

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors' Response

Case 21-05: County Staffing Challenges

The Grand Jury has requested responses from the Board of Supervisors to Findings 1 - 4 and 8 and to Recommendations 1 - 4 and 8. The Chief Administrative Officer was asked to respond to Findings 1 - 4 and 7-8 and Recommendations 1 - 4 and 7-8. The Human Resources Director was also asked to respond to Findings 5-6 and Recommendations 5-6.

Consistent with previous practice and pursuant to Board Policy A-11, the Chief Administrative Office is responsible for coordinating the County's response to the Grand Jury. Responses to the Grand Jury Report are directed by Board Policy A-1 1 and Penal Code 933.05. Accordingly, the Chief Administrative Office has reviewed and compiled the responses from all non-elected department heads into this Initial Draft Response for the Board's consideration.

FINDINGS

- F1. The County has historically set pay levels below the median of other counties, based on compensation studies; as of April 19, 2022, they have adjusted this upward to meet the median.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

- F2. The comparative compensation levels determined by the County include other California counties and the State of California, but do not include local private industry.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

- F3. Many employees see the County as a place to develop their skills and then leave for higher-paying positions in other counties or private industry, resulting in the County paying for training for which it does not receive the ongoing benefit.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

- F4. The County does not have knowledge of the cost of hiring a new individual, including the recruitment process, County training, and learning the role, duties, and responsibilities.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board is aware of various studies identifying the cost of turnover but does not have costs for each position/job classification in the county which would differ significantly depending on the role.

- F5. Due to the length of time required to complete the recruitment process, departments have lost potential candidates.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

There are exceptional situations where a recruitment has experienced significant delays, and a candidate has accepted another offer from a competing employer in the meantime. Most recruitments take approximately two months to complete (including the recruitment posting and application acceptance phase). There are several factors that may cause delays that are beyond the control of Human Resources, including delays in applicant response times, pre-employment medical exams, and background checks.

- F6. If there are not enough acceptable applicants for a position, the hiring department and the Human Resources Department can rewrite the specifications and advertise a revised position listing to attract more potential recruits.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The hiring department and the Human Resources Department can rewrite job specifications with Board of Supervisors approval and then advertise a revised position listing to attract more potential recruits; however, job specifications and, specifically, Minimum Qualifications are already inherently developed to create a baseline to screen for qualified applicants. Lowering the Minimum Qualifications solely to increase the number of applicants is not a good practice and creates risks, including attracting applicants who may not possess the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully perform the job. This could have a negative effect on the level of service that the public expects from the County, in addition to contributing to excessive turnover.

- F7. With the pandemic, the County is attempting to become more telework-friendly by allowing certain staff to work from home. This tends to be on a hybrid schedule, as determined by an employee's manager.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

While some departments may have delegated authority to the employee's manager to determine if an employee can telework, the Department Head is ultimately responsible for the final decision.

- F8. Many managers expressed that there is a lack of morale among staff due to low staffing levels contributing to burnout and more staff attrition.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with this finding.

The Board of Supervisors agrees we have lower staffing levels per capita than other counties in our region as published in the Recommended Budget book on an annual basis. The Board of Supervisors also agrees this is likely a contributing factor to burnout and more staff attrition; however, there are many factors that are in the control of the employee's manager that can be taken to improve morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide an annual recommendation to maintain, at a minimum, pay levels in the County at the calculated median total compensation, based on comparative analysis.

The recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Chief Administrative Officer regularly provides recommendations to the Board of Supervisors relative to compensation for all employees during labor negotiations with each of the bargaining units in order to achieve the Board's stated compensation philosophy. As a result, in 2022, the County was successful in reaching the median for most job classifications.

- R2. The Board of Supervisors should ensure that future compensation studies include pay levels only from Sacramento and Placer Counties and, where appropriate, similar classifications in local private industries.

The recommendation requires further analysis and staff should make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors no later than December 2022.

The County's Labor Management Committee is currently discussing changes to the compensation philosophy, one of which is to include pay levels only from Sacramento and Placer counties. Upon completing their analysis, a recommendation will be made to the Board of Supervisors for approval prior to December 2022.

- R3. The Board of Supervisors should direct staff to develop and implement policies that focus on employee retention as a priority within one year of the date of issue of this report.

This recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The County regularly reviews various policies and practices that focus on employee retention, and topics such as these are discussed with the Labor Management Committee. One such example of a policy to improve retention is the County's telework program.

- R4. The Board of Supervisors should commission a study into the true cost of recruiting and training new hires within one year of the date of issue of this report.

This recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Board of Supervisors agrees there is a cost associated with recruiting and training new staff and should do everything reasonable to reduce turnover. However, those costs will be different depending on the job classification and duties and using taxpayer dollars to pay for this study is not a wise use of funds that could be better spent in other areas.

- R5. The Human Resources Department should maintain ongoing lists of potential candidates for all positions to decrease time to bring in new employees and keep the application process for lower-level positions open on a continuous basis, within 90 days of the date of issue of this report.

This recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The County currently has just over 450 job classifications. Of those, 425 are currently allocated for use in Fiscal Year 2022-23. The Human Resources Department is not adequately resourced to run recruitments for all positions within 90 days and then maintain that many eligibility lists on an ongoing basis. Further, it is unclear what is intended by the term "lower-level position" or how it is defined.

The County's Personnel Rules currently allow difficult-to-fill positions to be recruited on a continuous basis, and Human Resources does that as necessary. Not every position is difficult-to-fill and running continuous recruitments for those that are not provides no benefit or advantage for the County or the applicants. While continuous recruitments may offer flexibility in referring qualified applicants to hiring departments as they come in, continuous recruitments can also have a detrimental impact on internet advertising. Most job

searches occur via the internet. The County currently advertises its open job postings on one of the largest government job websites, GovernmentJobs.com. Whenever a new job is posted, not only does it appear on Government Jobs, but several other web crawlers, such as Monster, Indeed and LinkedIn, pick up those new postings as well, exponentially increasing the number of views. Jobs that are posted continuously tend to drop off those web crawlers in favor of newer, fresher postings, thereby decreasing the views on continuous, or "stale," postings and negatively impacting the number of potential applicants.

The County's Personnel Rules currently allow an eligibility list to be used for 3 months, with an opportunity to extend the life of (he list upon request by an appointing authority for up to one year.

Human Resources strives to have a current list available for those job classifications that are used broadly across all departments and frequently recruited, such as the Office Assistant series, Administrative Technician, and Administrative Analyst, to name a few. This is done so hiring departments will have a list of candidates at the ready as unanticipated vacancies arise in these commonly used classifications. The promulgation and expiration of these lists are managed according to the County's Personnel Rules.

- R6. The Human Resources Department, in conjunction with County departments, should review that job descriptions are written to the lowest possible level for the position (especially recurring) to ensure the largest selection for that role, completed within 180 days of the date of issue of this report.

The recommendation has been implemented.

Human Resources already performs this function on an ongoing basis. There is currently a process in place that triggers a subsequent review and analysis of the entire job specification, including the Minimum Qualifications. The Minimum Qualifications are just that, the minimum qualifications based on the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the work. Human Resources regularly solicits input from department heads and hiring managers to ensure the job specifications align with the actual work performed, including the appropriate combination of education and experience delineated in the Minimum Qualifications section of the job specification.

Human Resources recognizes that in some circumstances it is appropriate to utilize substitution patterns when determining whether a candidate possesses the education and experience to be minimally qualified, which is referenced on our job specifications. When submitting a recruitment requisition to Human Resources, the hiring manager is proactively asked to confirm that the current job specification is accurate. If not, Human Resources works with the manager to update and make any necessary changes before ultimately going to the Board for approval of any revisions. Further, it should be noted that the compensation structure of classifications is directly aligned with the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the job, which are obtained through combinations of education and experience identified in the Minimum Qualifications, in combination with several other factors.

- R7. The Chief Administrative Officer, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, should expand the option of the hybrid telework model to as many positions as are practical within 180 days of the date of issue of this report.

This recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Telework opportunities are encouraged and available to all staff based on the determination of the Department Head. It is the responsibility of the Department Head, upon consideration of a number of factors associated with each position and employee, to determine if telework opportunities should be expanded or reduced in order to best meet the customer service needs of the department.

- R8. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Human Resources Department and elected department heads to implement a program to foster teamwork, and morale-building throughout the organization within 180 days of the date of issue of this report.

This recommendation should not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Asking the Human Resources Department to convene a meeting only with elected departments heads fails to receive input from more than half of the department heads who manage the majority of county employees. The County, through the executive leadership team of all department heads, will discuss and identify ways to foster teamwork and morale-building through the organization while recognizing it is ultimately the responsibility of each department head, both elected and appointed, to ensure their staff work in a manner consistent with the County's Core Value of collaboration.