



PUBLIC FINANCE WORKFORCE | CASE STUDY

NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Using Process Mapping to Identify Improvement and Consolidate Hiring Timelines

➔ How Nevada County, California found opportunities to save a cumulative 99 years of staff time in 17 months

Because of excessively long hiring timelines, many applicants to Nevada County positions accepted private sector employment offers before the County could complete the hiring process. Setting a 60-day recruitment goal, conducting process mapping, and consolidating final staff approval helped the County fill open positions. So far, the new process has saved the County a cumulative 99 years in staff time. Here is how staff led such positive change.

NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

POPULATION: 103,000



Located on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada in California's northern interior, Nevada County employs a staff of approximately 850 full-time employees

GFOA spoke with Steven Rose and Susan Kadera.

Rose is the County's human resources director, with previous experience with the United States Air Force and as a human resources executive in multiple federal agencies. Kadera is the deputy director of human resources with extensive experience in recruitment and talent management.

THE SITUATION

Competition with private sector employers and long hiring delays

In 2019, Nevada County was losing prospective hires because of the excessively long time it took to hire new employees. Candidates would apply, but before the county could move them through the full hiring process, they would land job offers elsewhere. Such delays made competing with private sector employers even more difficult.



NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

THE SOLUTION*Identifying opportunities and fostering a culture of collaboration*

County staff conducted a comprehensive assessment to identify areas for improvement, which helped to identify human resources as a key focus. Feedback from the assessment emphasized the need for collaboration and accountability among departments. Rather than assigning blame, though, the goal was to foster a culture of collaboration in which departments took ownership of their responsibilities and worked together toward common goals.

The overarching goal was a 60-day recruitment timeline. To address the issue of limited autonomy among staff members, the HR Department embarked on a mission to empower individuals to make decisions independently. By allowing them to take ownership of the hiring process, the County aimed to create a sense of responsibility and shared accountability for both success and failure. It was crucial, however, to ensure that these changes aligned with California's merit principles. The County sought an opinion from the director of the California Merit Appeals Board, assuring the human resources team that their actions were compliant with the merit system.

Change demanded fresh perspective, so the County recruited an intern from a senior HR program. This intern conducted interviews with a wide range of individuals within and outside the

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

- ❓ Cut time to hire
- ❓ Enhance collaboration

RESULTS

- ✅ 435 successful recruitments over 17 months
- ✅ 99 years cumulative staff time savings

organization to gain insights and help staff avoid being constrained by existing processes. Ideas for improvement were derived from a diverse array of sources, including HR Director Steve Rose's prior experience in federal government, suggestions from HR and other departments, discussions with other California counties, insights from private businesses, and a review of best practices by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM). The adoption of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) tools, such as fishbone diagrams and value stream analysis, played a pivotal role in identifying areas that required enhancement.

County staff highlighted one key change: collapsing several back-and-forth approval steps into a single meeting after the close of a recruitment. While assembling key staff for each recruitment in a single room can be difficult, it can also save a month or more in each hiring process. Ultimately, it was process diagramming that

provided the insight in identifying the steps that could be consolidated into the single final meeting.

THE RESULTS

With new insights and ideas, department leaders and staff members embraced their roles in change, took ownership of the process, and effectively collaborated. The results were clear: over a span of 17 months, Nevada County successfully carried out 435 recruitments, resulting in a cumulative time savings of 99 years. Deputy Director Susan Kadera reported a significant decrease in the number of issues escalated to her level, highlighting the success of the new approach.

The hiring improvements had a particularly positive impact on departments that had previously struggled to fill vacancies. The Sheriff's Department, for example, has historically faced such a challenge. By empowering recruiters with responsibility and autonomy, however, department staff were incentivized to proactively address staffing needs and successfully fill positions.

Notably, the implementation of these changes received favorable responses from various stakeholders, including employee unions. Although not legally required, Nevada County shared the proposed decisions and process changes with the unions to maintain transparency. The unions recognized the benefits brought about by these changes, which greatly benefited applicants, and approved of the modifications.

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