Solving Workforce Continuity through Improved Hiring and Better Retention

How the City of Hollywood accelerated hiring and focused on employee satisfaction

Beginning in 2020, the City of Hollywood, Florida struggled to hire quickly enough to replace staff who retired or resigned. This difficulty posed a significant challenge to the city's workforce continuity. To solve this problem, the city made use of technology for hiring, offered competitive benefits, and invested in employee satisfaction. Here is how city staff were able to implement these changes to improve outcomes.

CITY OF HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

POPULATION: 150,000

The City of Hollywood, Florida is in Broward County and has approximately 1,700 employees.

GFOA spoke with Tammie Hechler and Tami Thornton. Tammie Hechler serves as the city's human resources director and Tami Thornton is the human resources assistant director.

THE SITUATION

Inability to replace large-scale loss of employees with institutional knowledge

When the pandemic and its aftermath caused people to rethink their relationship with work, communities everywhere saw increased retirements a nd voluntary resignations. Like many municipal governments, the city encountered difficulty in hiring quickly enough to replace the employees who were leaving. A consequence was the significant loss of institutional knowledge. This, in turn, posed a major challenge to the City's workforce continuity.

City staff identified specific challenges in hiring employees in lower-paying positions in the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as specific technical positions in the building and utilities divisions. These roles required stringent qualifications and certifications from the county, limiting the available pool of candidates. In such a competitive job market, many candidates preferred private sector opportunities that offered higher compensation, making it challenging for the City to attract suitable candidates for these positions.

THE SOLUTION

Incorporate technology in hiring, offer more competitive pay and benefits

To tackle these hiring challenges, the city implemented several changes and strategies. Notably, staff introduced a sign-on bonus policy, which offered bonuses for hard-to-recruit positions to incentivize qualified candidates to join the City's workforce. They also recognized the importance of marketing their comprehensive benefits package, emphasizing work-life balance and offering a four-day workweek to improve employee satisfaction and retention. In addition, the city regularly conducted salary studies to ensure compensation packages remained competitive with other employers in the region. By offering attractive salary packages and benefits, staff sought to retain current employees and attract new talent to join the workforce.

The HR Department played a pivotal role in streamlining the hiring process. They embraced technology, utilizing platforms like NeoGov for electronic applications and onboarding, reducing paperwork and administrative burdens. Investing in online recruiters like LinkedIn allowed the city to enhance outreach and engagement with potential candidates, expanding their talent pool and increasing their visibility in the job market.

City staff emphasized the significance of building strong relationships with department directors and securing management buy-in to successfully implement the changes. Having supportive leadership allowed them to make necessary improvements and adjustments to their hiring and recruitment processes.

THE RESULTS

The City of Hollywood's efforts to address hiring challenges through innovative strategies, technology adoption, and a focus on employee well-being and satisfaction have contributed to their success in attracting and retaining talent. Their experience and insights serve as valuable lessons for other local governments seeking to enhance their hiring processes and build a thriving and diverse workforce.

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

- **Fill vacancies**
- **Recruit knowledgeable workforce**
- **Increase candidate eligibility**
- **Improve offer competitiveness**

RESULTS

RECRUITMENT

- **Sign-on bonus**
- **Competitive pay**
- **Comprehensive benefits**
- **Work-life balance**

RETENTION

- **Work-life balance**
- **Four-day workweek**

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Workforce 2023: Solving Hiring Challenges

GFOA has heard consistently from members about the difficulties of hiring in local government. In search of solutions, we identified eight municipalities across the country that have grown their applicant pools and reduced hiring times through process change. Their solutions are lessons to inspire other local governments to solve their hiring challenges.

Learn more: **gfoa.org/workforce2023**