

# Employment and Earnings in Local Government

By Jeff Hadland

In 1986, local governments in Alaska paid out nearly \$900 million in wages to their employees. Neither federal nor state government infused more money into Alaska's economy through wages. No single private sector industry paid out more. Local government employed a monthly average of nearly 29,000 workers during this period, more than either federal or state government.

Local governments have benefited from the large amount of state revenues available for schools, revenue sharing, capital projects and other local programs. With the decline of oil prices and state revenues this loss of funds has hit many local communities hard. The direct and indirect impact of local government is a significant part of every community's economic base. Even with the declines in revenue sources, anticipated declines in employment, and keener competition for jobs; local government job openings should be examined by the job-seeker.

Table 1  
Top 40 Alaska Local Government Entities (Excluding Education) in 1986  
Average Monthly Employment, Average Annual Earnings and Total Payroll  
Ranked By Total Payroll

Rank	City or Borough	Average Monthly Employment	Average Annual Earnings	Total Payroll
1	Anchorage Municipality	3,933	\$43,780	\$172,191,090
2	North Slope Borough	952	46,140	43,925,004
3	Juneau City and Borough	831	27,340	22,712,478
4	Fairbanks Municipal Utilities	340	44,285	15,057,000
6	Fairbanks	260	49,634	12,917,343
6	Fairbanks North Star Borough	399	28,701	11,444,459
7	Ketchikan	308	34,935	10,768,597
8	Kenai Peninsula Borough	287	27,309	7,828,492
9	Mat-Su Borough	150	34,040	5,111,653
10	Annette Island Canning Co. <sup>1</sup>	257	18,057	4,640,785
11	Valdez	140	32,463	4,539,396
12	Kodiak	153	25,120	3,839,243
13	Sitka City and Borough	110	34,183	3,751,635
14	Bethel	125	29,696	3,704,551
15	Kenai	114	28,836	3,284,894
16	Homer	100	28,592	2,849,707
17	Kotzebue	95	27,069	2,564,790
18	Petersburg	97	26,460	2,562,219
19	Unalaska	65	35,126	2,265,640
20	Seward	61	34,496	2,095,662
21	St. Paul	76	26,285	1,991,107
22	Kodiak Island Borough	60	31,798	1,891,961
23	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	63	29,085	1,842,074
24	Palmer	57	31,743	1,806,707
25	Soldotna	44	39,829	1,732,572
26	Wrangell	59	27,349	1,611,339
27	Nome	42	37,042	1,555,770
28	Cordova	51	30,327	1,536,577
29	Dillingham	43	28,532	1,217,360
30	Hoonah	39	28,649	1,117,321
31	Galena	38	26,019	999,553
32	Sand Point	40	24,258	978,395
33	Bristol Bay Borough	29	33,066	942,394
34	North Pole	26	35,102	895,090
35	Haines	25	27,623	690,582
36	Craig	45	14,298	644,590
37	Barrow	19	34,309	643,301
38	Whittier	25	24,777	615,297
39	St. George	24	25,013	606,559
40	Wasilla	25	23,816	605,313

<sup>1</sup> The Annette Island Canning Company is owned and operated by the Metlakatla Indian Community.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, 202 file.

Table 1 shows Alaska's "top 40" local government entities (excluding schools) as identified on the Alaska Department of Labor tax file. Anchorage is, of course, the largest single local government entity in the state paying well over \$170 million in wages and employing a monthly average of nearly 4,000 workers in 1986. The North Slope Borough was, surprisingly, the second largest local government in Alaska. Overall, wages paid to employees of local governments, excluding education, amounted to approximately \$400 million in 1986.

Average wages paid to local government workers are an indication of individual earnings but are affected by

the number of different employees that work during the year. A large number of part-time, seasonal or temporary workers can reduce the average annual earnings figure while a full-time, stable employee base will necessarily increase the average annual earnings.

Local government entities provide different geographic and service coverage. Some cover cities, others boroughs, and some combine both. Services such as utilities and social programs are provided by some city or borough employees but either may be handled by specialized agencies or contracted out. Occasional activities typically found in the private sector such as fish canning or construction

are conducted by local governments. The occupational mix to provide these different types of services affects the average annual earnings shown in Table 1.

### Local Education

The largest sector of local government in Alaska is education. Local schools in Alaska paid out nearly \$500 million in wages in 1986 to teachers, administrators and support staff. Table 2 shows Alaska's "top 40" local school districts. Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and Mat-Su were the largest school districts in terms of both wages and employment. Average monthly employment figures are calculated based only on the months

Table 2  
Top 40 Alaska School Districts in 1986  
Average Monthly Employment, Average Annual Earnings and Total Payroll  
Ranked By Total Payroll

Rank	School District	Average Monthly Employment	Average Annual Earnings	Total Payroll
1	Anchorage School District	4,480	\$35,736	\$160,077,304
2	Fairbanks North Star Schools	1,436	39,991	57,437,300
3	Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	1,016	34,141	34,675,555
4	Mat-Su Borough Schools	1,198	28,813	34,522,964
5	Lower Kuskokwim School District	679	32,740	22,236,204
6	Juneau School District	490	39,190	19,215,968
7	North Slope Borough Schools	480	39,068	18,752,636
8	Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	450	29,022	13,057,602
9	Lower Yukon School District	359	28,973	10,411,125
10	Kodiak Island Borough Schools	386	26,679	10,302,722
11	Bering Strait School District	372	27,546	10,249,362
12	Ketchikan Gateway Boro Schools	286	34,708	9,938,058
13	Sitka Borough School District	209	34,022	7,122,013
14	Valdez City Schools	141	36,410	5,142,926
15	Southwest Region Schools	189	26,630	5,041,997
16	Yukon Koyukuk School District	156	29,667	4,613,230
17	Nome Public Schools	147	30,893	4,528,459
18	Delta/Greely School District	124	34,958	4,329,017
19	Kuspuk School District	146	27,876	4,074,531
20	Lake & Peninsula School District	159	24,015	3,824,424
21	Iditarod Area School District	141	26,068	3,686,416
22	Yukon Flats School District	123	29,382	3,606,601
23	Dillingham City School District	103	32,863	3,393,062
24	Alaska Gateway Schools	113	28,122	3,163,738
25	Copper River School District	94	32,486	3,059,065
26	Southeast Island School District	135	21,945	2,969,844
27	Adak Region Schools	98	25,432	2,479,621
28	Railbelt School District	68	33,729	2,282,362
29	Petersburg School District	76	29,545	2,255,243
30	Wrangell Public Schools	72	31,313	2,246,730
31	Annette Island School District	70	31,021	2,166,298
32	Yupitit School District	102	21,186	2,155,699
33	Haines Borough School District	67	31,921	2,141,351
34	Cordova School District	77	27,748	2,134,279
35	Chatham School District	92	20,957	1,926,320
36	Bristol Bay Borough School	57	28,537	1,636,131
37	Galena City School District	39	37,138	1,439,094
38	Nenana City Public Schools	47	30,527	1,429,663
39	Kashunamiut School District	43	32,598	1,393,557
40	Kenai City School District	46	28,930	1,330,802

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, 202 file.

in which the individual received wages. This tends to reduce the average monthly employment figure and, by definition, increase the average annual earnings from that expected if all employees in the school districts worked twelve months. Of course, some school districts may rely more heavily upon part-time and temporary workers making interarea comparisons less meaningful.

### Occupations in Local Government

Each year Research and Analysis publishes an occupational employment forecast. Our most recent local government employment forecast results are highlighted in Table 3. The forecast is generated using occupa-

tional staffing patterns of local government entities and estimates of change in total employment during the forecast period.

According to our most recent survey of noneducational local governments, police officers, fire fighters, secretaries and clerk typists are the largest single occupational categories. We estimate that in 1986 there were about 700 police officers working for local governments in Alaska representing over six percent of total noneducational local government employment. Other occupations employing a large number of workers include recreation workers, mechanics, bookkeeping and accounting occupations, construction, and maintenance workers.

Unfortunately, virtually all occupational categories are slated for employment declines during the next five years. However, there will still be a large number of local government workers and a significant number of employment opportunities in this sector.

Table 3  
Top 40 Occupations in Local Government (Excluding Education)  
Alaska 1986 and 1991

Rank	OES Occupation Title	1986 Employment	1991 Employment	Percent of 1986 Local Government Employment
1	Police Patrol Officers	700	613	6.29
2	Fire Fighters	573	502	5.15
3	Secretaries	298	261	2.68
4	Typists	278	244	2.50
5	Recreation Workers	250	219	2.25
6	All Other Mechanics & Repairers	237	208	2.13
7	Supervisors/Managers: Clerical/Admin Sup	233	204	2.09
8	Bookkeeping, Acctg, & Auditing Clerks	225	197	2.02
9	All Other Construction Wkrs, Ex Helpers	221	194	1.99
10	Maintenance Repairers: General Utility	213	187	1.91
11	Water/Liquid Waste Treatment Plant Opers	211	185	1.90
12	Dispatchers: Police, Fire, & Ambulance	209	183	1.88
13	Switchboard Operators	207	181	1.86
14	Customer Service Reps: Utilities	206	181	1.85
15	Supervisors: Mechanics/Installers/Repair	203	178	1.82
16	Truck Drivers: Heavy or Tractor Trailer	178	156	1.60
17	Civil Engineering Technicians/Technologists	173	152	1.55
18	Librarians: Professional	164	144	1.47
19	Bus Drivers	157	138	1.41
20	Refuse Collectors	155	136	1.39
21	All Other Helpers/Laborers/Material Movers	154	135	1.38
22	Public Admin Chief Execs/Legislators/Gen	145	127	1.30
23	Municipal Clerks	137	120	1.23
24	Communication/Transport/Utilities Mgrs	137	120	1.23
25	All Other Clean/Bldg Svc Wkr, Ex Private	136	119	1.22
26	Fire Fighting & Prevention Supervisors	135	118	1.21
27	Emergency Medical Technicians	131	115	1.18
28	Operating Engineers	127	111	1.14
29	Police & Detective Supervisors	125	110	1.12
30	General Managers & Top Executives	120	105	1.08
31	General Office Clerks	116	102	1.04
32	All Other Plant & System Operators	114	100	1.02
33	Electrical & Electronic Engineers	114	100	1.02
34	Urban & Regional Planners	112	98	1.01
35	Accountants & Auditors	109	96	0.98
36	Highway Maintenance Workers	103	90	0.93
37	Gardeners & Groundskeepers, Ex Farm	102	89	0.92
38	All Other Protective Service Workers	100	88	0.90
39	Civil Engineers	98	86	0.88
40	Library Assistants & Bookmobile Drivers	97	85	0.87

Source: Alaska Industry-Occupational Outlook, Alaska Department of Labor, 1987.