



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2014 - 2015

PROCEDURES FOR HIRING
SOLANO COUNTY EMPLOYEES

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I. Summary

The Solano County Human Resources mission is to *provide the county with a well-qualified and well trained work force that reflects the diversity of the community, appropriately classified and equitably compensated and to develop and implement policies, procedures, and programs which promote a positive and productive work environment.*

The 2014-15 Solano County Grand Jury conducted an inquiry of the Solano County Human Resources Department (HR) to gain a better understanding of county hiring procedures and the length of time it takes to fill a vacancy. The hiring process is lengthy and results in a hiring pool of decidedly qualified candidates.

II. Introduction/Background

The Grand Jury conducted numerous interviews and reviewed various documents pertaining to Solano County HR policies and procedures, to better understand Solano County's hiring process and to determine if there were areas of concern that could cause a delay in the process.

III. Methodology

INTERVIEWED

- Members of the County Administrators Office (CAO)
- Members of the Human Resources Leadership (HR)
- Members of the Health & Social Services Department (HSS)
- A Former HSS Employee
- A Prospective Applicant for a County Position
- Several Human Resources Analysts

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Two County-wide Vacancy Reports
- New Requisition Guide for Hiring (Flowchart for hiring)
- Social Worker III Open Recruitment and Hiring Steps
- Office Assistant II Open Recruitment and Hiring Steps
- Clinic Physician Supervisor Open Recruitment and Hiring Steps
- Environmental Health Manager Recruitment and Hiring Steps

- 2014 Human Resources Goals
- Solano County Bargaining Units by Departments
- Human Resources Organizational Chart
- Vacant Positions and Average Lag Days

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

As a result of the 2009 economic downturn, there was a 25% staffing reduction in Solano County. Since that time, the county has been working under a “soft freeze” which is designed to minimize layoffs as the county recovers from the economic downturn. There are 37 departments within the county employing approximately 2,836 positions. As of March 2015, there are 236 vacant positions (including two HR analyst positions) resulting in a vacancy rate of 8.8%. Some of the county-wide vacant positions are not being filled because the workload may not support filling the positions at this time.

Currently, seven HR analysts are responsible for filling employee vacancies in 19 departments, containing 18 divisions. Various positions are represented by 15 unions and associations. Within the 15 unions and associations, there are different rules, regulations and guidelines that may affect the process; i.e., Civil Service rules. The analysts are responsible for filling each position as they are requested, as well as responding to additional requests by management. Of the seven analysts, three are assigned to the largest department in the county, Health & Social Services (HSS).

The average time to fill a position is 60 to 90 days. More complex positions may require more than 90 days. Positions such as Physicians and Psychiatrists are difficult to fill and retain due to factors such as pay, benefits and incentives. Private hospitals offer higher pay and better incentives; e.g., hiring bonuses, benefits packages etc.

To fill a position, the hiring manager submits a requisition to the Human Resources Department (HR). HR will review the requisition and forward it to the County Administrator’s Office (CAO) for review and approval by a CAO analyst. Once approved, the requisition is returned to HR to begin the recruitment process. This process seems simple, however in reality there are many steps in the process to be considered and executed before selecting a viable candidate. Some of the hiring steps may include:

Opening recruitment process

- Check for current eligibility list
- Conduct job analysis
- Develop job announcement
- Create recruitment plan
- Create advertising plan
- Set-up recruitment file

Closing recruitment process

- Identify subject matter expert
- Determine opening and closing dates of recruitment
- Determine applicable exams
- Establish oral board panel
- Certify names of applicants to hiring department
- Determine hiring interview dates

Selection process

- Candidates meeting the minimum requirements then go through the interview process.

Initial interview questions may include:

- Behavior characteristics
- Customer Service skills
- Multi-tasking skills
- Managing difficult situations

If a prospective candidate passes the initial interview, the next step is the hiring interview.

Hiring interview focuses on:

- Position applied for
- Job knowledge

As a result of the 2009 economic downturn, there was a reduction in HR staffing. Prior to the Grand Jury investigation of the HR department, there was a question as to whether the department was adequately staffed and if vacancies were filled in a timely manner. At the beginning of our investigation, it was surmised that the county's hiring process was deficient. Through our investigation we discovered that, in fact, the hiring process is quite adequate based on the parameters set forth by the many types of jobs in the county. With HR's current staffing level, there is no evidence that the process is unduly extended. However, as the Grand Jury conducted various interviews, it was apparent that a number of Solano County Department leadership and interviewees did not have a clear understanding of the hiring process.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

As a result of the 2009 economic downturn, there was a reduction in staffing in the Human Resources Department. Requests have been made to fill three vacant positions with only one filled.

Recommendation 1

The Human Resources Department immediately fill the two vacant positions in HR to bring the department to full complement to expedite the hiring process.

Finding 2

Some of the Solano County leadership other than the Human Resources Department do not have an accurate understanding of the hiring process.

Recommendation 2

Human Resources leadership should be more engaged in educating their peers about the complexities involved in the hiring process. The education will help stem some of the negative perceptions as to how HR performs its duties.

Comments

The hiring process can be justifiably lengthy because of its complexities.

Required Responses

Solano County Administrator Office (Findings All)
Solano County Human Resource Department (Findings All)

Courtesy Copies

Clerk, Solano County Board of Supervisors