



Kansas Bureau of Investigation

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Before the House Transportation and Public Safety Budget Subcommittee
Kirk D. Thompson, Director
Kansas Bureau of Investigation
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Chairman Francis and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kirk Thompson and I currently serve as Director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI). Thank you for the opportunity this afternoon to brief you on the KBI and the challenges we face as an agency with recruitment and retention of personnel. I would like to start by first thanking you and the legislature for your continued support of the KBI.

The mission of the KBI is to provide professional investigative, laboratory and criminal justice information services to Kansas criminal justice agencies for the purpose of promoting public safety and preventing crime in Kansas. While this is the mission of the agency, it is our invaluable and dedicated employees who work together to execute our mission. As a public safety organization, we rely greatly on our ability to recruit and retain highly educated, well-trained, and appropriately experienced professionals of impeccable moral and ethical character.

Like many public safety agencies the KBI has experienced difficulty with recruiting and retaining investigative, forensic science, and professional staff. Several factors have contributed to these difficulties.

First, the KBI recruits Special Agents who meet preferred qualifications that are equivalent to seasoned investigators at local law enforcement agencies.

Over the past six years, which included seven hiring classes, on average **less than 10% of the Special Agent applicants in each class possessed the preferred qualifications sought by the KBI.** To find applicants with the experience equivalent to the types of crimes the KBI investigates, the KBI often looks to larger law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, larger law enforcement agencies have significantly higher pay for Detective positions than the starting salary for a KBI Special Agent. As a result the KBI must draw candidates from smaller departments, who do not necessarily have the experience or training expected of a KBI Special Agent.

The KBI Investigations Division is currently operating at **86% with 14 vacant Special Agent positions.** That equates to approximately 73 Special Agents (excluding supervisors) working cases in 105 counties in Kansas.

Second, the KBI hiring standards and practices are more rigid than many other public and private agencies due to the sensitive and confidential information we utilize.

Over the past three years, the KBI has made 279 conditional offers for employment and rescinded 152 of the offers. In other words, **54% of the applicants who are given a conditional offer of employment did not pass the stringent requirements of the background process for hiring.**

Third, the retention of our forensic scientists has become more difficult as our agency competes against an increasingly competitive marketplace that seeks individuals with scientific and research backgrounds in an attempt to stop a global pandemic.

The Forensic Science Laboratory continues to face staffing challenges as salaries are not competitive for the recruitment and retention of experienced scientists. We have been reasonably successful in hiring applicants with little to no laboratory experience in the recent past and providing training necessary to perform the analysis. The training process of our staff takes from 12 to 24 months to complete. The cost of training a new scientist varies greatly depending on the section and length of the program. **The per scientist training costs range from approximately \$80,000 to \$200,000.** Unfortunately, we have struggled to retain these scientists once they are trained and are qualified to perform the analysis in actual casework.

Finally, the KBI is attempting to recruit professional staff in an environment that is highly competitive with both public and private companies.

To address the recruitment and retention issues within all ranks of the KBI, our agency is seeking three separate enhancement requests from the legislature for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. Our first enhancement request will address the recruitment and retention of our commissioned personnel. Our second enhancement request will concentrate on the recruitment and retention of our Forensic Scientists. The third and final enhancement request will focus on the recruitment and retention of the KBI professional staff.

FY 2023: KBI Enhancement Package Number 1: Recruitment and Retention of KBI Commissioned Personnel

Law enforcement is currently experiencing unprecedented difficulty with recruitment of new officers. Although these challenges are not unique to Kansas, the KBI experiences additional barriers to recruitment that other law enforcement agencies may not experience. These barriers include: heightened preferred qualifications, an extensive background investigation of the applicant, non-preferred duty assignment location, mutual recruitment competition, and salary. The ideal KBI Special Agent candidate has a college degree and six years of felony investigative experience.

Unlike many traditional municipal police agencies and Sheriff's offices, the KBI does not have the responsibility for a patrol function. Instead, all of our commissioned resources are special agents or the equivalent of a local agency detective. Most law enforcement agencies do not allow their patrol officers to become detectives without first gaining experience and significant training. The KBI requires six years of certified experience prior to being eligible for being a special agent and we prefer candidates who already have experience conducting investigations.

In keeping with that line of thought, the longer a special agent works for the KBI, the more experience they gain conducting investigations of murder, sexual assault, aggravated crimes against children, and public corruption cases, the more valuable they are to the KBI. Having more

experienced investigators working on criminal cases increases the likelihood that the case will be resolved. And in an era when it is increasingly harder to recruit candidates to the law enforcement profession, in general, and the KBI, in particular, it is even more critical to retain our experienced special agents.

The KBI believes that adjusting the existing recruitment and retention pay plan for KBI Special Agents will provide increased incentive to applicants who meet the preferred qualifications to be Special Agents and provide incentive to the KBI special agents to remain in the workforce.

The salary for all commissioned Special Agents must be adjusted to allow the KBI to retain the experience currently in the workforce and be competitive with and recruit candidates from other state agencies in Kansas, equivalent state law enforcement agencies in other states, and particularly from local law enforcement in Kansas.

The KBI is currently working with the Division of Budget to determine a specific solution to address the recruitment and retention issue within the commissioned personnel. However, in preparation for this enhancement request, the KBI completed a study of mid-western, regional state agencies, surrounding state agencies with investigative positions, and mid to large agencies within Kansas.

Objective:

Adjust the recruitment and retention pay plan for Special Agents to provide a fair market value for work commensurate to other equivalent law enforcement agencies in an effort to enhance recruitment and retention of Special Agent personnel.

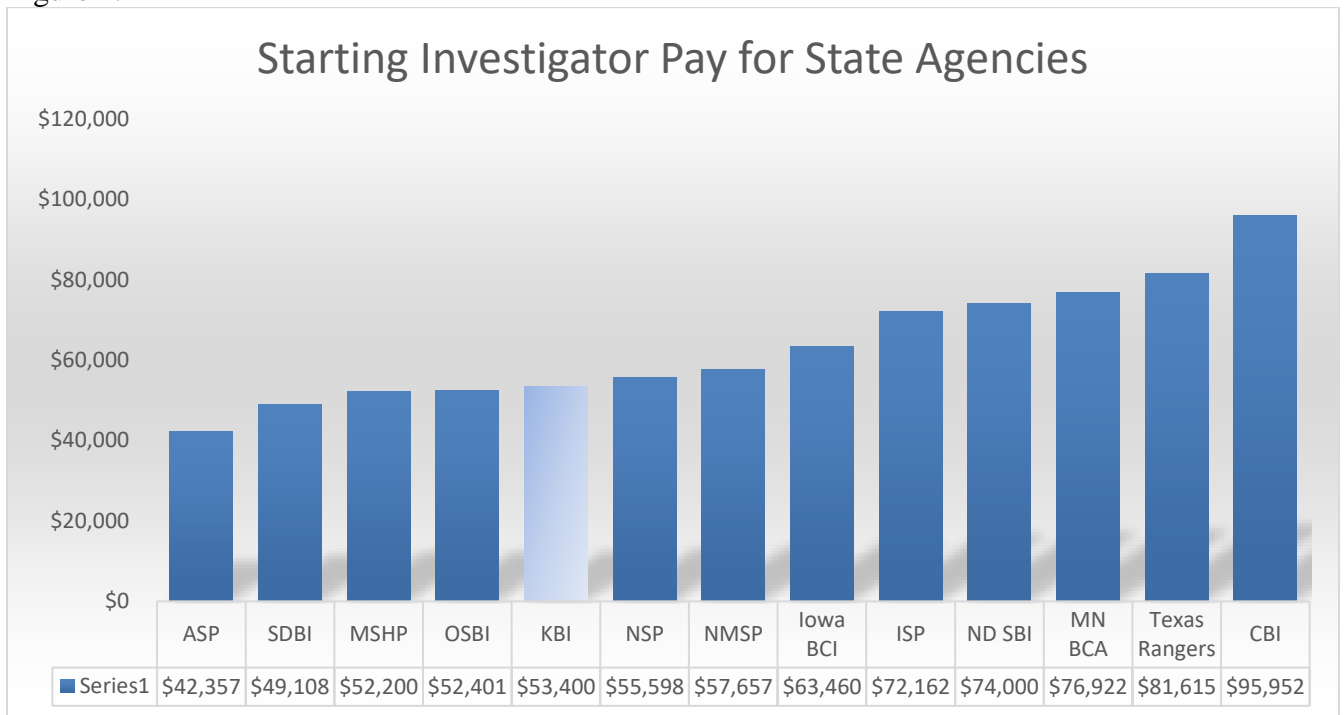
The starting salary for a newly hired KBI Special Agent is \$53,400/annually. The KBI believes raising the starting salary for new Special Agents would increase the recruitment of those applicants with preferred qualifications and enhance retention of Special Agents by mitigating the allure of lateral hiring opportunities with other higher paying agencies.

The KBI conducted a salary survey of the equivalent salaries for Special Agent positions within state agencies similar to the KBI in twelve surrounding states. Those state agencies and the starting annual pay for Investigator/Special Agent included:

1. Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI)	\$52,400
2. Texas Department of Public Safety (Texas Rangers)	\$73,911
3. Nebraska State Patrol (NSP)	\$57,824
4. Iowa Department of Public Safety (Iowa DPS)	\$63,460
5. Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (MBCA)	\$76,922
6. North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NDBCI)	\$74,000
7. South Dakota Bureau of Investigation (SDBI)	\$49,108
8. Illinois State Police (ISP)	\$72,162
9. New Mexico State Police (NMSP)	\$57,657
10. Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI)	\$95,952
11. Arkansas State Police (ASP)	\$42,357
12. Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP)	\$52,200

Figure 1 shows the starting salaries for Investigators equivalent to KBI Special Agents in other state law enforcement agencies.

Figure 1.

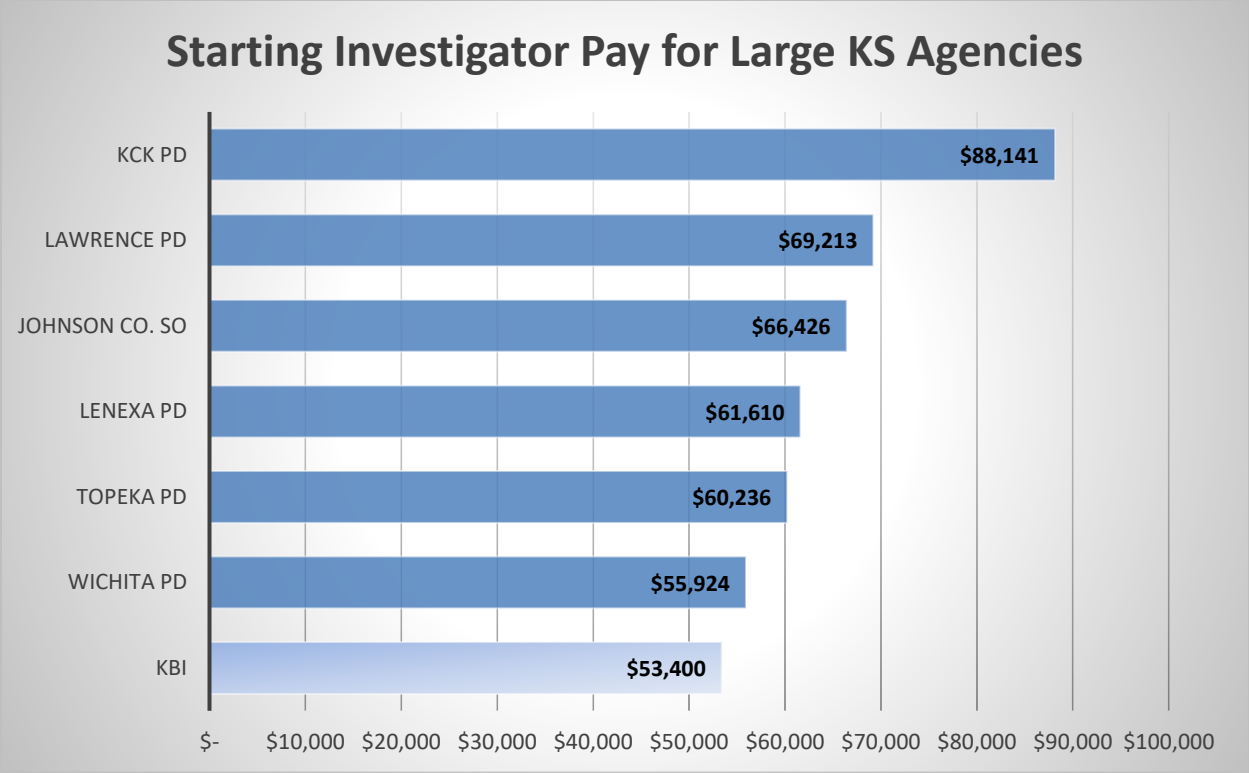


Additionally, a comparison of the KBI Special Agent starting salary was made to six larger law enforcement agencies within the State of Kansas. Those in-state local law enforcement agencies and the starting Detective pay included:

1. Topeka Police Department \$60,236
2. Lawrence Police Department \$69,213
3. Wichita Police Department \$55,924
4. Johnson County Sheriff's Office \$66,426
5. Kansas City, Kansas Police Department \$88,141
6. Lenexa Police Department \$61,610

Figure 2 shows the starting salaries for investigators with equivalent experience to KBI Special Agents in larger Kansas law enforcement agencies.

Figure 2.



The following is a summary of the findings:

- Only four of the twelve state agencies polled start investigators at a lower salary than the KBI (Arkansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Missouri).
- One of those four agencies surpasses the KBI after one year (Oklahoma).
- Seven of the twelve state agencies surpassed KBI at the top end of the salary range by more than \$10,000.
- Texas DPS has a mandatory 25% overtime pay included with their starting salary, which raises their starting salary to \$102,018 (almost \$49,000 above the KBI starting salary)
- Although the starting salary for the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation is comparative to the KBI, after one year the Special Agent moves from \$52,200 to \$61,800. Furthermore it takes 16 years for a KBI Special Agent to reach the same salary a Special Agent with the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation would reach in three years (\$71,990). This is an earning difference of over \$125,000 in those 13 years.

The KBI should be recruiting applicants from larger law enforcement agencies. Those applicants with preferred qualifications will have the training and experience expected of a KBI Special Agent.

A review of six larger law enforcement agencies in the state found the following:

- A new Topeka Police Department Detective earns \$60,236 or approximately \$6,800 more than the starting KBI Special Agent. In four years that same TPD Detective will earn \$67,558 while the KBI Agent has received their first raise and moved to \$56,070, a difference of over \$11,000. At the end of 18 years, the TPD Detective earns \$88,566 while the KBI Special Agent earns \$75,100 (almost \$13,500 less) for equivalent work.
- A new Lawrence Police Department Detective earns approximately \$69,213 per year, but reaches \$80,433 at the top end of the pay scale for the Detective. This is approximately \$5,000 more than the KBI Agent.
- The starting salary of a Wichita Police Department Detective is \$55,942, which is comparable to the starting salary of KBI Agents. However, the top end of the salary for Wichita Police Department Detectives is \$78,741, which is slightly ahead of KBI Agents.
- The Johnson County Sheriff's Office sergeant position is equivalent to the KBI Special Agent. The sergeant starting salary is \$66,426 (or \$12,000 more than the KBI Special Agent starting pay) and tops out at \$99,640 (\$24,000 more than a KBI Agent).
- Kansas City, KS Police Department Detectives start at approximately \$88,141 (\$34,000 more than a KBI Special Agent).
- On average a KBI Special Agent at their top end salary is still making approximately \$10,000 dollars less than a Topeka Police Department or Kansas City, KS Police Department Detective.

A summary of the comparative salaries of KBI Special Agents and equivalent investigators with other state law enforcement agencies as well as in-state local law enforcement agencies shows that conservatively the **KBI Special Agent is earning approximately \$10,000 less than their counterparts from other agencies for commensurate work.** This indicates a disproportionate fair market value for the work of the KBI commissioned personnel.

The top end pay for KBI Special Agents is the fifth lowest out of twelve state agencies. Only New Mexico State Police, Missouri State Highway Patrol, Arkansas State Police, and the South Dakota Bureau of Investigation have a lower top end pay than KBI Special Agents. Furthermore, the state law enforcement agencies in both North Dakota and South Dakota requested an annual pay increase of \$7,000 to \$10,000 each in FY 2020.

Figures 3 and 4 depict the top end salaries for investigators equivalent to KBI Special Agents from other state law enforcement agencies as well as Kansas law enforcement agencies.

Figure 3.

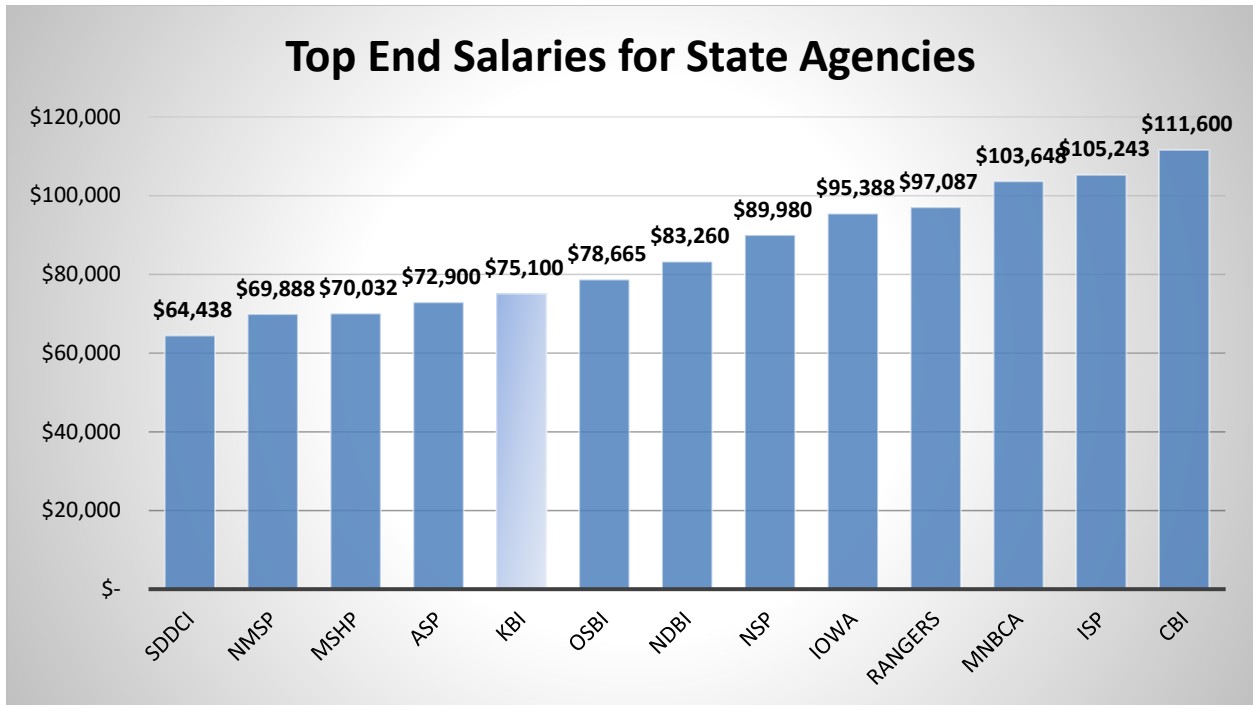
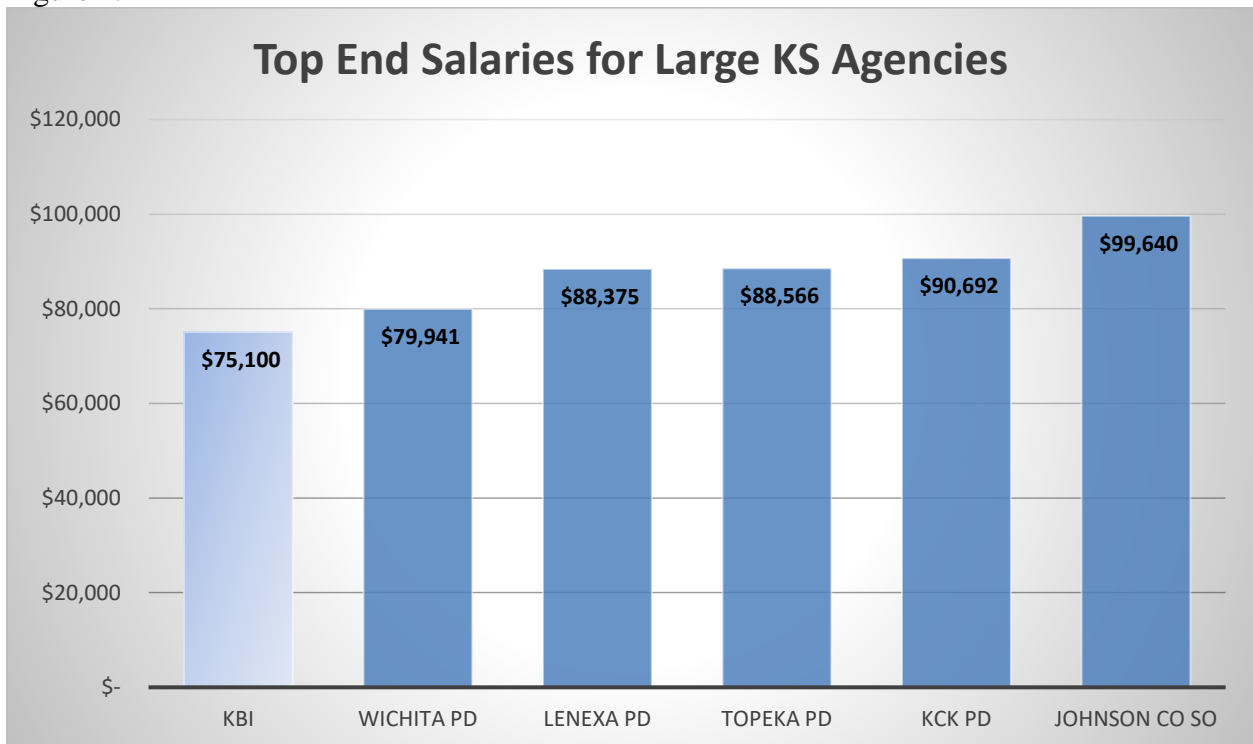


Figure 4.



As the states' premier law enforcement investigative agency, this pay adjustment will greatly enhance the KBI's ability to recruit and retain skilled and professional investigators from outside state law enforcement agencies and larger in-state law enforcement agencies.

FY 2023: KBI Enhancement Package Number 2: Forensic Scientist Recruitment and Retention Initiative

The KBI Forensic Science Laboratory desperately needs to retain and recruit a technical scientific staff that will meet the needs of our customers in Kansas for years to come.

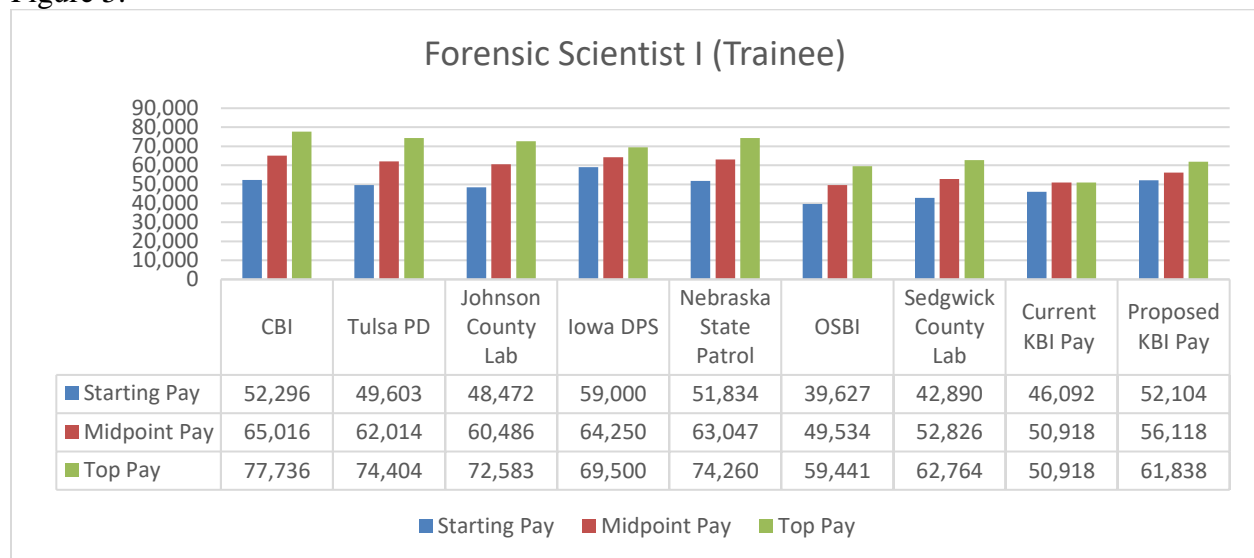
This highly technical scientific staff is extremely marketable and our proposal would compensate them for their years of service with the KBI Laboratory and recognize their outstanding efforts in obtaining advanced degrees, certifications and becoming technical leaders in their discipline. This proposal would allow us to remain more competitive in the marketplace. Without retention of these valuable personnel assets, the criminal justice system in Kansas is negatively affected and justice is delayed.

In 2020, the KBI conducted a market study of forensic scientist salaries from seven forensic laboratories both in Kansas and within the surrounding states. Those forensic laboratories included: Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Tulsa Police Department (Tulsa PD), Johnson County Sheriff’s Office Criminalistics Laboratory (Johnson County Lab), Iowa Department of Public Safety (Iowa DPS), Nebraska State Patrol, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI), and the Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center (Sedgwick County Lab).

The following data illustrates the starting, mid-point and top end salaries for a Forensic Scientist I (in training), Forensic Scientist II, Forensic Scientist III and a Forensic Scientist IV (supervisor).

Figure 5 depicts the starting pay, midpoint pay and top pay for a Forensic Scientist I (in training).

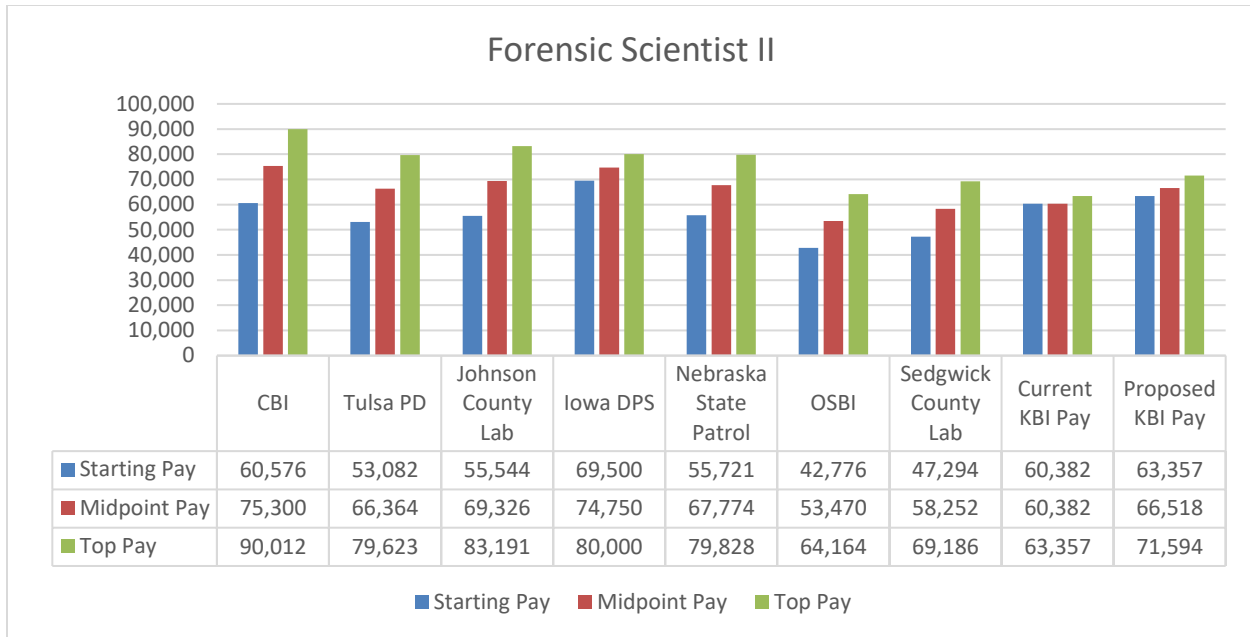
Figure 5.



Although the starting salary for a KBI forensic scientist is commensurate to several other in-state and out-of-state laboratories the top pay of the Forensic Scientist I in other laboratories quickly surpass the KBI. An analysis of the data shows that **a KBI Forensic Scientist I is paid \$19,180 less than the average of the top end salaries for comparative work in the other laboratories after one to two years.**

Figure 6 shows what the starting pay, midpoint pay and top pay for a Forensic Scientist II position.

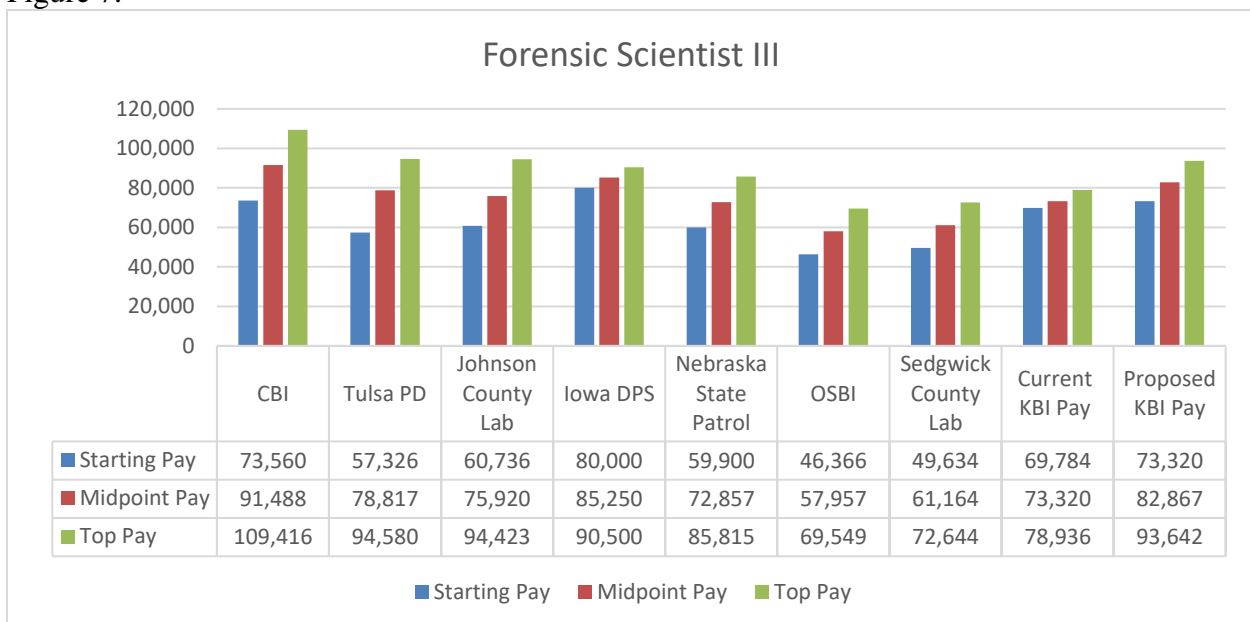
Figure 6.



The beginning pay for a KBI Forensic Scientist II position is higher than several of the other laboratories, but once again by the time the forensic scientist has been in the position for two to five years (on average), the disparity in pay is still significant. The top end pay of a Forensic Scientist II position is **\$14,643 lower than the average top end pay for equivalent positions in the other laboratories.**

Figure 7 indicates the starting pay, midpoint pay and top pay for a Forensic Scientist III.

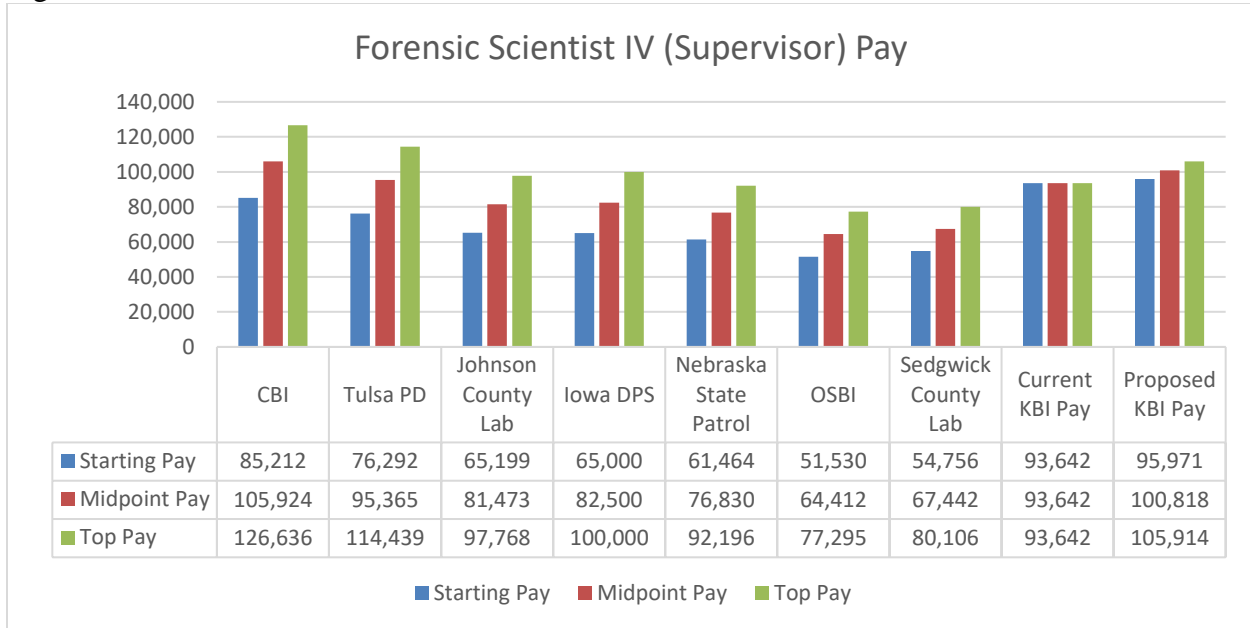
Figure 7.



The KBI starts Forensic Scientist III positions at \$69,784, however **it takes approximately ten years for that position to reach the top end of the salary range (which equates to an increase of only \$9,152 dollars during that time).**

Figure 8 indicates the starting pay, midpoint pay and top pay for a Forensic Scientist IV (Supervisor).

Figure 8.



A Forensic Scientist supervisor currently has no room for salary growth between the starting pay and the top pay in the Forensic Scientist IV position. Additionally, the top pay scale for a Forensic Scientist supervisor is still **\$4,700 below the average top salary of the other forensic laboratories.**

Our proposed solution to losing this significant investment in our employees is the development and implementation of a competitive compensation plan that is designed to assist us in both recruiting qualified applicants and retaining professionals dedicated to enhancing public safety in Kansas. The Forensic Scientist I is the job classification used for scientists who are moving through the training process mentioned above. This classification has largely been affected by the recent demand for increased starting wages and market demand for applicants with a science background. The salary adjustment within this classification is necessary to become competitive in the new market. Those Forensic Scientists who meet the rigorous standards of the training program will receive a compensation adjustment mid-way through the program as the forensic scientist becomes more productive in case analysis.

After successful completion of the training program scientists move to the Forensic Scientist II classification where our compensation plan would place employees in a pay band based upon the years of experience in their particular discipline such as biology, firearms, chemistry etc. Forensic Scientists would have the opportunity to advance through the pay bands from 2 – 4 years of experience, 5 – 7 years of experience, 8 – 10 years of experience and more than 10 years of experience. The compensation adjustment from a Forensic Scientist II just out of the training program to a Forensic Scientist II with more than 11 years of experience is approximately a 15% increase.

The Forensic Scientist III classification would also have incremental pay bands which would allow for an adjustment of salary based on 5 – 7 years of experience with pay bands extending to more than 35 years of experience. Adjustments within the pay band could also be attained based on training competency and yearly proficiency, knowledge, skills and ability above the level of the journeyman and providing forensic training, sitting on the board of a Forensic Science Organization, or Publishing research within the discipline.

Pay adjustments for Forensic Scientist Laboratory Technicians, and those scientists that manage our mission critical Laboratory Information Management System and the Quality Assurance Program, as well as those that oversee the technical testing areas in all disciplines are included to stay competitive in the market and retain these valuable resources which are extremely difficult and costly to replace. The loss of any of these staff affect our ability to serve the Kansas criminal justice system and ultimately delay justice. Approximately 95 forensic science staff would be affected by these combined compensation adjustments.

We believe that the implementation of a competitive compensation plan will allow the KBI to retain employees who would typically leave the organization for other more lucrative opportunities. The benefit to the State of Kansas will be easily recognized by the ability to maintain forensic capacity and provide the results of critical forensic analysis in a timely manner to the criminal justice system. A competitive pay plan will work to eliminate the vicious, costly cycle of training new staff as qualified scientists find more competitive salaries elsewhere. Without these critical adjustments the agency will continue to struggle to retain quality employees or recruit against other local and statewide laboratory's that offer better compensation plans.

FY 2023: KBI Enhancement Package Number 3: Professional Staff Recruitment and Retention Incentive

The KBI professional staff include positions such as program consultants, public service administrators, senior administrative assistants, application developers, system and data architects, information security analysts, technical support consultants, and service desk technicians.

The KBI struggles to fill many of its professional staff positions due in part to the stringent hiring standards of the KBI, the lack of parity with market place value regarding compensation, competition with other state agencies and the private sector and geographic preferences of the applicants.

As a law enforcement agency, the background investigation conducted on each and every employee of the KBI is arduous and lengthy. The numerous steps necessary in the hiring process often dissuade applicants who can get hired elsewhere and begin working immediately.

The KBI is a professional state law enforcement agency that is competing for employees against the food industry that is offering competitive wages to that of the KBI. A KBI senior administrative assistance starts out earning \$12.66 per hour. According to the INDEED employment website, positions of a warehouse operator, grocery store associate and delivery driver in Topeka, KS, all have starting salaries offered at \$15.00 per hour and above¹. One fast food restaurant is starting employees at \$13.00 per hour².

¹ Indeed Website: [Indeed Retail Jobs, Employment in Topeka, KS | Indeed.com](#)

² Ibid

Professional staff employed in similar positions with agencies of parity in other states on average earned a higher yearly salary than KBI employees. The pay differences demonstrate the KBI is below market value in the salaries offered to its professional staff.

Therefore the KBI is requesting a **10% salary enhancement for all professional staff** to assist with the recruitment and retention of these critical positions to the operation and successful achievement of the KBI's mission.

Many of the professional staff positions are equivalent to positions found at other state agencies in Kansas. In order to recruit those individuals who exemplify an unwavering character and the ethical and integrity standards expected of KBI employees, the KBI must increase the starting salary for their employees. These individuals will be expected to pass a polygraph examination and a background investigation prior to the employment with the KBI. Few if any other state agencies have such stringent requirements to be employed. The KBI must find a way to attract candidates that can pass such rigorous standards.

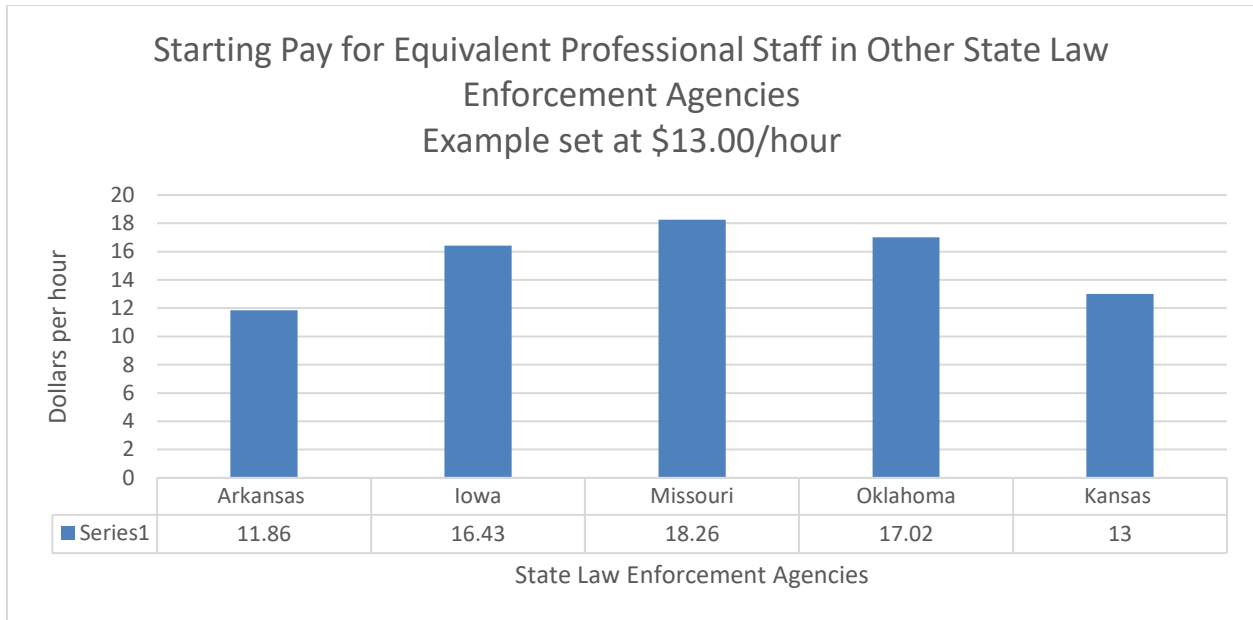
The challenges to recruitment are seen within several different KBI divisions employing professional staff. For example, the Information Services Division is currently operating with a 10% deficit in Full Time Employees (FTE) and the Information Technology and Communications Division is currently operating at 40% deficit in FTE's. The KBI must offer wages that will not only compete with other state agencies as well as private industry organizations in Topeka, KS, but will help draw those applicants who want to exemplify the meaning of the word "professional". Information Technology is a complex field that requires extensive training, application, and dedication. Often times the salaries offered to those who work in Information Technology for private companies are far above that which is offered through state service. Understandably, the State of Kansas will cannot compete for applicants against private companies that compensate their Information Technology employees extensively.

Unfortunately, salary is even more critical when discussing the KBI's ability to retain Information Technology personnel. Much like our Forensic Scientists, applicants will come to the KBI to receive the training they need to work in the Information Technology field only to leave KBI service for a much higher pay once they have received the training. Increasing the starting salary for the professional staff will help to recruit and retain Information Technology staff.

Over the past year the KBI has lost three Information Technology employees to private companies that paid significantly higher wages, and in at least one instance; for reportedly less work responsibilities.

The KBI must raise salaries to a fair market value as compared to similar state law enforcement agencies in other states. Figure 9 provides a graph demonstrating an example of the difference in professional staff hourly rate between the KBI and other state law enforcement agencies.

Figure 9.



In comparing similar job performances between professional staff at the KBI to agencies of parity in Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Oklahoma, the following observations were made:

- KBI ranked fourth out of the five agencies in regard to salaries
- Other than one reviewed position, Arkansas was equal to or slightly less than KBI on starting salary with an average of \$1.14 per hour per hour less than the KBI.
- Professional positions with the Iowa Department of Public Safety had a higher salary than the KBI with an average pay of \$3.43 per hour more than the KBI.
- Professional positions with the Missouri Department of Public Safety had a higher salary than the KBI with an average increase of \$5.26 per hour more than the KBI.
- At the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, the starting salary for professional staff was approximately \$4.02 per hour above the KBI starting salary.
- The difference in the average starting salary for the professional staff in Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Oklahoma is approximately \$3.09 per hour. In other words, the KBI's average starting salary is approximately \$3.00 per hour lower than other state law enforcement agencies.

The KBI endeavors to maintain a vacancy level below 5% as compared to established optimal staffing levels. Over the past four fiscal years, the KBI has failed to maintain an optimal staffing level as demonstrated by the following vacancy levels:

FY 2017	15% vacancy level
FY 2018	18% vacancy level
FY 2019	17% vacancy level
FY 2020	15% vacancy level

These staffing shortages are a direct result of the difficulties experienced by the KBI with recruitment, hiring, and retention of its professional staff. Adjusting the professional staff compensation will help the KBI realize and maintain an optimal staffing level of below 5%.

According to Trading Economics, the annual inflation rate in the United States accelerated to 7.0% in the last December 2021³.

In order to compete against other state agencies for qualified applicants who can successfully pass the stringent background requirements expected of KBI employees, contend with location challenges that exist for technology jobs, an increasing inflation rate, and assist with the recruitment and retention of employees at a fair market value, the KBI requests funding for a 10% salary adjustment for the agency's professional staff.

In summary, I encourage the legislature to take the opportunity we currently have to invest in the dedicated Special Agents, Forensic Scientists, and Professional Staff of the KBI. With the rising crime rate in Kansas and the increase in requests for assistance, the mission of the KBI has never been more important. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today regarding our on-going challenges of recruitment and retention and once again thank you for your support.

³ [United States Inflation Rate | 2022 Data | 2023 Forecast | 1914-2021 Historical \(tradingeconomics.com\)](https://tradingeconomics.com)