Office of the Independent Budget Analyst

Civil Service Hiring Process: Vetting Internal City Issues

Presentation to the

Economic Development &

Intergovernmental Relations Committee

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- IBA report 14-01, released January 7, 2014, focuses on vetting hiring departments' suggestions for hiring process improvements.
- It also covers the following areas which have been discussed as part of the R&ED Committee's ongoing examination of the hiring process:
  - A comparison of average timeframes for steps in the hiring process; and
  - Discussion of the potential for further utilization of NEOGOV technology.

IBA Report 14-01

14-01 does not explore the reasons for the lengthy timeframes on the part of the hiring departments.

- We would note some areas that should continue to be monitored, such as workforce planning/staffing plans, as well as ensuring managers and supervisors are proactive in the hiring process.

- As prescribed by the City Charter, the CSC appoints the Personnel Director and supervises the selection, promotion, and removal of all classified City employees.

- Changes to Civil Service Rules must be vetted by the CSC before being approved by the City Council.

- CSC's primary purpose is to safeguard against a "spoils" system, whereby influence rather than merit determines who gains City employment.

- A stated policy of the CSC: equal opportunity be afforded to all applicants in the course of interviewing and selecting employees.

Personnel Department Issues

Over the past couple years, the Personnel Department's workload has increased due to a number of factors:

- Replacement of the Personnel Application Tracking System (PATS), which was utilized for recruitment, with NEOGOV.

- A large influx of applications (at times, thousands for one position) with the posting of jobs on GovernmentJobs.com.

- An increase in information processing workload with the implementation of SAP – Personnel reallocated four existing positions to handle personnel administration and position control.

- The addition of new departmental positions to the City's budget with the recent economic recovery.
  - Hiring increases can be seen in the data over the past three fiscal years: 521, 725 and 969 employees were hired in FY 2011, 2012 and 2013, respectively.
  - More hiring and recruitments are anticipated to occur in the future with further economic recovery and as the aging workforce retires.
- Close collaboration with the Police Department over the past nine months on hiring process improvements.

The Personnel Department has indicated that staffing increases are necessary in order to continue to make improvements and keep up with the increased workload.

- In April 17, 2013 memorandum to Councilmember Lightner, the Personnel Director requested nine new positions for this purpose.

- One of these positions was approved in the FY 2014 budget.

- *The IBA recommends that the City Council consider Personnel's request during the upcoming FY 2015 budget process.*

- Table of average hiring timeframes appears on the following slide – Personnel Department data.

- The approach used by the City Auditor's Office to determine average hiring timeframes in their November 2013 audit is different from Personnel's.

  – Auditor's timeframes based on the applicant's perspective (the average time for the applicant to acquire a job), from submission of the application to the start work date.

  – We feel Personnel's average timeframes better reflect the average length of time for departments to fill positions (once a request to start the process has been made to Personnel).

Average Hiring Timeframes

All City Positions Except Police Safety

	Hiring Process Step (in Average Number of Days)	First ten months of CY 2013*	CY 2012*
	*When Recruitment Needed (Certified List **Not Available**)*		
1	Days between hiring department request for certified list and provision of certified list by Personnel Department	63	100
2	Days from hiring department receipt of certified list to background initiation (includes candidate interviews)	59	40
3	Days from background initiation to background clearance received by hiring department	8	12
	Total	*130*	*152*
	*When No Recruitment Needed (Certified List **Available**)*		
A	Days between hiring department request for certified list and receipt of such list	6	17
B	Days from hiring department receipt of certified list to background initiation (includes candidate interviews)	59	40
C	Days from background initiation to background clearance received by hiring department	8	12
	Total	*73*	*69*
	Additional Days to Start Work Date		
-	Days from background clearance date to start work date	24	27

*Timeframes are based on hiring requests during the respective calendar years.

IBA Recommendations

- Hiring freezes, reorganizations, and economic conditions can interrupt recruitments that are in progress which can skew average timeframes.
  - Due to these issues, which confound the data, the Personnel Department and hiring departments should endeavor to continually improve controllable processes as well as set performance targets.
- *IBA Recommendation Related to Average Timeframes for the Hiring Process:*
  - ***We recommend the City set performance targets, for both Personnel and hiring departments' steps in the hiring process.***

Recommendations for Solutions Working Group:

- *The City create a working group of key departments, along with the Personnel Department, for constructive dialogue and collective solutions to city-wide hiring challenges.*

- *In addition to some of the issues we vetted in report 14-01, other issues to be addressed could include, but are not limited to, the following:*

  - *Having a timely opportunity to discuss questions and issues regarding the process as they surface;*

Recommendations for Solutions Working Group (con't):

– *Prioritizing city-wide recruitments, considering the limited capacity of the Personnel Department;*

– *Expanding predictive recruiting (starting the recruitment process for a job classification four to six weeks before a current list expires) for highly used positions and high turnover positions; and*

– *Considering ways to make hiring and processing forms more user-friendly.*

Recommendations for Solutions Working Group (con't):

- *Personnel staff and the solutions working group of key departments return to the Committee on Budget and Government Efficiency by April 2014 with their initial thoughts on recommendations made in this report, including the identification of any budget impacts for FY 2015.*

- *Transition to NEOGOV (beginning calendar year 2011) has involved a learning curve.*

- *Some NEOGOV functions still not being utilized, such as the hiring manager portal.*

- *Hiring manager portal could be used to create/route requisitions to Personnel, generate email/hard copy notices to candidates, including those related to scheduling job interviews and job offer letters.*

- *It could also create other efficiencies:*

  - *Dissemination of candidate lists (to hiring departments) – via direct data access.*

  - *Communication of candidate outcomes (from hiring departments) – via direct data entry.*

Recommendations Related to Utilizing NEOGOV Technology:

- *That the Personnel Department move forward with expanding utilization of NEOGOV technology, and that Personnel either identify funding or be provided funding in the very near future to accomplish the following:*

  - *Software changes for more efficient tracking of hiring timeframes (estimated at $2,000-$3,000); and*

  - *Consulting services to help determine how the City can optimize the use of NEOGOV, including the hiring manager portal (estimated at $5,000).*

Recommendations to the Personnel Department for Improving Paper-Based Processes:

- *Create a quick reference document that lists all Personnel Department forms requiring original signatures/hard copies, and under which conditions original signatures are required;*

- *Have discussions with the City's external auditors and key departments (such as Office of the Comptroller, Office of the City Attorney, Office of the City Auditor and Human Resources) to clarify which forms require original signatures;*

Recommendations to the Personnel Department for Improving Paper-Based Processes (con't):

- *Consider acceptance of a singular form (instead of requiring multiple forms) when a hiring department requests certified lists for multiple job classifications with respect to a vacant position; and*

- *Ensure hiring departments are aware that Personnel can provide eligible candidates' information in Excel format, which can include email addresses.*

- The City's information processing system (SAP) does not accommodate different approval levels (for example, City departments, Financial Management and Personnel Department approvals) for various transactions such as:
  - Moving positions among budgetary organization units; creating an organization unit; moving employees from one position to another; creating a (limited) position; entering a promotion; and applying a merit increase.

- Because various approval levels are required as part of the City workflow but are not programmed in SAP, a manual paper process has been created to acquire the necessary approvals.

- Information is provided on fillable PDF forms, with necessary departmental and FM approvals, and submitted to Personnel for review and data entry.

- The creation of an electronic workflow process that would save time, reduce paper processing and avoid duplicate data entry would be of benefit to City departments and Personnel.

- Potential solution for the workflow/approval process: use SAP technologies to generate an electronic form, incorporating built-in security features.

- Once the appropriate level of approval for a particular transaction is made, the information from the form would automatically feed into the system.

Recommendations for More Efficient Electronic Workflow Processes:

- *A working group be created (consisting of the Office of the Comptroller, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), FM and Personnel, as well as representatives from some larger departments) to study the feasibility and cost/benefit of the following:*

  - *Using the SAP technologies to automate a number of SAP transaction processes that currently use paper-based approvals.*

  - *Creating enhanced workflow for the current batch processing (to reduce Personnel's data analysis time).*

Recommendations for More Efficient Electronic Workflow Processes (con't):

- *The working group study the feasibility and cost/benefit of creating an electronic workflow and approval process for forms that are not conducive to electronic transmission into SAP, such as the Position Classification Request form.*

Recommendations to the Personnel Department for Streamlining Other Processes:

- *Continue to look for redundancies in the review process and eliminate them; and*

- *Explore the possibility of obtaining all required employment documentation in conjunction with the fingerprinting appointment.*
  - Including Federal form I-9 with appropriate ID presented, photo for subsequent employee ID, oath of office etc.
  - This would allow departments to easily request an employee ID number upon background clearance, which would allow the IT security group to promptly set up a new employee's access to the City's systems.

Recommendations to Personnel for Resources for Hiring Departments:

- *Consider expanding on information in last October's PowerPoint training document for hiring departments (which is currently included on Personnel's website within the City's intranet).*
  - *Such a document could provide direct links to the forms being described. This would give the hiring departments' staff more of the step-by-step information they have been seeking.*
- *Consider providing additional information, including ideas suggested by hiring departments, in one location on Personnel's website.*

Recommendations to Personnel for Resources for Hiring Departments (con't):

- *Additional website information could include:*
  - *Sample letters (such as an offer letter) and informational documents (such as how to make fingerprinting arrangements), so that department staff that do not hire often have a reference.*
  - *A link to Human Resources information on hiring of provisional employees (returning retirees).*
  - *A link to information on the Citywide Volunteer Program – which is overseen by HR.*
  - *Steps for bringing a new hire onboard.*
  - *A checklist of forms and policy documents that need to be distributed to the new hire on his/her first day.*

Other Recommendations for Resources for Hiring Departments:

- *Risk Management explore opportunities to provide hiring departments with more comprehensive employee benefits reference documents for new hires who have never worked for the City in the past.*

- *Hiring departments proactively consult with Risk Management early in the hiring process regarding employee benefits information.*

Recommendation for Evaluating Approval of Limited Positions:

- *Human Resources and Financial Management should continue to evaluate this issue on a case-by-case basis.*
  - A concern repeatedly expressed is when departments know of pending retirements but, for budgetary reasons, FM will not allow Personnel to create a limited position to jump start the hiring of a replacement employee.
  - The pending retiree must have an official retirement date before a position can be created.
  - Without position control to protect the budget, ultimately these types of limited positions can lead to budget creep, impacting other service areas.

Recommendations to Personnel for Competitive Process Considerations – to Improve Candidate Quality:

- *Coordinate with hiring departments to initiate a competitive recruitment at the same time a conference or job fair of interest to a hiring department is occurring;*

- *Continue to work with hiring departments to determine when minimum qualifications are sufficient versus when more specific departmental qualifications can be included in job postings; and*

- *Continue to communicate with hiring departments regarding times when an open recruitment may be more appropriate than a promotional recruitment.*

Other Recommendations for Competitive Process Considerations:

- *The hiring departments explore opportunities to attend job fairs, considering instances where departmental attendance may ease the Personnel Department's work load; and*

- *Hiring departments continue to bring forward ideas for changes in the competitive process, with the understanding that such changes will likely require legal review, as well as review by the Civil Service Commission, and possibly meet and confer with all impacted employee organizations.*

Recommendations for Gathering and Utilizing Feedback to Improve the Process:

- *New hires should be surveyed as a matter of practice, and results should be compiled and shared with the Committee on Budget and Government Efficiency.*

  – *Feedback should be considered for making hiring process improvements.*

Recommendations for Gathering and Utilizing Feedback to Improve the Process (con't):

- *City departments should provide periodic evaluations of the overall hiring process. We suggest that such evaluations be vetted by the solutions working group discussed on slide 11.*

- *The Chief Operating Officer could also create a procedure for evaluating the hiring departments' portion of the hiring process. Information acquired could also be vetted by the solutions working group with the goal of improving the process and setting performance targets.*

Concluding Remarks

- With the complexities involved in hiring, the potential for further process improvements is high.

- In some cases it can be the "little things" that make a big difference:

  – For example, sending hiring departments Excel spreadsheets with the certified candidates' information, including email addresses (which Personnel has implemented), will make the process more efficient.

- In other cases, process change will be harder:

  – For example, trying to determine the feasibility and cost/benefit of automating certain processes.

- It will take time to modify procedures and enhance the current processes; and thus the work needs to be prioritized.

Questions?