

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: HUMAN RESOURCES – A DEPARTMENT IN NEED OF ATTENTION

Report Date: March 20, 2013

Response by: Carmel J. Angelo Title: Chief Executive Officer

FINDINGS

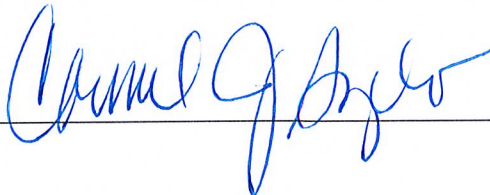
- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: _____
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: 1, 2, 3, 4
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered 2 have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered 1 and 4 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered 3 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: June 4, 2013

Signed: _____



Number of pages attached: 4

CEO Responses

Findings

F1: The CEO recognizes that there has been high turnover of HR Directors over the last fifteen years (the average service time since 1998 is approximately two years). However, there are no indications that this turnover is a result of senior administrative management not effectively focusing on the HR Department's organizational needs, as asserted in the findings. Within the tenure of the current CEO, one HR Director retired after 33 years of County service and the previous HR Director left the County to accept a position with another agency outside the area for a significant increase in salary. The CEO is committed to recruiting a well-qualified HR Director who has proven leadership skills and a vision for the future that is reasonably compelling and achievable over time.

F2: In the past few years, the CEO has required departments to give greater justification and detail in support of budget requests. This may account for some difference between the budgeted amount and the amount actually spent in the years prior to this change. More recently, departments were asked to come in under net county cost. This would contribute to the difference in more recent years, as departments searched for ways to curb spending on travel and out-of-County training while retaining dollars in support of mandated and/or essential services. All funding and expenditures are fully documented, so it is unclear how this could possibly be misconstrued as a lack of transparency. The majority of training needs must be evaluated by management at the departmental level, and as funds are spent within any line item a record of the expenditure is created.

F3: HR conducts long-term recruitment planning to the extent it is able, depending on when and how other departments determine their immediate and future needs. The Civil Service rules allow for recruitment and examination in anticipation of future needs, but oftentimes unplanned vacancies occur due to illness, voluntary termination, promotion or a variety of other reasons. Thus, it is not always possible for a department to identify its personnel needs early enough for HR to respond in advance.

With regard to County-wide training and staff development, HR offers various trainings throughout the year, such as two to three full days of training each year on a variety of topics through its Employer Relations Consortium with Liebert Cassidy & Whitmore; through the Wellness program; a variety of online trainings through the County's membership with CSAC-EIA; and other opportunities that arise through various venues. In addition, the County implemented early phases of a leadership program in 2012 with the intent to establish a long-term Leadership Academy (please see Response R2 for more information). Most departments also engage in individual employee, unit, and department-wide training for their staff development.

F4: The Civil Service System is for those classifications under the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Rules, and the Merit Services Systems is for those classifications designated to Social Services and Child Support that are supported by State and Federal sources. Merit Services Systems was put in place in order for the State Personnel Board to assure conformity with Federal and State regulations with regard to personnel standards. The two systems, while very similar, are independent and do not conflict with each other. Both systems have time-consuming aspects, as does any public sector personnel system, but they are not overly complex, nor is it difficult to administer both systems simultaneously.

It is possible to seek approval from the State Personnel Board to become an Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) county, and this is actively being explored. If approved, the County may then administer personnel rules under its local system.

Recommendations

R1: With regard to recruiting efforts, the County is currently finalizing a contract to adopt a new applicant processing system through NEOGOV. This system will provide a faster and more efficient recruitment process, using online applications. This, in addition to streamlined recruitment, will help to keep applicants moving through the process without losing interest or finding work elsewhere. The CEO recently approved the purchase of a software application system for the HR department which will automate the entire hiring process, freeing up staff from repetitive functions that have been so time consuming. The key features of this new application include: Requisitions, Recruiting, Selection and Testing, Applicant Tracking and Certifications, and Eligibility lists, plus over 80 standard reports and Ad Hoc reporting tools to provide customized information for users and department managers. The CEO also approved an annual subscription to Governmentjobs.com as an additional venue for HR to post current job openings, which will potentially provide the County with a larger pool of applicants.

Additionally, the CEO and HR department managers are in the process of reviewing another NEOGOV software application that will provide the tools needed for supervisors and managers to complete employee Performance Evaluations in a timely manner, communicate organizational expectations, and align individual and departmental goals with strategic County objectives. It will also aid departments to identify their workforce strengths and gaps which become the basis for accessing and/or creating employee training programs as well as evaluating employee competencies and potential for the purposes of succession planning.

Overall, the implementation of the NEOGOV Applicant Tracking system coupled with the addition of the NEOGOV Performance Evaluation system will significantly reduce HR and departmental support staff time, allowing staff to be

allocated to other activities and projects such as long range recruitment planning, training, and staff development (please see Response F3 for more information). The cost of these two systems has already been budgeted; they are planned to be implemented and fully operational within the coming months. An update regarding progress towards implementation and utilization will be given in the CEO Report.

R2: The CEO both agrees and supports the development and implementation of a Leadership Academy designed as an intensive learning experience aimed at growing and developing leadership skills. Leadership development is an essential element in enhancing the professionalism and skill-set of those who aspire to advance their careers within County government. The CEO's vision is to identify emerging leaders across all departments of the County, encouraging participation in a variety of deep-dive workshops (e.g., personnel management, budget development, program planning and operations, effective communication, conflict resolution, etc.) enabling them to sharpen their skills to enable them to exert a strong positive influence on the future of the County.

As an interim step, the CEO has formed an informal workgroup comprised of managers, directors and others as a precursor of a fully developed Leadership Academy. The current group voluntarily meets during the noon hour to explore ideas, concepts, and styles of communication. An added benefit is the spirit of cooperation that has naturally emerged to enhance working relationships between individuals beyond their day-to-day responsibilities and across departments.

R3: Using a very strict zero-based budgeting approach for training would essentially require departments to amend their budgets each time a new need for training is identified, which would be a lengthy and needlessly burdening process. Like any expenditure, it is necessary for departments to estimate their training costs, and it is not possible to anticipate with complete accuracy what their training needs and opportunities will be for the coming fiscal year. If the intent of recommending a zero-based approach and non-fungibility is for departments to provide a more accurate justification and estimation of training expenditures, then this is already consistent with recent changes in what the CEO requires during budget requests. Departments are asked to explain anticipated expenditures regardless of whether they are estimated at the same level as the prior year. (Please see Response F2.)

R4: The process of becoming an Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) County is already being explored. (Please see Response F4.) It is not yet known when it can be implemented, since it would be contingent on State Personnel Board approval. In the interim, the CEO initiated an independent review of the core functions being performed in support of both systems (Merit and Civil Service). The final recommendation noted that it was an inefficient use of County resources to support two separate and distinct personnel systems housed in

separate departments. Additionally, it was noted that there was an increased potential liability for the County with one division operating without the expertise, oversight and direct supervision of the HR Director. The final recommendation was to align the human resource functions and co-locate the 5 HHSA staff within HR where there would be increased training and supervision from the HR Director and Managers plus the ability to integrate and cross-train staff, yielding increased efficiencies which would free up staff time to address other functions beyond the basic recruitment and associated tasks.