

# A Guide To Finding the Right Talent for Your Life Sciences Organization

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## The life sciences field has changed dramatically over the last five years.

These changes have created challenges for agencies that need to hire and retain quality talent from a scarce pool. Now more than ever, agencies need to be on the lookout for candidates who can fill essential roles. These individuals need knowledge of science that aligns with an organization's work and a work ethic that allows them to complete assignments and experiments humanely and according to government or organization regulations.

Many life sciences projects today are interdisciplinary, often including data and computational science. This interdisciplinary nature requires teams to have the ability to learn quickly and adapt to changes as they occur. An organization's talent may need to have cross-training to ensure an understanding of the roles of everyone on the team. Helping teams expand their knowledge may lead an organization to complete more diverse projects by the same team. A well-rounded team may also have more success and increase productivity to allow for advanced research and development opportunities.



# Current Trends in Hiring Life Sciences Talent



In the past 20 years, the life sciences have grown tremendously, especially in medical scientist roles. Some jobs have moved away from requiring only laboratory research to including computational analysis, marketing, sales, accounting, and administrative duties. With this change in roles comes a need for additional or different skill sets. Shifts that affect the needs of companies can pose challenges to hiring talent that meets the changing needs of an organization.

As life sciences roles change, hiring managers must stay vigilant, ensuring that potential employees know what to expect from a position to equip themselves with the right skills and training to complete the job well.

### These roles have seen the most growth over the last 20 years:



Epidemiologists



Bioengineers



Microbiologists



Biochemists

### Other life sciences roles that have seen substantial growth include:



Data  
Scientists



Mathematicians



Biological  
Technicians

The skills needed to fulfill these roles may not always be the skills typically associated with performing tasks in a life sciences role.

### A few of the skills that those in a life sciences role may need are:



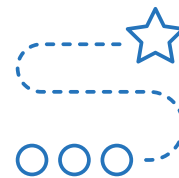
Analytical and  
Creative Thinking



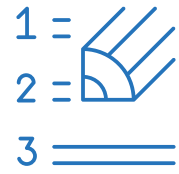
Leadership



Communication

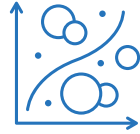


Problem-Solving



Attention to  
Detail

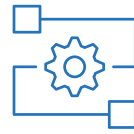
## Specialized skills that some life science roles may require include:



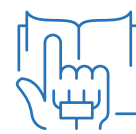
Math and  
Statistical Skills



Machine  
Learning



Processing  
Data Sets



Lab  
Skills

Although a record number of people are graduating with life sciences degrees, finding talent requires strategy. One reason for this is that the number of degree holders is disproportionate to the number of open roles. The other challenge is the change in roles. This shift in what makes for a talented life sciences professional has created a gap in the skills required to fulfill a role successfully.<sup>1</sup> Of course, organizations can still find talent if they know where to look and who they're looking for.

# How to Find Life Sciences Talent for Your Organization

When searching for the ideal candidates for a scientific organization, hiring managers can take steps to make the process go smoothly and ensure that positions get filled quickly with top talent. To hire the best talent, hiring personnel can do the following:

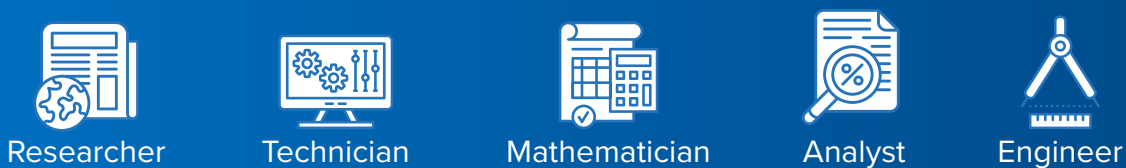
## Define Staffing Needs

Before an organization can hire new talent, it must understand its staffing needs. By analyzing current employees' expertise, performance, and potential, an organization can determine whether there's room for professional growth. A scientific organization must consider where it could benefit from upskilling current staff and areas that may require acquiring new talent.

Upskilling current staff members has many benefits, including not having to pay the costs of hiring new scientists. For example, a team member who excels at research could improve their efficiency if they gain skills in analytics or chemistry. An organization can be more productive when it provides its staff with an opportunity to gain new skills specific to their roles.

However, when a company goes through a transition period, it may need to be flexible in its hiring practices because it takes time to learn the complex skills required in the life sciences field. This situation could make acquiring permanent and temporary staff members necessary until hiring needs stabilize.

Once an organization has determined the positions to fill and the skills individuals need to perform their roles, hiring managers can create a list of roles they need to fill. **The list might include the following:**



Some organizations may require professionals who can conduct research and work in a lab. In contrast, others might have open positions requiring technical skills or knowledge of product development or business management. Regardless of the roles needed, hiring managers should learn where gaps in skills exist to find talent that fills those gaps and makes room for growth.

Sourcing talent from multiple places could be beneficial, providing access to professionals with various skill sets and career goals. Knowing whether to hire permanent employees or work with contractors can guide an organization's hiring plan. Some organizations might benefit from using a **clinical research staffing partner** that can help them locate top talent with the skills missing from their current talent pool.

Other talent-sourcing options include contracting companies and contract research organizations. **Contractors** are people with specific skills who work for themselves or through other agencies. A contract research organization provides talent with specializations in research, clinical trials, data management, and regulatory consulting. Staffing and contract companies can help life sciences organizations find the talent to perform the highly skilled work required in this field.<sup>2</sup>

## Create a Hiring Plan

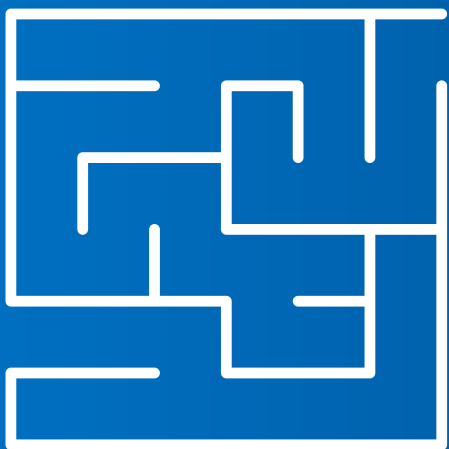
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After defining staffing needs, an organization can create a hiring plan. This plan should outline how the organization will source new talent and fill empty positions. A hiring manager can use a list of job categories and missing skill sets to determine how many people to hire and for which roles. In the life sciences field, this could mean better defining the positions the organization has open to help create job descriptions. An organization requiring talent who can perform thorough research, collect and analyze data, and run clinical trials must clarify these specifications in the job description.

The plan should also determine where to post job openings, as qualified talent is scarce in this industry. Advertising an open role in the right place can help fill the empty position faster. Some organizations may want to work with a staffing partner to outsource their hiring, especially for life sciences talent.



Hiring plans can outline what each position pays and how much compensation will vary based on education and experience. Because life sciences roles require highly skilled talent, many organizations expect to negotiate when it comes to salaries. Organizations can also include plans for interviewing potential candidates. Life sciences professionals who apply to open roles are often already employed, so an organization may need to accommodate a busy schedule or interview through a video call.



Looking at an organization's work history and future work plans and goals can help a hiring team see the bigger company picture. Knowing what current and past talent could accomplish can lead to understanding what talent the organization needs for future growth and expansion. Organizations that want to expand to include human studies and animal research must understand the skills they'd like to see in their talent pool. Incorporating this knowledge in the hiring plan can help an organization hire the right talent to achieve its goals.

## Write Job Descriptions

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Having written job descriptions for each vacant role is essential. A job description should be detailed yet brief. A candidate will understand the needs of the role and its requirements after reading the job description, but this job summary may not be all-inclusive. The job description must explain to a candidate the expectations of the role regarding daily duties and list the skills required to apply. Life sciences roles can vary significantly from one organization to the next, so creating a job description that outlines the role specifically can keep unqualified individuals from applying.

**A job description for a bioanalyst, for example, might require these skills:**

- Ability to perform routine lab tests
- Familiarity with bioanalysis methods
- Knowledge of common biochemicals
- Organization
- Problem-solving
- Communication

The job description can outline what a candidate can expect from the role, such as whether the individual will split time between an office and a lab or work mainly out of the lab and the level of education required. Most life sciences roles require candidates to have at least a bachelor's degree, but for higher-level positions, candidates may need a master's degree or doctorate. Including these details and information regarding the regulations that candidates need to be aware of before applying can weed out those who aren't qualified.



## Consider Outsourcing Strategies

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Outsourcing the hiring needs of life sciences organizations can free up time and better target the best talent. Scientific organizations want trained personnel who are comfortable performing clinical trials, conducting research, and innovating initiatives that drive momentum and growth.



**Finding the time to recruit, interview, and onboard new team members can be time-consuming and keep current employees from more critical tasks.**

Working with a staffing partner can be the solution that brings new talent to the team.

# Challenges with Life Sciences Talent Management and Acquisition

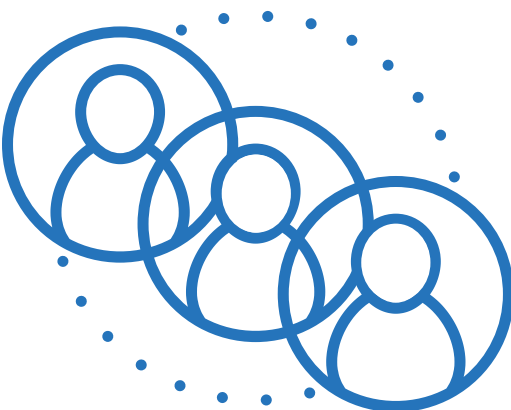
Agencies in the life sciences industry require a specialized workforce, making it challenging to acquire and manage talent across departments. These organizations often need to hire staff quickly. Unfortunately, many organizations are also slow to hire because of administrative work that can make the hiring process lengthy. Other challenges that life sciences organizations face with talent acquisition and management include:

## Competitive Job Market

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There is often intense competition for top talent in the life sciences sector. This point is particularly true in areas such as research and development, where skilled professionals are in high demand. Because research and development are broad in scope, hiring for these roles means companies need to know what they're looking for in a new team member.

The skills required for some tasks mean an organization has to be ready to offer a higher salary. This situation can make it challenging for smaller companies with limited resources to compete with larger companies for top talent.

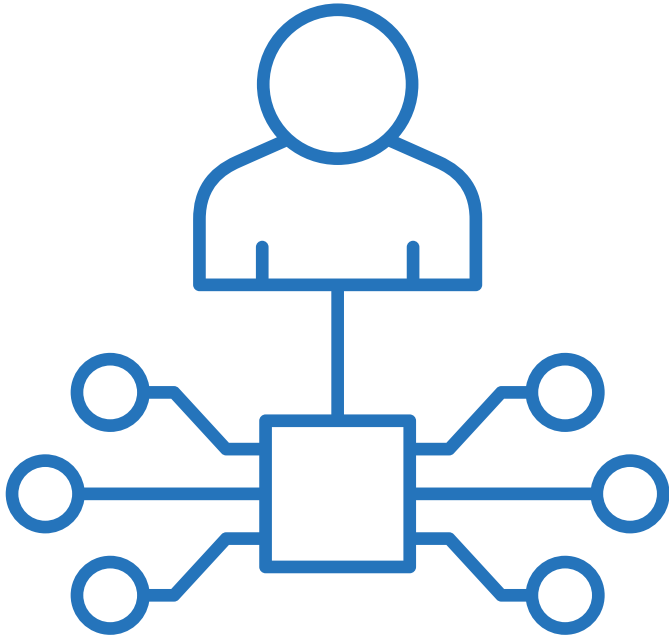


## Small Pool of Candidates

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The pool of candidates for specific positions in the life sciences field can be limited, particularly in geographic regions where these roles have yet to gain prominence or are just starting to appear. This factor can make it challenging to find qualified candidates, especially those willing to relocate to an area with fewer nearby services or amenities and those who work in biotechnology, including bioinformatics, computational biology, and medical imaging.





### Complicated Regulations

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The life sciences industry is heavily regulated, and candidates with the knowledge and experience to navigate complex regulatory requirements are few and far between. Finding people who understand these regulations and how to comply with them can be a big hurdle for many life science organizations. Making it even more difficult are frequently changing regulations that vary between organizations and the work performed.

Because companies can select candidates worldwide, organizations must be aware of international immigration regulations. Getting talent to work legally in a new country can also be time-consuming.

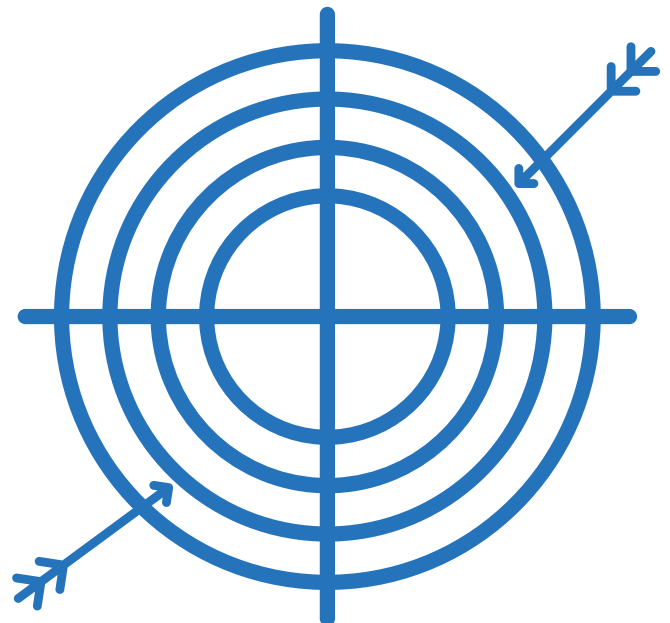
### Poor Assessment Methods

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Assessing talent before hiring them is critical, especially in the life sciences industry.

Organizations need to be sure that the people they hire have the skills and experience they need to perform in technical roles. Assessing how well a candidate will fit in with an agency's culture is essential, and assessing the extent to which the individual will contribute to the organization's overall success is imperative.

Technology can assist in the selection process, but it may require multiple staff members to choose the right talent. This arrangement can take people away from their regular tasks, slowing productivity.



# The Conundrum of Attracting and Retaining Talent

Life sciences roles are fast-paced and in demand, which contributes to the challenge of both attracting and retaining talent in this industry. When a job is in demand, talented individuals believe they can easily find a better job with another organization. Many people in this field may constantly be looking for something better. The fast-paced work involved with life sciences jobs makes for high turnover and burnout.<sup>3</sup> This combination of factors could cause top talent to look for work in a related field or change careers entirely.



Organizations may have to offer talent more than a desirable wage to bring them onto the team, as many professionals seek roles with opportunities for upskilling and training. With these benefits, life sciences professionals have room for growth with a company. This sentiment provides them stability, leading to a desire to stay with an organization for the long term.

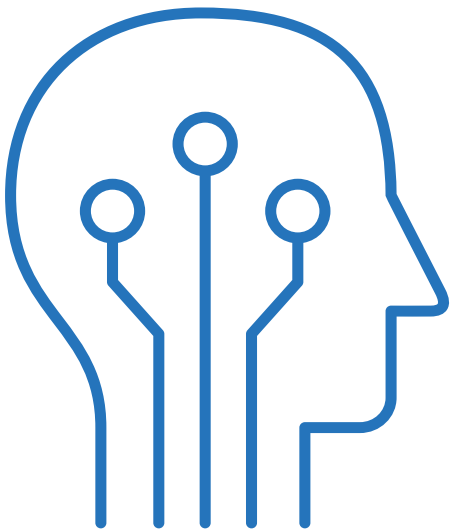
# Solutions for Hiring in the Current Life Sciences Field

A scientific organization can overcome the challenges of finding talent for its open roles by working with a **scientific staffing partner** that specializes in recruiting individuals with the exact skills needed for jobs in creating medical devices, developing and improving pharmaceuticals, conducting research, and getting products to market.

## Tackling the Competitive Job Market

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Here at Medix, we continuously build relationships with life sciences talent in order to fill important roles efficiently. Our recruitment strategy allows us to source top talent with the right skills for jobs in **biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, research,** and data science, among others, because we target individuals with specialized skills or transferable skills for these roles. It's also important to target talent with the right personality traits, which can be accomplished by using analytics and assessments.



## Understanding Skills Gaps

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It's critical to understand current skills gaps in the life sciences sector. This understanding allows you to use fitting resources to recruit candidates with specialized skills or similar skills which may easily translate to a unique role. Understanding these gaps also helps you identify where you should focus on upskilling to close those gaps with your current workforce.

## Navigating Regulations

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Life sciences is a highly-regulated space, and your staffing partner should help you comply with regulations. While navigating the many requirements of hiring and training staff for a life sciences role can be overwhelming, ensuring you find talent with proven experience complying with regulations and personality traits conducive to compliance are key.

## Assessing Talent

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Medix uses cutting-edge, proprietary people analytics tools and assessments to help screen talent more effectively than traditional methods. Through our technology tools, we can determine whether candidates have the skills and temperament to work well in a life sciences environment. It's important that your staffing partner looks beyond the resume when screening talent, as personality, particularly a propensity for learning and upskilling, can help you fill current and future gaps with long-term talent.

# Overcome the Challenges of Finding Talent for Life Sciences Roles

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, finding and retaining talent for life sciences roles has become increasingly challenging. The increased strain on the medical industry and the heightened demand for medical professionals have created an interesting situation for those looking to hire for life sciences roles. In addition, there have been many changes to the field of life sciences, causing a shift in the skills that candidates need for success. With the limited talent pool available, it may be more challenging than ever to attract and retain talent.<sup>4</sup>

Working with a scientific staffing partner can allow your organization to focus on providing stellar service and completing clinical trials on time, while still having the temporary and permanent staff required to complete everyday tasks. Consider how your staffing partner is or isn't helping you build a flexible, talented workforce to reach your short- and long-term business goals.

# Citations

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2. “What is a contract research organization (CRO)?” Brooke Corcoran, May 9, 2022, <https://medinstitute.com/blog/what-is-a-contract-research-organization-cro/>.
3. “The High Cost of Employee Turnover and How to Fix It,” The Astrix Blog, Dec. 20, 2022, <https://astrixinc.com/the-high-cost-of-employee-turnover-and-how-to-fix-it/>.
4. “Tackling Talent Acquisition in Life Sciences,” Vincent Masat, Accessed on March 19, 2023, <https://www.cielotalent.com/insights/tackling-talent-acquisition-in-life-sciences/>.

