

Friday, March 13, 2009

These Baltimore-area companies are adding staff —

by Scott Dance, Staff

Is anybody out there hiring? Unemployment keeps rising.

The national rate hit 8.1 percent in February. And more layoffs keep making headlines.

But for those companies that see an upside — some sort of demand or opportunity driving growth — there are jobs to be filled.

For many businesses that are actually growing, the driver is government spending. While it's still early in the process, some of it is an echo of the \$787 billion federal stimulus package passed last month.

Other businesses are growing through ongoing government spending in areas like anti-terrorism or information security.

Meanwhile, the downturn has become an opportunity for some businesses to grab market share from competitors weakened by the economy.

The *Baltimore Business Journal* looked for those companies that are hiring 20 or more new employees. Among them are:

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

The region's largest health insurer is investing in its information technology infrastructure to improve processing of claims doctors file when their patients receive treatment. And the company is seeking IT workers to help the process, spokesman Kevin Patrick Kane said.

CareFirst has 28 positions listed in Canton, Columbia and Owings Mills, as well as Washington, D.C., many of them for network design and integration. The company could hire more than one person per position.

While President Barack Obama's administration has put an emphasis on electronic health records, CareFirst's networking improvements aren't directly related, Kane said. But in the coming year, that priority could mean jobs at firms that work in health care IT.

Force 3 Inc.

The federal government is continuing to ramp up IT spending as well, and Force 3 is looking to fill about 30 positions in its Crofton headquarters and on-site with contracts in the Washington area and other parts of the country, said Margarita Berman, the company's director of recruiting.

The majority of the company's work is with the federal government, and with new contracts coming up, it has openings for network engineers and sales people who can work directly with the government.

State Employees Credit Union

The credit union, better known as SECU, has recently opened two new branches in Timonium and Annapolis, with plans for another in Bel Air. And company leaders said they see room for continued growth as consumers look for lower loan rates and more security than they might find at a commercial bank.

Each branch has a staff of about a dozen, and the Bel Air location is hiring for all jobs, said Joseli Wright, senior manager responsible for sales.

As SECU works to manage the effects of the financial crisis, the company is also hiring risk managers to work in collections, said Rod Flowers, SECU vice president of human resources. On average, the company brings in three new employees each week, Flowers said.

SoBran Inc.

Amos Otis, CEO of the Dayton, Ohio-based company, said SoBran is working to stay ahead of significant opportunities it sees from the stimulus package, and it may already be seeing an upswing thanks to the federal Base Realignment and Closure Act that is adding tens of thousands of jobs to the state's military bases.

SoBran has about 40 openings at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Harford County, largely for mail screeners checking for dangerous substances. The company focuses on engineering and technical services.

It also expects growth in its business supporting biomedical research. SoBran is expecting 50 to 60 new jobs starting in the summer and going through the rest of the year at a new facility at the Science + Technology Park near [Johns Hopkins Hospital](#). With Obama's lift of a ban on federal embryonic stem cell research funding, SoBran expects more opportunities to work in research.

All-Pro Placement

With accounting being one of the so-called “recession-proof” careers, All-Pro partners Jennifer Quinn and Nancy Kelbaugh have seen strong demand in the field. All-Pro is a staffing company that fills jobs in administrative, insurance and accounting jobs.

And while late last year and into January, demand was slow, orders for as many as 10 to 15 people have been coming in more frequently.

Much of the placement has been for temps in the past, but they are also finding more temp jobs turning into permanent positions for companies that find the money in their budgets.

All-Pro has had about a dozen open positions over the past two weeks.

Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

The Johns Hopkins lab is still getting a boost from government spending on antiterrorism measures after Sept. 11, 2001, human resources manager Ned Aull said. The lab is adding 150 to 200 new positions this year.

Plus, although attrition has slowed because of the economy, the lab expects to hire up to 500 people total this year including turnover, Aull said.

Work is focused in cyberwarfare and information security, as well as in the development of technology to respond to possible chemical or biological warfare threats, he said. And while much of that work requires advanced degrees, as many as 100 of the new hires will be recent college graduates, Aull said.

CACI International Inc.

Among the newest business developments in the Aberdeen Proving Ground area is CACI, which signed a 60,000-square-foot lease at the first building of Opus East LLC’s project there late last year. That building means new employees, said Larry Clifton, senior vice president of recruiting and work force planning.

The Arlington, Va.-based company currently has 51 jobs open in the Baltimore area for work in logistics, telecommunications, engineering, systems administration and information security.

Over the next few years, CACI is expecting to hire as many as 250 more, Clifton said. It recently laid off 100 workers when it was passed over for a [Social Security Administration](#) contract in Woodlawn.

The company also does work at Maryland’s other military bases, and is seeking intelligence analysts and software developers at Fort George G. Meade in Anne Arundel County.

Greater Baltimore Medical Center

GBMC has 100 to 125 job openings at any given time, and while many of them are for nurses or other training-heavy roles, many are more entry- to mid-level, said Peggy Collier, director of work force planning for the Towson hospital.

The hospital, which employs 3,500, is seeking secretaries and other clerical roles and is also filling entry-level jobs in food service and transportation. GBMC, like many other Baltimore-area hospitals, is also hiring medical and service techs, which require one to two years of training, as well as experienced nurses.

Collier said the hospital expects to process 40,000 job applications this year.