



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

DATE: January 8, 2014

TO: Honorable Members of the Audit Committee

FROM: Eduardo Luna, CIA, CGFM, City Auditor
Office of the City Auditor

SUBJECT: Performance Audit of the Personnel Department (OCA-14-010): San Diego Fire-Rescue Department and San Diego Police Department Responses to Audit Recommendations

The Performance Audit of the Personnel Department (OCA-14-010) was presented to the Audit Committee on December 5, 2013. Following discussion of the item, Chairman Faulconer requested that the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (Fire-Rescue) and the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) provide written responses to the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) regarding how specific recommendations in the audit report would affect the departments' respective specialized hiring practices. Fire-Rescue's response is included as Attachment 1 and SDPD's response is included as Attachment 2 to this memorandum. Key issues outlined in the departments' responses and OCA's clarifications are set forth below.

1. Enhanced Applicant Screening Filters (Audit Recommendation #1): Both Fire-Rescue and SDPD indicated general agreement with the recommendation to consider implementing additional or enhanced screening filters in order to narrow applicant pools to the most qualified candidates. Fire-Rescue noted that the application of highly desirable qualifications (as opposed to broader minimum qualifications) could be used as a screening tool in advance of written testing for Fire Recruit hiring. Additionally, SDPD indicated it would be in favor of narrower screening filters to be used in the first step of the hiring process as a precursor to candidates registering to take the written exam.

However, SDPD noted concerns about using the full Pre-Investigative Questionnaire (PIQ) as an initial screening tool. OCA agrees with SDPD on this point and the report should have been clearer regarding the purpose of including the PIQ example in the report Appendix C. Utilizing the 52-page questionnaire at the outset of the hiring process for all applicants would indeed create an untenable workload. To clarify, our recommendation pertains to enhancing screening filters generally. While we agree that it is not practicable to utilize the full PIQ as an initial screening tool, we maintain that using a few select, "non-negotiable" questions from the PIQ (for example, questions pertaining to criminal convictions and illicit drug use) early in

the application process would be an additive element in helping narrow the applicant pool to the most qualified candidates. The audit team identified this as a successful practice employed in other municipalities' law enforcement recruitment efforts. Additionally, our report notes the potential benefits of utilizing enhanced applicant screening filters for other, non-public safety job classifications.

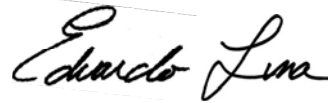
2. Establishing Target Timeframes for the Various Phases of the Hiring Process, Including the Length of Time Job Announcements Remain Open (Audit Recommendation #2): Fire-Rescue and SDPD noted specific needs and circumstances under which job announcements may need to remain open for a protracted period. OCA fully acknowledges and understands the unique aspects of Fire-Rescue and SDPD hiring processes. It is important to note that the audit recommendation deliberately includes language stating that Personnel should establish target timeframes "*differentiated as needed for specific classifications.*" The inclusion of that language is intended to give Personnel maximum flexibility in addressing hiring departments' specific needs. Moreover, Audit Recommendations #5 and #6 specifically recommend that hiring departments assess current and future workforce needs as part of a City-wide workforce development plan. Finally, we maintain that Fire-Rescue's and SDPD's specialized needs should not preclude Personnel from establishing target timeframes for the various phases of the hiring process, as determined by hiring departments' specific needs.

3. Hiring Departments Submission of Requests for Certification (Audit Recommendation #4): The recommendation is intended to minimize Personnel staff time spent on recruiting for positions before hiring departments are prepared to hire. As noted in our report, hiring departments increase the risk of losing applicants to employment elsewhere due to a variable or elongated recruitment process. Fire-Rescue indicated that it subscribes to this recommendation, but noted extenuating circumstances where it is more efficient and effective to submit Requests for Certification early in the hiring process in order to maintain hiring flexibility. OCA acknowledges Fire-Rescue's specialized needs in this regard. Nevertheless, we maintain that initiating Requests for Certification only when actively ready to hire would benefit the hiring process for other job classifications, subject to the specific needs of the hiring department.

OCA appreciates the additional input from Fire-Rescue and SDPD regarding the departments' specialized hiring needs. Our audit acknowledges that Fire-Rescue and SDPD have collaboratively made progress with Personnel in resolving issues that had been problematic in the past.

Our recommendations are not intended to impede that continued progress, but rather help provide Personnel with the flexibility necessary to address all City departments' hiring needs. While we acknowledge recent progress in the Civil Service hiring process, we maintain that implementing the audit recommendations will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's hiring processes and better position the City to address current and future human capital needs.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eduardo Luna". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Eduardo Luna
City Auditor

cc: Hadi Dehghani, Personnel Director
Stacey LoMedico, Assistant Chief Operating Officer
Javier Mainar, Fire Chief
William Lansdowne, Chief of Police
David Ramirez, Executive Assistant Police Chief
Shelley Zimmerman, Assistant Police Chief

Attachment 1: Fire-Rescue Response (Mainar), December 23, 2013

Attachment 2: SDPD Response (Zimmerman), December 23, 2013



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 23, 2013

TO: Eduardo Luna, Auditor

FROM: Javier Mainar, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Fire-Rescue Department's Response to Performance Audit of the Personnel Department's Hiring and Recruitment Process

During the December Audit Committee meeting it was requested that Fire-Rescue provide a written response to the above referenced performance audit. Below please find the Fire-Rescue Department's response to the six recommendations.

Recommendation #1:

In order to refine the applicant screening process, Personnel should:

Create additional screening filters to increase the number of qualified applicants while simultaneously decreasing the number of less qualified candidates for review.

Department Response: The Fire-Rescue Department will work with Personnel to further consider the application of screening filters that could trim the large applicant pool for Fire Recruit down to a more manageable number. Currently, the Department uses general MQs to qualify to take the written exam (3k-4k qualify). The screening filter then used is that the candidate must score in Category 1 to continue in the selection process (400-700). Highly desirable qualifications are then applied to arrive at 200-400 candidates for interviews. These highly desirable qualifications could be used as a screening tool in advance of written testing. This would only apply to the Fire Recruit hiring category as the Department's sworn promotions are all made from a rank ordered list.

Recommendation #2:

In order to decrease timelines within various phases of the hiring process, Personnel should:

Establish overall target timeframes based on the individual phases of the hiring process, differentiated as needed for specific classifications.

Department Response: *This recommendation addresses the work done by Personnel at the application level. Personnel and Fire-Rescue Department staff work to minimize the length of time an application period should be open and establish schedules for all our promotional processes to best meet the needs of the Department. Personnel has assigned a dedicated analyst for the Fire-Rescue Department and we have an agreement to start our Fire Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, and Fire Engineer processes six to eight months before the current list expires. Because the City uses an outside consultant to administer two of the exams listed above there are delays built into the process that are out of Personnel's control, such as the availability of the consultant, hotel space, and the use of outside raters. The Department will continue to work with Personnel on the selection process to decrease timelines where possible.*

Recommendation #3:

In order to continuously monitor performance, Personnel should:

Periodically evaluate and review its performance in meeting target timeframes to determine if opportunities for improvement exist.

Department Response: *This recommendation addresses Personnel's self-assessment of meeting their target timeframes and is outside Fire-Rescue purview.*

Recommendation #4:

In order to decrease timelines within the hiring department's portion of the hiring process, Personnel in collaboration with the Chief Operating Officer should:

Require that hiring departments not submit Requests for Certification forms until departments are ready to actively fill positions; and
Establish target timeframes for extending offers of employment upon receipt of referred candidates.

Department Response: *The Fire-Rescue Department currently subscribes to the recommendations made by the Auditor but in practice it sometimes appears there are long delays between certification to hiring. Due to the utilization of an Academy in the Fire-Rescue Fire Recruit hiring process it is more efficient to interview candidates from the same list one or more times or to select candidates for multiple academies from a single interview. This approach contributes to the length of time it takes between certification of a list and an offer being made to some candidates.*

In the initial interview process the Department will interview upwards of 400 candidates and make job offers shortly after. If the Department is approved for a second or third fire academy before the list expires, we may also conduct a second or third round of interviews, and many of the original candidates may be interviewed again. While this keeps a certification list open it is the most efficient/effective process. For the Fire Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, and Fire Engineer, the Department is provided a rank-ordered list which is valid for two years.

In order to minimize the effect of constant staffing on overtime, the Department reviews staffing needs monthly and promotes as needed. In order to begin hiring, the Department submits a Request for Certification to have names certified to the Department. As more promotions are needed, the Department requests to increase the certification to get the next names on the list. As there are many variables in the recruitment and promotional process such as budgetary constraints, retirements, and attrition to other agencies, the Department would prefer to maintain the flexibility in hiring as noted above in order to meet the needs of the City.

Recommendation #5:

In order to provide input to the City's workforce planning, the Chief Operating Officer should:

Direct all applicable hiring departments to assess current and future workforce needs. The results of these assessments should be communicated to Personnel for inclusion in ha workforce development plan.

***Department Response:** The Fire-Rescue Department stands ready to work with the Chief Operating Officer on this recommendation. The Fire-Rescue Department monitors anticipated vacancies and regularly meets with Personnel to discuss our hiring and promotional needs. If the Department is close to exhausting a current list before it expires, we communicate with Personnel the need to begin a new process as soon as possible in order to have a current list available at all times to meet our minimum staffing needs.*

Recommendation #6:

In order to tailor predictive recruiting efforts toward high-need, hard-to-fill, and ready-to-fill positions, Personnel should:

Develop a workforce development plan, based on input from the hiring departments that tailors predictive recruiting efforts toward high-need, hard-to-fill, and ready-to-fill positions.

***Department Response:** The Department is prepared to work with Personnel on how best to apply this recommendation to Fire-Rescue needs.*



Javier Mainar, Fire Chief

JM/kcb

cc: Scott Chadwick, Chief Operating Officer

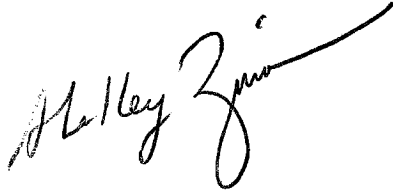


THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: December 23, 2013

TO: Matthew Helm, Audit Manager

FROM: Shelley Zimmerman, Assistant Police Chief 

SUBJECT: San Diego Police Department Response Regarding Recommendations Contained within the Performance Audit of the Personnel Department

On December 5, 2013, the Performance Audit of the Personnel Department was presented at the City Council Audit Committee. I was present during the meeting and answered several questions from the Audit Committee regarding the audit report and the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) hiring process.

Councilmember and Chair of the Audit Committee Kevin Faulconer asked me to prepare a written response to the audit report in regards to the results and recommendations that would affect the hiring process at the police department.

Over the last several months the SDPD and City Personnel have met to refine the hiring process. These meetings have gone well and numerous recommendations have been put in place that have reduced the time it takes for a prospective police recruit to begin the hiring process of becoming an SDPD officer.

On page 1 of the audit report there were two recommendations that would affect the hiring process at SDPD.

The first recommendation was to shorten the amount of time a job announcement would remain open. We would not be in favor of this recommendation for our police officer positions because of our constant recruiting. A large pool of candidates is needed in order to find candidates who meet all the requirements especially during the thorough background process. If the job announcement closes at anytime, qualified prospective candidates would not be allowed to apply which would negatively impact our ability to recruit the very best candidate in a competitive field for police officers.

The second recommendation discussed creating more narrow screening filters. We are in favor of this recommendation and it should be used as a precursor prior to signing up to take the written test which is the initial first step in the hiring process.

On page 41 of the Audit Report a recommendation is made to use the SDPD Pre-Investigative Questionnaire (PIQ) as part of the initial screening filters. SDPD is not in favor of this recommendation.

The PIQ is 52 pages long, contains 341 questions and takes approximately two (2) hours to complete. After completion, SDPD Background Sergeants screen the PIQ to determine who is eligible to continue in the process. Prior to 2013 the PIQ was administered to all applicants after the PAT regardless of pass or fail. In addition if the PAT was cancelled due to rain the PIQ was still conducted. This created a huge backlog of screening, heavy caseload of uncleared candidates and caused massive data entry for the background staff tracking systems.

What we found was although several candidates may have looked good on paper, they could not meet the physical demands of the job. In some cases, the background unit worked with candidates for months to complete their background; only to find they could not pass the PAT test even after many months of trying.

To alleviate this issue, SDPD worked with City Personnel and in early 2013, the PIQ is now only given to candidates who pass the PAT test. The PIQ is also given on the same day after successfully completing the PAT test. This has significantly increased efficiencies in the process and has greatly reduced the time to hire a qualified candidate. Therefore, to use the PIQ as a preliminary screening process would return to the old method which would greatly hinder our hiring efforts.

A question was asked regarding the status and funding of the computerized background tracking application system that was presented to the ITBLG.

As a point of reference SDPD starts background investigations on approximately 5,000 individuals annually for SDPD positions. These include sworn, civilian, intern and volunteer positions who require a security clearance for Department facilities or computer systems. Approximately 800 of these investigations are taken through the entire process. The remaining are unsuccessful at various stages of the process. It is anticipated that this number will increase drastically based on current hiring needs. The current process requires significant time and resources to collect, verify and process information with the existing background tracking application. The current system was developed in-house and has limited capabilities, which are now commonly available in commercial products and services. The Background Unit has identified vendors who can provide cost effective and convenient access for applicants through Web based portals for forms, questionnaires and other documents. The web processes can reduce paper handling, decrease the time required for processing, reduce the manual processes for collecting and verifying information, and enhance the management monitoring and reporting capabilities.

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Matthew Helm, Audit Manager

December 23, 2013

Funding has been identified in the FY2014 budget and the RFP is being finalized for submitting to Purchasing and Contracting to continue preparing the RFP for publication. Once the new tracking system has been implemented it will significantly reduce the amount of time it takes allowing our Background personnel more time to hire qualified applicants.

Shelley Zimmerman

Assistant Chief