



Job Market Woes: More Funding, Stability Needed for Turnaround

By Angela Gabriel
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The biopharma job market likely won't turn around until 2026, according to two industry experts. Both cited a need for more investment and noted the impact of uncertainty on the industry.

The biopharma job market is unlikely to turn around this year, according to two industry experts who cited a need for more investment and regulatory predictability as key factors to a hiring increase.

“I expect 2026 will be the real inflection point,” said Audrey Greenberg, CEO and founder of AG Capital Advisors, a strategic advisory firm. “The election year, uncertainty last year and the capital markets conditions—coupled with sort of inflation concerns and global trade and geopolitical risks—are all sort of making folks stop and stare, like rubberneckers during a car crash.”

Greenberg noted that emerging biotech and early-stage research and development hiring are still slow and will probably lag until the markets fully recover and rebound.

Based on *BioSpace* data for April, overall biopharma hiring activity is down year over year. There were 8% fewer job postings live on the website last month than the year prior.

Ira Leiderman, healthcare managing director at investment banking firm Cassel Salpeter & Co., which primarily handles mergers and acquisitions, said there’s a low chance hiring will turn around in 2025. Echoing Greenberg, he noted that just as the job market looked like

it would get better, it was hit with uncertainty on the macro level with the economy and political situation and the micro level for biotech. Certainty must come back for the situation to improve, he said.

Leiderman noted that it's possible the biopharma job market will turn around after the midterm elections in 2026. If the House and Senate flip, he explained, President Donald Trump may not be able to run the country by fiat and executive orders.

"Right now, Congress is not doing their job, in my opinion, and they're getting steamrolled," Leiderman said.

Investment Key Factor in Turnaround

For the biopharma job market to turn around, there needs to be more capital deployment, according to Greenberg.

"Funding is still very selective," she said. "A lot of capital is sitting on the sidelines. We need recovery in the IPO markets, and then that will allow for the redeployment of capital into early-stage companies and late-stage ventures. So, the cycle of capital needs to increase in momentum, starting with the IPO market opening up."

A recent *BioSpace* [article](#) noted that more capital left biotech than entered the sector in 42 of 52 weeks of 2024.

Greenberg noted there are some bright spots for investment, citing Philadelphia and New Jersey as examples. According to CBRE data, between 2019 and 2024:

- Philadelphia life sciences companies secured more than \$6.5 billion in venture capital funding, the eighth-most in the world.
- Greater New York City/New Jersey metropolitan area life sciences businesses received roughly \$12.5 billion of VC funding, the fifth-largest amount globally.

Leiderman's thoughts on investment aligned with Greenberg's, as he noted that the flow of funds into biotech has decreased and venture capital activity has dried up.

"There are funds with a lot of money that are holding back, and they're keeping dry powder for their portfolio companies," Leiderman said. "We're not seeing a lot of transactions getting closed."

Biopharma VC funding dropped 20% year over year in the first quarter, from \$8.1 billion to \$6.5 billion.

As to what could spark a change in investment, Leiderman said, "I think when we see people feeling good about the stock market without the crazy volatility that we've been seeing over the past

month, people may start saying, ‘Well, maybe now it’s time to start looking at transactions and still putting some money to work.’”

Regulatory Predictability, M&A Activity Also Critical

Regulatory predictability is another factor in the job market turning around, according to Greenberg. She cited recent changes at the FDA as part of what’s holding the market back. Those changes include 3,500 FDA staffers being let go in April, leading to drug review delays.

Leiderman also pointed toward a lack of predictability where the FDA is concerned, noting “you have successful Phase III trials, registration studies, and you file your BLA or your NDA, and then who knows how long it’s going to take to get out of the agency.”

In addition, he said cuts to research funding at universities could become a hiring issue, as the biopharma industry sources scientists from those academic institutions, from grads and postdocs to junior and senior faculty.

“If that gets cut back, we’re killing the farm club, right?” Leiderman said. “We’re going to have empty benches.”

The final factor Greenberg cited for the biopharma job market turning around is more mergers and acquisitions.

“We’ve seen a lot of partnerships, but Big Pharma—and they’re the ones with all the dollars—is still a bit cautious,” she said. “But I think it’ll really only be a matter of time before pipeline gaps force aggressive buying and partnering.”

Although M&A value in biopharma rose 101% in the first quarter of the year compared to the final three months of 2024, policy challenges prompted pharmas to turn to less risky licensing transactions.

Finding the Right Rhythm for Growth, Hiring

How companies pace growth moving forward is also important to the biopharma job market, according to Greenberg. She noted that businesses should avoid not only underhiring but also overhiring, which can lead to layoffs.

“Not too hot, not too cold,” Greenberg said. “You need to hire against real inflection points and avoid ‘short-termism,’ is a phrase I like to use.”

She noted that when it comes to hiring, timing can be particularly difficult for those running a manufacturing operation, such as a contract development and manufacturing organization. When CDMOs are trying to sell contracts to clients, she explained, they

need to prove that they already have the capability, which means hiring a bit ahead of need.

“You need some people, say, six months door to floor, meaning from when you hire someone to when they’re actually operational and fully functional on the manufacturing floor,” Greenberg said.

Leiderman’s recommendation for how companies can pace growth was that they should focus on programs with the highest likelihood of success. He noted that data talks.

“If you have good data, it’s going to attract people who are going to want to fund that,” he said.

Putting It Into Perspective: It’s Not 2022, but That’s a Positive

As biopharma professionals keep an eye on the job market, funding and federal actions that impact the industry, Greenberg offered a positive take on the situation.

“This isn’t 2022, and that’s a good thing,” she said. “We’re in a more rational market. Emerging biotech is leaner, making good decisions. Big Pharma is incredibly disciplined, and cell and gene therapy, AI and manufacturing are scaling with purpose. So, I wouldn’t call it

bad. I call it healthier and smarter hiring for the next wave of innovation.”