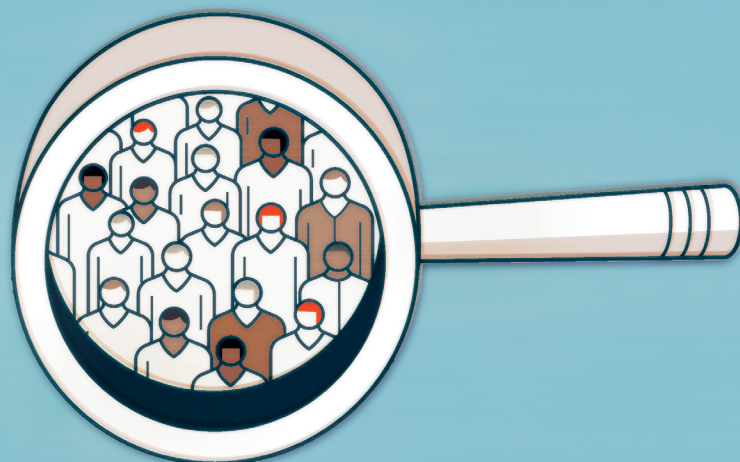


CASE STUDIES

Hiring Issues, Solved

In response to common hiring challenges reported by our members, GFOA conducted a series of case studies with eight municipalities that have grown their applicant pools and reduced hiring times through process change. Their stories reveal solutions that can help other governments overcome similar challenges.



GFOA has consistently heard about hiring issues from our members—few applicants, extended hiring timeframes, and the interaction of these issues leads to vacancies that sit open for months. To support our members in confronting these issues, GFOA identified eight local governments across the country that have increased their applicant pools and reduced hiring times through process change. GFOA spoke with staff from the City of Los Angeles, California; Nevada County, California; San Diego County, California; the City of Memphis, Tennessee; the City of Hollywood, Florida; the City of West Plains, Montana; Pierce County, Washington; and the Kitsap County Public Health District, Washington.

COMMON ISSUES

The governments all reported similar issues. Difficultly attracting qualified candidates was a problem for highly technical, certified, or law enforcement positions. But we found that in some cases, governments can make this worse. In Pierce County, for example, supplemental questions about experience on each job posting meant that new graduates were being removed from the applicant pool even though they would be able to do the job.

Extended hiring processes was also a problem. In Nevada County, applicants were being delayed for so long that by the time the county was ready to move forward, applicants had been able to find jobs elsewhere.

RESULTS

The case study governments were trying to address hiring issues in various ways, so results have also been varied—but all eight governments, despite different contexts, state laws, and political environments, have been able to make progress toward their own hiring goals. By adapting available solutions to their own contexts, GFOA member governments can also start to chip away at their hiring times and grow their workforces for the future.

SOLUTIONS

The case study governments implemented a wide variety of solutions to address their hiring challenges, but some common themes are:

Outreach to expand the candidate pool. Several case study governments reported a number of actions to encourage more applicants. The City of Los Angeles reported using not just the typical job fair booths, but also strategies including same-day-hire events where they interview

candidates and provide conditional offers for targeted positions.

Reduce barriers for applicants. Another common strategy was to make changes to job descriptions and application processes to stop qualified candidates from self-selecting out of the process. The Kitsap County Public Health District reviews job descriptions for any problem positions to remove barriers such as overly strict supplemental questions.

Review your process. Several governments emphasized the importance of detailed process analysis at the start of any project to address hiring time. Clearly laying out each step in the process will help in identifying steps that could be combined, eliminated, or done concurrently instead of sequentially.

Collaborate. Many governments noted that improving the relationship between Human Resources and client departments was a key part of their process improvements. Sharing responsibilities and giving lower-level staff more control over the process speeds things up and also gives these employees more of a stake in each recruitment. Some human resources staff also noted that changes can be piloted by eager departments and then rolled out to others once they've demonstrated success.



Pierce County, Washington

Population: 921,000

PROBLEM: Inconsistent hiring processes between government branches created barriers and delays that were exacerbated in 2020, especially for wastewater, civil engineering, and medical examiner positions.

SOLUTION: Recruiting was centralized through the Human Resources Department, with analysis of historical position data, holistic applicant evaluation, and specific strategy sessions for hard-to-fill positions.



Kitsap Public Health District, Washington

Population: 300,000

PROBLEM: When the pandemic hit, Kitsap Public Health District faced surging demand for public health services coupled with high turnover.

SOLUTION: The district embraced innovation and flexibility in hiring, expanding its recruitment outreach channels and streamlining staffing for early-stage interviews.



City of Los Angeles, California

Population: 4,000,000

PROBLEM: The City faced high vacancy rates, at times nearly 25% of its workforce, with difficulty recruiting for police, clerical, analyst, and specialized positions.

SOLUTION: City staff engaged in process mapping to streamline the hiring process, introduced alternative targeted hiring pathways, and hosted community-based hiring events.



San Diego County, California

Population: 3,000,000

PROBLEM: The one-two punch of population loss and difficulty attracting candidates to public service meant the County encountered difficulty hiring for positions including public health, public safety, and technical staff.

SOLUTION: The county deployed a three-prong strategy to strengthen its hiring processes, including pre-planning interview dates, introducing same-day offers, and allowing for walk-in applicants.



Solutions In Action

These eight success stories offer a variety of solutions to common hiring issues.

To learn more about the challenges they faced and lessons learned, visit gfoa.org/workforce2023.



Nevada County, California

Population: 100,000

PROBLEM: Because of excessively long delays, many applicants accepted private sector offers before the County could complete the hiring process.

SOLUTION: The County set a 60-day recruitment goal, sought key outside perspectives for process improvement and diagramming, and consolidated final staff approval into a single meeting.



City of West Plains, Missouri

Population: 12,500

PROBLEM: Like much of the nation, the city has had a difficult time recruiting for public service roles, specifically in the police department.

SOLUTION: A proactive scheduling process fast-tracks hiring timelines, and an employee training and advancement program helps hires learn while they earn—and advance quickly.



City of Memphis, Tennessee

Population: 620,000

PROBLEM: When the Great Resignation hit, City staff grappled with record staff turnover and evaporating applicant pools, especially for mechanics, executive-level finance positions, and summer staff.

SOLUTION: Staff enhanced collaboration between recruiters and departmental hiring managers, and compensation and talent management teams to create an internal culture of efficiency.



City of Hollywood, Florida

Population: 150,000

PROBLEM: The city struggled to replace employees in lower-paying and technical positions, with a limited applicant pool and stiff competition from private-sector industries.

SOLUTION: City staff added sign-on bonuses for hard-to-recruit positions, revised compensation packages, used technology to streamline hiring processes, and invested in online recruitment.