Performance Audit of the City's Classified Employee Hiring Process

JULY 2023 | OCA-24-02

Finding 1

The City Administration should take a more active role in monitoring and advocating for efficiency in the classified hiring process, which took approximately 9 months to complete on average.

Finding 2

The Personnel Department can better balance its focus on fairness in hiring with efficiency by streamlining Personnel regulations and practices.

Andy Hanau, City Auditor
Matthew Helm, Assistant City Auditor
Danielle Knighten, Deputy City Auditor
Carissa Nash, Principal Performance Auditor
Nadia Torkman, Performance Auditor

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
OCA
OFFICE *of the* CITY AUDITOR

independent. objective. accurate.

Our mission is to advance open and accountable government through independent, objective, and accurate audits and investigations that seek to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of City government.

The Office of the City Auditor would like to thank staff from the following departments and agencies for their assistance during this audit:

- Personnel Department
- Office of the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Operating Officers
- Civil Service Commission
- Office of the Independent Budget Analyst
- Human Resources Department
- All 8 hiring departments we met with (listed on page 55) and the additional 10 hiring departments that provided information throughout the audit

CONTACT US:

Find past audit reports—and sign up to get future reports delivered to your inbox—on our website: **sandiego.gov/auditor**

twitter.com/sdCityAuditor

cityauditor@sandiego.gov

619-533-3165

Report fraud, waste, or abuse in city operations through our fraud hotline: **866-809-3500**

600 B Street, Suite 1350, San Diego, CA 92101

Performance Audit of the City's Classified Employee Hiring Process

Why OCA Did This Study

The City of San Diego (City) has operated with an elevated employee vacancy rate perpetuated by the length of time it takes to hire. City leaders have expressed concern regarding the high vacancy rate and its effect on the City's ability to provide public services. Analyzing budgeted classified not-sworn positions, we conducted a performance audit with the following objective:

Determine whether changes to the City's hiring process and Civil Service Rules would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process for classified employees.

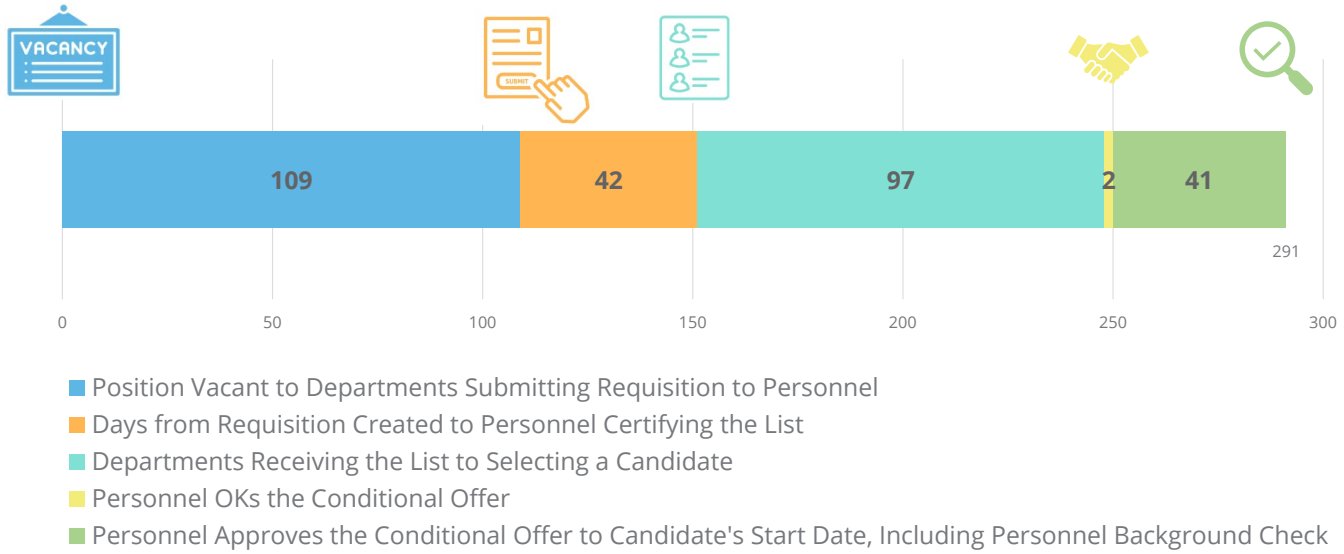
What OCA Found

Finding 1: The City Administration should take a more active role in monitoring and advocating for efficiency in the hiring process, which took approximately 9 months to complete on average.

- The City's lengthy hiring process likely contributed to **19 percent of vacant positions remaining vacant for more than 14 months**.
- In total, the **classified hiring process took approximately 9 months** to complete. The **unclassified hiring process, which is run primarily by the Administration, took almost as long**—nearly 8 months.
- The **Administration does not monitor or have goals** for how long hiring departments take to hire classified or unclassified employees.
- In our sample, the lengthiest step in the classified hiring process was the time it took hiring departments to submit a requisition to Personnel requesting a list of candidates (109 days).
- Once hiring departments requested a list of eligible candidates, the positions in our sample still took an average of 26 weeks to fill, **42 percent longer than the average local government organization** according to NEOGOV.
- Hiring at the City takes so long because the overall hiring timeline is **not transparent**, there is **no centralized oversight of hiring departments**, and there is **no expert on the Administration side** driving efficiency.

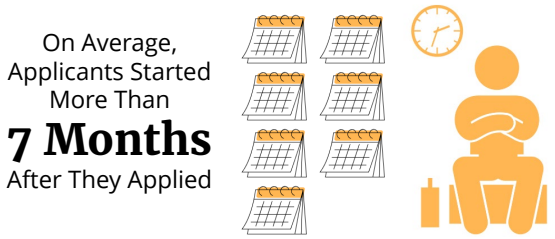
Exhibit 7: Hiring Departments Were Responsible for About 70% of the Hiring Timeline in Our Sample

Average Days to Fill a Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Vacant Position from Our Sample



Source: OCA generated based on a sample of data from SAP, Personnel, NEOGOV, and hiring departments.

Excerpt from Exhibit 9: In Our Sample, Applicants Started the Position 224 Days After They Applied



Source: OCA generated based on sampled data from SAP, Personnel, NEOGOV, and hiring departments.

Finding 2: The Personnel Department can better balance its focus on fairness in hiring with efficiency by streamlining Personnel regulations and practices.

- The hiring process requires **more than 60 steps**. The extensiveness of the current hiring process makes it unclear and confusing, and **Personnel's guidance on the hiring process is inconsistent and incomplete**.
- The Civil Service Rules are generally broad enough to allow flexibility and expediency in the hiring process, but **Personnel Regulations go beyond requirements** and create administrative burdens without sufficient benefit in some cases. For example:
  - Many hiring departments believe Personnel requires positions to be fully vacated before hiring departments can request a list of candidates to hire from in most cases.
  - Personnel requires hiring departments to fill out more than 90 pages of forms during the interview process alone, many of which require duplicate information.
  - Personnel Regulations require employees to be fingerprinted in a machine installed in the Personnel Department.
  - Personnel requires pre-employment medical checks and drug screenings for many not-sworn classifications, while many cities simply require pre-employment drug screenings for candidates applying for safety-sensitive positions.
  - Personnel still relies on physical forms and is not clear that it accepts electronic signatures on all forms.

What OCA Recommends

We made 12 recommendations: 8 to Personnel and 4 to the City Administration. Key recommendations include:

- The Chief Operating Officer should designate a **central point of oversight and coordination** for hiring departments' hiring of classified employees.
- The Administration should identify the key phases in the hiring process timeline, **set goals** for how long each step should take, and **monitor and report hiring timeline information** by department.
- The Administration should determine if there are administrative requirements or other barriers contributing to the length of time phases in the hiring process take and **propose changes** to make the process more efficient and effective.
- Personnel should work with the Administration to **provide the information it needs** to implement these recommendations and present to the Civil Service Commission.
- Personnel should formalize the practice of allowing hiring departments to **begin the hiring process as soon as they are aware of an upcoming vacancy**.
- Personnel should **streamline the documents it requires departments and applicants to fill out**.
- Personnel should **develop a hiring process overview and step-by-step guide** that depicts the overall hiring process and is clear, understandable, up to date, and easy for all City stakeholders to find.
- Personnel should create a background check, medical check, and drug and alcohol screening process that requires **fewer steps and paperwork** for classified not-sworn positions.

The Personnel Department and the City Administration agreed to all recommendations.

For more information, contact Andy Hanau, City Auditor, at (619) 533-3165 or cityauditor@sandiego.gov.

Table of Contents

Background 1

Finding 1 The City Administration should take a more active role in monitoring and advocating for efficiency in the classified hiring process, which took approximately 9 months to complete on average. 10

Recommendations 27

Finding 2 The Personnel Department can better balance its focus on fairness in hiring with efficiency by streamlining Personnel regulations and practices. 32

Recommendations 50

Appendix A Definition of Audit Recommendation Priorities 53

Appendix B Audit Objectives, Scope, and Methodology 54

Appendix C City Administration Management Response 59

Appendix D Personnel Department Management Response 65

Background

The City of San Diego (City) is operating with an elevated employee vacancy rate that is perpetuated at least in part by the length of time it takes to hire. The Mayor and the City Councilmembers have expressed concern regarding the high vacancy rate (15 percent), as it is affecting the City's ability to provide public services.[1]

Human capital is the City's most valuable asset and is relied upon to serve the residents and visitors of San Diego. Therefore, given the heightened interest by City leadership regarding vacancy rates and human capital, we conducted a performance audit of the City of San Diego's hiring process for classified not-sworn employees. This audit was also performed in accordance with the Office of the City Auditor's Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Audit Work Plan.

Classified employees make up the majority of the City workforce.

The City workforce can be broken down into the following categories: unclassified positions, classified sworn positions, and classified not-sworn positions, as shown in **Exhibit 1**. As of October 1, 2022, the City had 12,356 total budgeted positions. Only 987 (8 percent) of these were unclassified, while the remaining 11,369 (92 percent) were classified.

- Unclassified positions make up the smallest percentage of the City's workforce at 8 percent. These positions typically consist of management-level roles that may participate in policy creation and can make operational decisions. Unclassified positions require a different hiring process than classified employees and therefore are not included in the scope of this audit.[2]
- Classified sworn positions make up 26 percent of the City's workforce and include public safety positions such as firefighters, police officers, and lifeguards. Due to the nature of these positions, prospective sworn employees go through a different recruitment and hiring process compared to not-sworn City employees and therefore are not included in the scope of this audit.

1 The 15 percent vacancy rate is based on budgeted classified not-sworn positions vacant as of October 1, 2022.

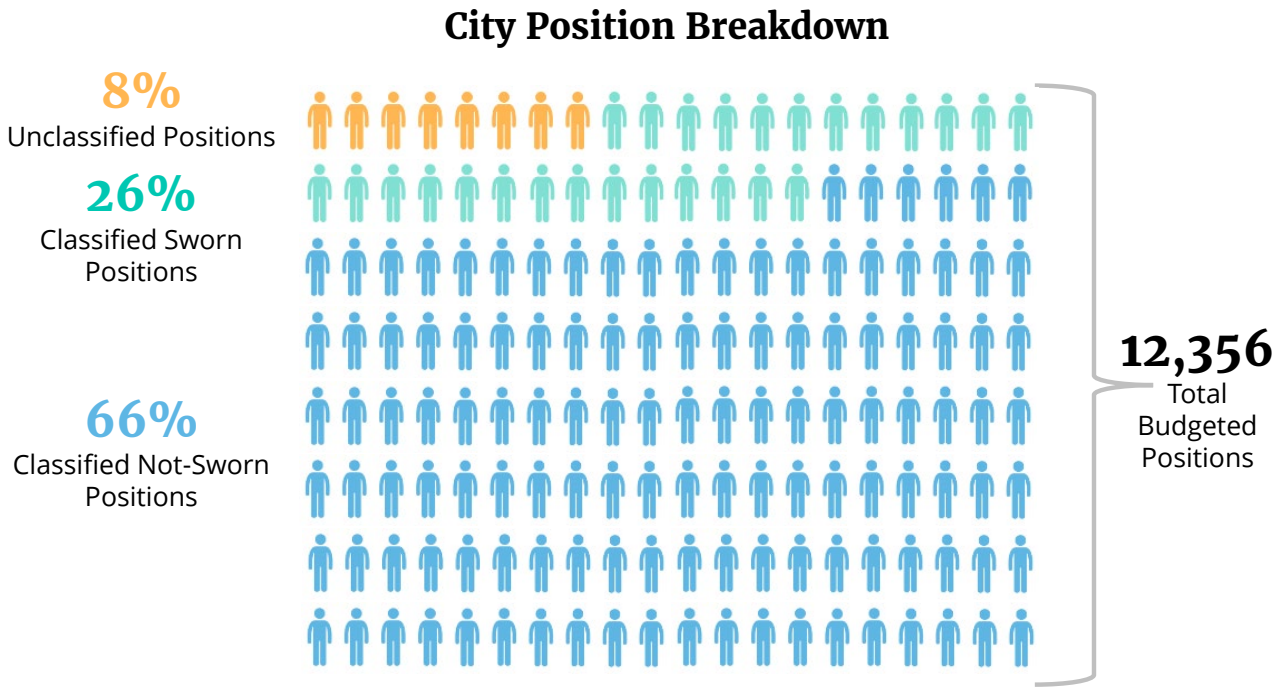
2 While unclassified positions were outside of our scope, we did benchmark the classified hiring timeline with the unclassified hiring timeline, as described in Finding 1.

- Classified not-sworn employees make up the majority of City positions at 66 percent and consist of jobs that primarily interact with constituents and that are out in the community fixing potholes, working in libraries, repairing streetlights, and answering 911 phone calls. Classified employees are public servants who occupy these classified positions and are often represented by unions. Classified employees are hired through the civil service process, which is more extensive than the unclassified hiring process.

The public sector uses job classifications to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for a position and to ensure appropriate compensation for the responsibilities of each role. Due to concerns over the length of the classified hiring process and the fact that classified not-sworn employees make up the majority of the City's workforce, classified hiring is the focus of this audit.

Exhibit 1

Two-Thirds of City Budgeted Positions are Classified Not-Sworn Positions



Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP.

The Civil Service Commission oversees the Personnel Department and all classified hiring.

The Civil Service Commission governs the Personnel Department (Personnel) to preserve fair employment opportunities. The Civil Service Commission is an independent five-member board appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Commissioners serve 5-year terms and hold monthly public meetings. The City Council can remove commissioners with a two-thirds majority vote after holding a public hearing.

The Civil Service Commission proposes and enforces policies, known as Civil Service Rules, that are intended to protect against political and non-merit factors influencing employment within the City. Civil Service Rules that are adopted by the City Council have the effect of law and must be followed as Personnel and City departments carry out the recruitment, hiring, and removal of classified employees. The Civil Service Commission's duties include conducting workforce investigations, hearing employee and applicant appeals, and reviewing various salary issues.

The Personnel Department carries out the classified hiring process, in compliance with the City Charter and Civil Service Rules.

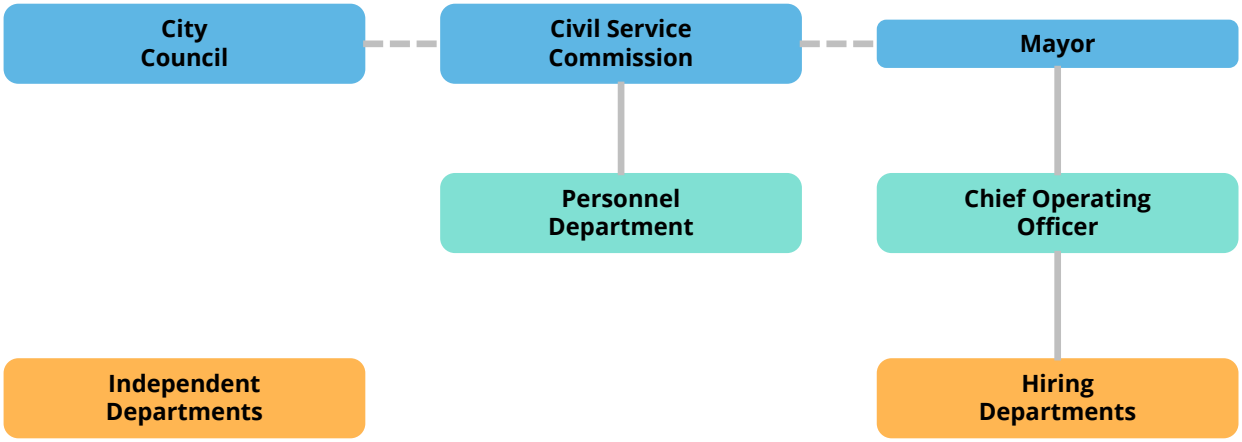
Personnel is an independent department that does not report directly to the Mayor.

The Civil Service Commission oversees Citywide hiring for classified positions, but Personnel is responsible for creating classified hiring procedures that Personnel and hiring departments both execute. The Civil Service Commission appoints the Personnel Director who oversees Citywide employment policy. Personnel creates policies to direct hiring procedures—policies which must be approved by the Civil Service Commission to ensure rules fall within the framework of the Civil Service Rules and City Charter. Personnel regulations dictate employment standards, classification of jobs, compensation, and more. Personnel's Adopted Budget for FY2023 was $12 million and included 85 department positions.

As illustrated in **Exhibit 2**, the Personnel Department is an independent department that does not report directly to the Mayor or the City Council. The Personnel Department emphasizes that its independence is crucial to maintaining a fair, merit-based hiring process.

Exhibit 2

The Personnel Department Reports to the Civil Service Commission



Source: OCA generated based on the City of San Diego Organization chart.

Hiring departments interview applicants and decide who to hire.

Although Personnel and the Civil Service Commission both play a role in the hiring of classified employees, hiring departments also participate in the hiring process by initiating the hiring process, conducting interviews, checking references, and selecting candidates. **Exhibit 3** shows how many budgeted classified not-sworn positions each department had as of October 1, 2022.

Exhibit 3

Classified Not-Sworn Positions are Distributed Across Many Different City Departments

Hiring Department	Total Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Positions
Public Utilities	1,785
Parks and Recreation	879
Engineering and Capital Projects	773
Development Services	682
Library	621
Police	570
Environmental Services	511
Transportation	471
Stormwater	284
General Services	217
City Attorney*	202
Facilities Services	173
Fire Rescue	130
City Treasurer	114
Department of Finance	87
Purchasing and Contracting	80
Information Technology	72
Risk Management	68
Personnel*	67
Planning	49
City Clerk*	44
Economic Development	44
Retirement (SDCERS)*	44
Sustainability and Mobility	38
Real Estate Management	29
Communications	24
Compliance	23
Airports	20
Public Facilities Planning	18
Emergency Services	11
Human Resources	10
Debt Management	8
Office of the Chief Operating Officer	5
Cultural Affairs	4
Homelessness Strategies and Solutions	4
Special Events	3
Concourse and Parking Garage	2
Emergency Medical Services	2
Office of Boards and Commissions	2
Police Practices Commission*	2
Total	**8,172**

*Independent departments.

Note: Departments are listed as the positions are allocated in SAP; actual department structures may vary.

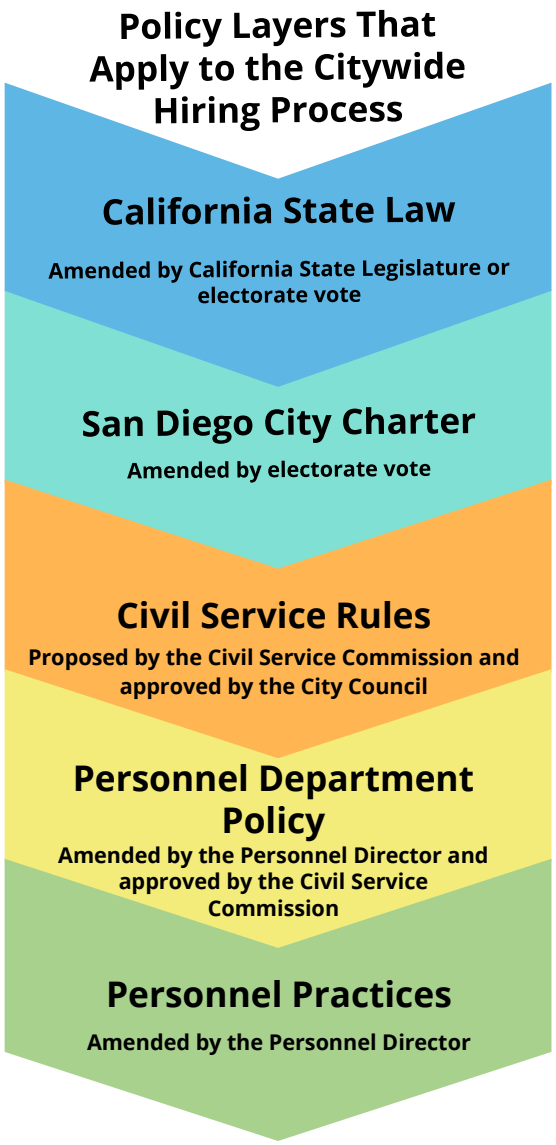
Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP.

The hiring process requires Personnel and hiring departments to work together.

As illustrated in **Exhibit 4**, the Civil Service Commission provides structure to the City's hiring process by creating rules that uphold fair hiring practices. Personnel creates hiring processes that implement the City Charter and Civil Service Rules, and hiring departments must work within these processes to successfully hire and fill vacancies.

Exhibit 4

The City's Hiring Process Operates Under Multiple Layers of Public Policy



Source: OCA generated based on California State law, San Diego City Charter, Civil Service rules, and Personnel policy and procedures.

As required by Civil Service Rules, the City, like other government agencies, uses job classifications to assess job requirements and establish pay rates. City positions are allocated into a job classification based on job duties and responsibilities. Positions that have similar duties are grouped together into the same classification. Often, one classification will apply to several positions across different departments. For example, several different departments use the civil engineer classification. When someone applies to the City, they do not apply for a specific position, but instead for a job classification. According to Personnel, if Personnel decides an applicant meets the minimum qualifications for a classification, they are placed on an eligible list, which is a collection of qualified applicants. Hiring departments can request a certification list which is comprised of one or more eligible lists of applicants for that classification when they are ready to hire for a position. Hiring departments must fill classified positions through the civil service process, which includes the eligible lists certified by Personnel, with very few exceptions.

Hiring departments must fill classified positions through the civil service process.

A broad overview of the hiring process is shown in **Exhibit 5**. The hiring process begins when a department notifies Personnel of a vacancy by submitting a requisition online using the NEOGOV Online Hiring Center. If there is no existing list of eligible candidates, Personnel then creates and publishes a job posting for the classification based on the job description and required classification minimum qualifications, with input from the hiring department. Applicants then apply online through NEOGOV.

Personnel provides hiring departments with the list of applicants that it has determined meet the classification's minimum qualifications.

Personnel screens applications to confirm they are eligible to work for the City and meet the classification's minimum qualifications. Personnel provides hiring departments with the list of applicants that it has determined meet these standards. Departments use this list to decide which candidates to interview. Once a department conducts interviews and selects a candidate, it extends a conditional offer and notifies Personnel of its decision. Personnel then conducts a background screening of the candidate through criminal databases, such as those managed by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If the classification requires a pre-employment medical examination, the candidate is scheduled for a medical exam with the City's medical provider. After a candidate clears the background and medical screening, if required, they can begin work.

Exhibit 5

Both Personnel and the Hiring Departments are Responsible for Completing Steps in the Hiring Process

1. Departments Notify Personnel of Vacancy	The hiring process begins when a vacancy occurs. Departments then submit a requisition to Personnel requesting a list of eligible applicants.
2. Job Vacancy Posting and Applicant Screening	Personnel posts the job announcement and screens applicants.
3. Interview and Selection Process	Departments interview candidates and extend a conditional offer.
4. Candidate Approval and Processing	Personnel conducts background checks and medical screenings. Personnel notifies departments when candidates pass any necessary checks and can be extended a formal offer.
5. Candidate Begins Work	Departments contact the selected candidate and arrange a start date.

Source: OCA generated based on process walkthroughs and interviews with Personnel, interviews with several hiring departments, and the Appointing Authority Interview Training.

The City Council has seen a recent proposal to ask voters to move the classified hiring process under the Mayor.

In 2022, the City Council considered a ballot measure proposing that the Mayor assume authority over the classified hiring process. This would have centralized all hiring—classified and unclassified—in one department in the City and was intended to address delays in the hiring process.

While the proposal would have allocated hiring operation oversight to the Mayor, the ballot measure would have retained the civil service system. The Civil Service Commission would have retained investigative powers and appellate authority over the City's hiring process and employee rights. The City Council ultimately did not place the measure on the 2022 ballot.

Although initiatives such as this ballot proposal have the potential to structurally change the City's hiring system, this audit identifies areas for improvement that can be implemented regardless of how the classified service is managed or organized.

This Audit is Part of Our Human Capital Report Series

This Citywide Hiring Audit is the latest report in the collection of human capital management audits conducted by the Office of the City Auditor. The following audit reports are a part of our human capital audit series that provide further insight into the City's workforce:

- Citywide Human Capital Fact Book (2018)
- City Employee Pay Equity Audit (2019)
- Strategic Human Capital Management Audit (2020)
- Strategic Human Capital Management Audit II: Employee Performance Management (2020)

Finding 1

The City Administration should take a more active role in monitoring and advocating for efficiency in the classified hiring process, which took approximately 9 months to complete on average.

Finding Summary

The City Administration and the Personnel Department both share responsibility for the performance of the City of San Diego's (City's) classified hiring process, which we found took an average of at least 265 days.[3] The split of responsibilities between the City Administration and the Personnel Department (Personnel) means both entities must be held accountable for the timeline and must work together to ensure the process is fair and efficient. Because Personnel's responsibility is to ensure fairness in hiring, the Administration is best positioned to advocate for efficiency.

However, we found that the Administration currently lacks centralized oversight of its portion of the hiring process and therefore is unable to oversee departments' hiring performance. As a result, the Administration cannot effectively identify and quantify problems and advocate for changes to the hiring process to make it more efficient. For example, in our sample the lengthiest step in the hiring process was the time it took for operational departments to request a list of candidates from Personnel. We found in our sample that departments took an estimated 109 days on average for this step—delaying the hiring process by 15 weeks.[4] As another example, we found that the unclassified hiring process, which is run primarily

3 We analyzed the time it took to fill all classified positions that were vacant on October 1, 2021. The Administration had implemented a hiring freeze for some positions from March 12, 2020 to June 15, 2021, so the timeline to fill some of the positions still vacant on October 1, 2021 may have been impacted by the hiring freeze. Therefore, we did not start the timeline for any position that became vacant during the hiring freeze until the hiring freeze was over. If the position was vacant prior to the hiring freeze, we did not count the time the position was vacant during the hiring freeze. However, the hiring freeze did not affect all positions, so some of these positions may have been able to be filled more quickly but our analysis of the full population of vacancies treated all positions as if they were unable to be hired.

4 The 109 days calculation takes into account the hiring freeze. If the position was vacant during the hiring freeze and the requisition was not submitted during the hiring freeze, we did not start the timeline for those positions until the hiring freeze was over. If the requisition was submitted during the hiring freeze, our analysis uses the original vacancy date as the timeline start date.

by the Administration, took an average of at least 239 days.[5] The City Administration does not currently monitor either one of these timelines or have goals for how long they should take.

The unclassified hiring process, which is run primarily by the Administration, took an average of at least 239 days.

Here in Finding 1 we make four recommendations that include 13 specific actions for the Administration to centralize oversight of the hiring process, hold departments accountable for completing their parts of the process as quickly as possible, identify and quantify pain points, and advocate for changes and innovation. We also make several recommendations in Finding 1 to Personnel to assist the Administration by sharing and centralizing information.

For classified positions, the hiring departments must comply with Personnel's hiring regulations and policies, which are out of the Administration's direct control and are complex and cumbersome. Hiring departments expressed frustration with many pieces of the process and how they contribute to the hiring timeline. In Finding 2, we make several additional recommendations to Personnel to streamline the process and make it easier for hiring departments to complete.

The City's lengthy hiring process likely contributed to many positions remaining vacant for more than 14 months.

We reviewed all budgeted classified not-sworn positions that were vacant as of October 1, 2021 and had been filled by December 19, 2022.[6] Of the total 1,075 vacant positions, 19 percent were still vacant 14 months later, as illustrated in **Exhibit 6**.

5 The unclassified average of 239 days was calculated using the same methodology described in Footnote 3.

6 We defined sworn positions as all classified positions represented by the San Diego Police Officers Association, the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 145, and the Teamsters Local 911 (which represents lifeguards at the City of San Diego), because these positions involve hiring processes, prerequisites, and recruiting factors that are unique to the profession beyond the anticipated level of variance expected in the other positions at the City. Therefore, these positions were excluded from our review, but could be reviewed in a hiring or recruitment audit in the future.

Exhibit 6

Nearly One in Five of Budgeted Classified Not Sworn Positions Were Still Vacant 14 Months Later

Departments with 10 or More Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Vacancies October 1, 2021	Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Positions Vacant October 1, 2021	Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Positions Vacant October 1, 2021 That Were Still Vacant December 19, 2022	Percent of Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Positions Vacant October 1, 2021 That Were Still Vacant December 19, 2022
Facilities Services	24	8	33%
General Services	23	6	26%
Development Services	67	17	25%
Engineering & Capital Projects	141	35	25%
Purchasing & Contracting	23	5	22%
Public Utilities	281	60	21%
Environmental Services	72	15	21%
Citywide Total	**1,075**	**205**	**19%**
Library	47	9	19%
Transportation	47	8	17%
Fire-Rescue	13	1	8%
City Treasurer	13	1	8%
Parks & Recreation	108	8	7%
Police	80	4	5%
Stormwater	23	0	0%
City Attorney	20	0	0%

Note: Departments are listed as the positions are allocated in SAP; actual department structures may vary some. Also, the table excludes departments with fewer than 10 budgeted classified not-sworn vacant positions. However, the Citywide total row includes the total across the City.

Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP and Personnel.

The City's classified hiring process took approximately 9 months to complete, on average.

The hiring process took an average of 396 days for the 870 positions that were filled, from the time the seat was vacant to the time the seat was filled.[7] However, the City had implemented a hiring freeze on some

7 The 396-day timeline begins when a position becomes vacant in SAP and ends when the position is filled. The timeline does not include the time it takes to create a new position.

positions from March of 2020 to June 15, 2021.[8] Therefore, some of the positions vacant on October 1, 2021 may have become vacant during the hiring freeze and intentionally held vacant until the end of the hiring freeze, extending the timeline.

Given this information, we could not determine for the full population of vacant positions which positions were affected by the hiring freeze and which were not, since the freeze did not apply to all positions across the board. Assuming all positions vacant during the hiring freeze were affected equally by the hiring freeze, we found the hiring timeline totaled 265 days (about 9 months) on average for budgeted classified not-sworn positions. This subtracts the length of time the position was vacant during the hiring freeze from the total number of days the position was vacant.

Assuming all positions vacant during the hiring freeze were affected equally, we found the hiring timeline totaled about 9 months on average.

However, the hiring freeze was not applied the same across the board to all positions, so subtracting the full length of the hiring freeze from all positions likely overcorrected for the hiring freeze. Therefore, the total hiring timeline of 265 days is likely lower than the true hiring timeline.

To detail how long each phase of the hiring process took, we also took a sample of 102 positions vacant on October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022.[9] In our sample, we looked at when the position became vacant, and if it became vacant during the hiring freeze, we gave the Administration the benefit of the doubt in those cases and did not start the timeline until June 15, 2021, unless the hiring department submitted a requisition during that time.

Thus, taking into consideration the hiring freeze and the fact that it was not applied equally to all positions, we estimated the hiring process took 293 days (9.7 months), on average for the positions in our sample.

8 According to the Administration, the hiring freeze applied to all vacant positions excluding all sworn Police and Fire positions, but exceptions were evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In September of 2020, the Administration stated that General Fund departments and some non-General Fund departments would be allowed to hire classified positions that met the criteria "specialized skillset, critical to operations, necessary to meet Regulatory Requirements, Critical to Public Health/Safety" and that "crucial positions in Non-General Funds that do not impact the General Fund and are supported by rates may resume hiring...subject to approval by the respective Deputy Chief Operating Officer."

9 See Appendix B for details on the sample methodology. The City lacks data on several key milestones in the hiring process, so data for certain milestones had to be collected manually. We could not take a sample of the full population because the variation indicated a feasible sample would not be representative. Therefore, we analyzed the population of vacancies filled within one quartile of the median time to fill a vacancy, between 182 and 526 days, which represented about 50 percent of the population. We then reviewed data from SAP, NEOGOV, Personnel, and hiring departments to detail the timeline it takes to hire for this population to get an understanding of how long each phase takes for an average hiring process.

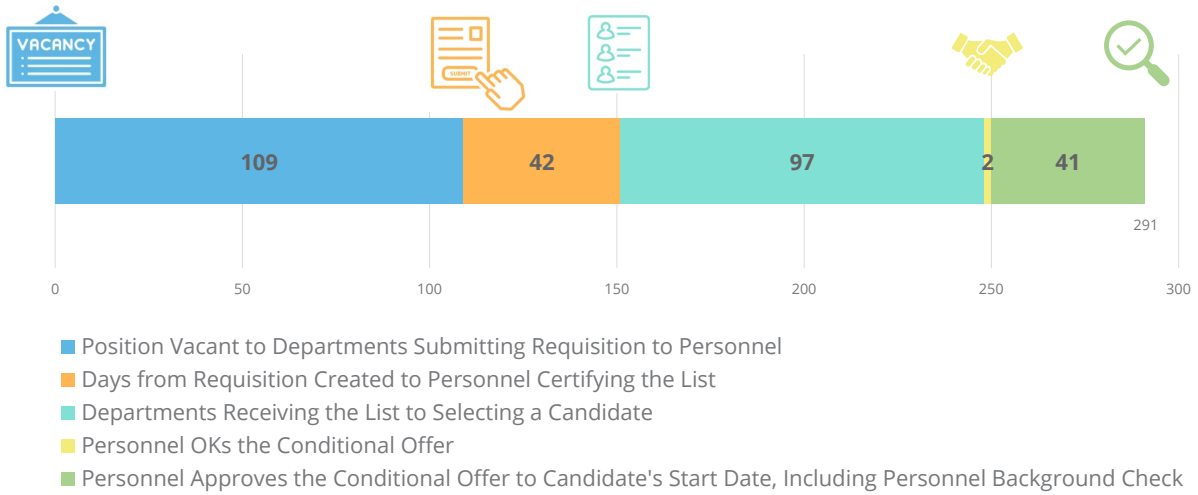
In our sample, the lengthiest step in the classified hiring process was the time it took hiring departments to submit a requisition to Personnel requesting a list of candidates.

We took a sample of the positions vacant October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022 and detailed how long each phase of the hiring process took.[10] As illustrated in blue in **Exhibit 7**, hiring departments were responsible for an average of 206 days (about 70 percent) of the time positions were vacant in our sample.

Exhibit 7

Hiring Departments Were Responsible for About 70% of the Hiring Timeline in Our Sample

Average Days to Fill a Budgeted Classified Not-Sworn Vacant Position from Our Sample



Note: The numbers in the timeline will not total 293 days (and instead total 291 days) because the overall timeline has a margin of error of plus or minus 16 days.

Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP, Personnel, NEOGOV, and the hiring departments.

In our sample, the lengthiest step we found in the classified hiring process is the time it takes hiring departments to submit a requisition to Personnel requesting a list of candidates to hire from. As detailed in **Exhibit 7**, hiring departments in our sample took an average of 109 days (more than 15 weeks) from the time a position was vacated to the time the department submitted a request for a certified list of applicants to Personnel.

10 See Appendix B and previous footnotes for details on the sample methodology.

If hiring departments reduced the time to submit a requisition from 15 weeks to 2 weeks, the total time to hire a candidate would potentially be reduced by nearly one-third.

We estimated the 109 days it took departments to submit a requisition by taking into account the hiring freeze.[11] However, for the 38 positions in our sample that became vacant after the hiring freeze, the hiring departments still took an average of 120 days to submit a requisition for the positions.

If hiring departments reduced the timeframe to begin the hiring process from 15 weeks to 2 weeks, the total time to hire a candidate would potentially be reduced by nearly one-third, bringing the total to an average of about 200 days. As of October 2022, 496 classified positions had been vacant for more than 200 days, meaning that moving more quickly to notify Personnel would likely result in hundreds of additional City positions being filled and performing critical City services.

Hiring departments could also proactively begin the process to fill positions they know will become vacant, such as when an employee turns in their 2-week notice to leave the position or when departments plan to make promotions and will have vacancies in the positions staff were promoted from. Hiring departments expressed their interest in proactive hiring but said Personnel does not formally allow the hiring process for most positions to begin until the position is vacant. Personnel reports that it allows hiring departments to begin the process before the seat is vacant upon request; however, Personnel training materials do not explicitly state in what situations this would be acceptable beyond a known retirement. In Finding 2, we recommend clarifying that departments can begin the process whenever they learn of an upcoming vacancy. This would make the proactive process the standard practice, shortening the hiring timeline even further for these positions.

The Administration does not currently have a goal for how quickly hiring departments should submit requisitions to Personnel and does not monitor how long it takes hiring departments to submit requisitions. By setting a goal and monitoring hiring departments' performance, the Administration can help ensure that departments move as quickly as possible to fill vacant positions.

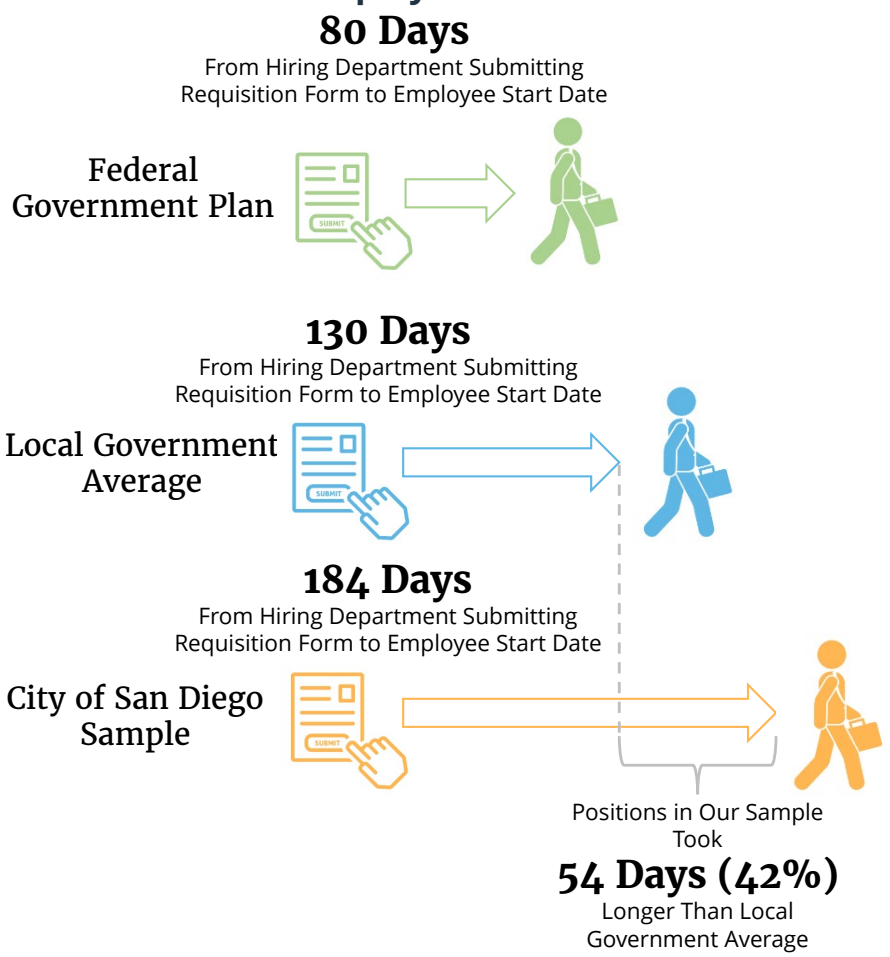
11 We reviewed all positions in our sample and if the position was vacant during the hiring freeze and the requisition was not submitted during the hiring freeze, we did not begin the timeline until the hiring freeze was over. Without this adjustment for the hiring freeze, hiring departments took 143 days on average to submit a requisition to Personnel for positions in our sample.

Once hiring departments submitted a requisition requesting a list of eligible candidates, the positions in our sample still took an average of 26 weeks to fill, 42 percent longer than the average large public sector organization according to NEOGOV.

NEOGOV reported in 2018 that the average time to hire for local government organizations was 130 days from hiring departments submitting a requisition to the employee's start date. In comparison, we found positions in our sample took an average of 184 days for this part of the process. Thus, the positions in our sample took 54 days (42 percent) longer, as illustrated in **Exhibit 8**. The Office of Personnel Management set out a detailed plan for the federal government to hire new employees in only 80 days.

Exhibit 8

It Takes 184 Days From the Time the Hiring Department Submits the Requisition to the Time the Employee Starts



Source: OCA generated based on sampled data from SAP, Personnel, and NEOGOV; information from the Office of Personnel Management; and NEOGOV's 2020 Time to Hire Report

We found that for our sample, once a department submitted its request for a certified list to Personnel, it took Personnel an average of 42 days to send the department the certified list. The 42 days includes both positions that required a recruitment and positions that did not.[12]

There are steps hiring departments could take to streamline the interview process.

Once Personnel sent the certified list of applicants to the hiring department, departments took 97 days on average to select candidates to interview, conduct interviews, rate and select a candidate, and email Personnel to confirm they can extend a conditional job offer to that candidate. In the City of Los Angeles, this process is required to take no longer than 60 days, according to its Personnel Director. The interview process understandably takes time for hiring departments—as discussed in Finding 2, Personnel has established many specific requirements for departments to follow during the interview process and we make several recommendations to Personnel to help streamline these requirements. At the same time, there are steps hiring departments could take to streamline the interview process. For example:

- ***The City should require departments to begin assembling the interview packet and interview panel once they submit the requisition to Personnel, while departments wait for the list of applicants.*** Beginning assembly of the required interview packet during the 42 days departments wait for a certified list of applicants could mean departments begin setting up interviews as soon as they get the list, resulting in less time spent overall in the interview process and contacting candidates sooner. The Public Utilities Department stated that it has had success with its staff using this approach. According to Personnel, it trains departments to begin assembling the interview packet early and recommends departments do so when it opens a recruitment.
- ***The City should create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access.*** Part of the interview packet that takes time to complete is a required job analysis, which helps identify job factors that become the basis of the interview questions and candidate ratings. Personnel requires these documents be completed for each interview, which takes time for departments. However, many positions in the City have similar job factors and therefore could benefit from sharing job analyses and resulting interview questions. According

12 Positions that required a recruitment means the position the hiring department wanted to fill was in a classification for which Personnel did not already have an eligible list of applicants. When a list of eligible applicants from a prior recruitment already exists, a new recruitment is not required.

to Personnel, its new Outstation staff are already working on this centralized bank, but Personnel needs the information from hiring departments so that it can centralize the information.

- ***The City should coordinate joint interviews for positions shared by multiple departments, if the departments wish.*** Departments reported that setting up the required three-person interview panel takes time and may be difficult with supervisors' busy schedules.[13] Departments expressed interest in conducting more joint interviews when multiple departments are hiring for the same job classification. For example, the Engineering and Capital Projects Department was interested in conducting joint interviews with the Development Services Department for Senior Civil Engineers because it believed the process would be more efficient. In another example, according to the City, conducting joint interviews at its job fair in March of 2023 was highly successful.

Departments expressed interest in conducting more joint interviews.

We found that on average for our sample, once the hiring departments selected their candidate and extended a conditional offer, the background check, the medical check, and other requirements took 41 days to complete before the employee's official start date. We also discuss efficiencies to the background and medical check process in Finding 2.

The City's lengthy hiring process negatively impacts City services, existing employees, and applicants.

The length of time to fill positions contributes to the City's vacancy rates, which impacts City services. In October 2022, more than 1,000 (more than 15 percent) of the City's budgeted classified not-sworn positions were vacant. In nine departments, 25 percent or more of these budgeted positions were vacant. Vacant positions negatively impact the services the City can provide, meaning fewer potholes can be filled or streetlights replaced, for example.

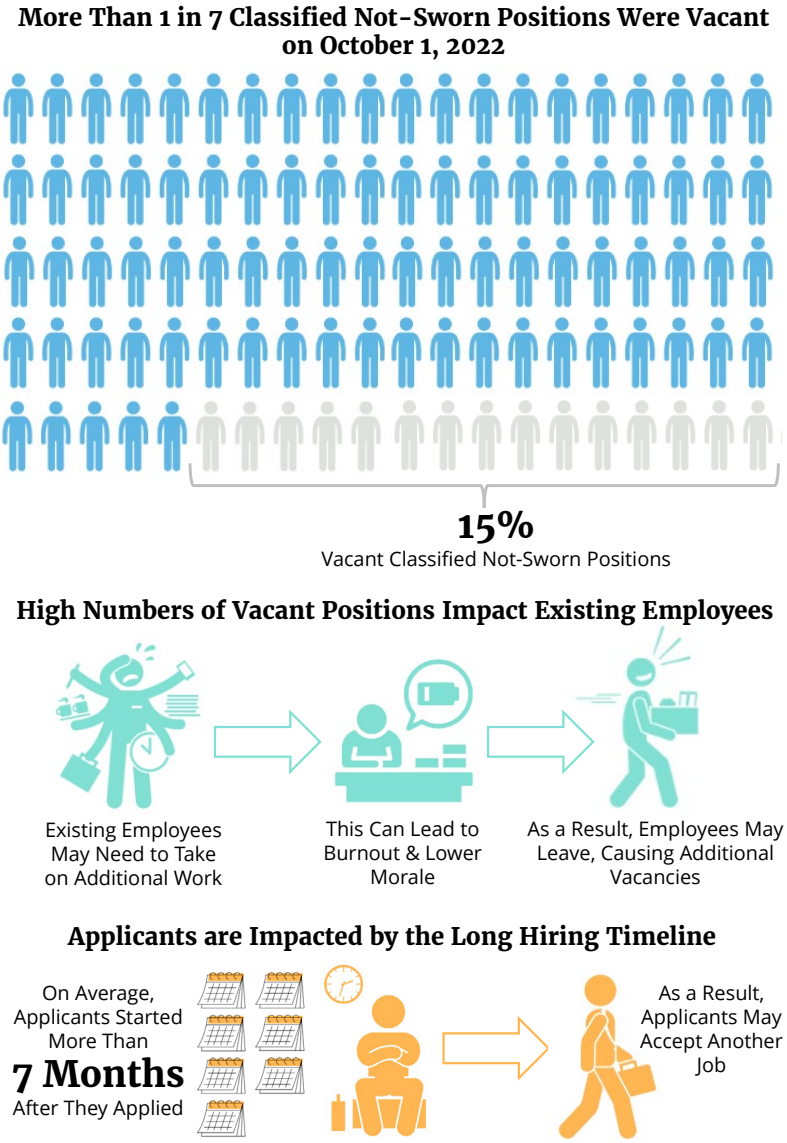
High numbers of vacant positions also impact existing employees. Employees may take on additional work and work more overtime to get the job done, which can lead to burnout, lower morale, and eventually more vacancies if employees leave as a result.

13 Personnel notes that although the panel chair must be a City employee, departments can use employees from other departments, outside agencies, or a member of the public to make up the panel. According to Personnel, a diverse three-person panel contributes to a diverse workforce and allows departments to continue the hiring process if one of the three panelists cannot continue the interview process for any reason.

The long hiring timeline also impacts the applicants that the City can hire. On average, applicants started the position 224 days (more than 7 months) after they applied. Hiring departments reported that often when they reach out to applicants to interview or to offer the job after the interview, applicants had already accepted another job. Not only does this mean the City is losing out on some of its top applicants, but it also means departments then must spend additional time in the hiring process rather than on providing City services. These negative impacts are illustrated in **Exhibit 9** below.

Exhibit 9

Taking a Long Time to Hire Negatively Impacts the City



Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP and Personnel; sampled data from SAP, Personnel, and NEOGOV; and interviews with hiring departments.

Hiring at the City takes so long because the overall hiring timeline is not transparent, there is no centralized oversight of hiring departments, and there is no expert on the Administration side driving efficiency.

The City Charter states that the Civil Service Commission has supervision over the selection, promotion, and removal of all classified employees. However, this does not prohibit the City Administration from designating an entity responsible for coordinating hiring departments under the Administration, holding them accountable for hiring timelines, and advocating for more efficient and effective practices while still complying with the Civil Service Rules.

There is little transparency into the complete hiring timeline.

Personnel administers NEOGOV, the main system that stores dates for key phases in the hiring process, and therefore has much of the hiring process timeline data. In order for the City to have a complete picture of the hiring timeline, the City Administration and Personnel need to share information from NEOGOV and other key dates in the process.

The Administration does not have goals or measures for how long key phases in the hiring process take.

Although Personnel collects and reports data for its portion of the hiring timeline, it does not have insight into how long key phases in the departments' interviewing process take. Hiring departments do not keep this information in an accessible manner, so hiring departments also have little insight into the timeline, making it difficult for the Administration to identify and quantify problem areas in the process and advocate for improvements.

Further, the Civil Service Commission, the City Council, and City Administration leadership do not receive regular updates on the hiring timeline. The Office of the Independent Budget Analyst (IBA) recommended in 2014 that the Administration and Personnel develop hiring timeline goals. To date, Personnel has goals for its portion of the timeline, but the Administration does not have any overall goals and does not have goals or measures for key phases in the process, such as the time it takes hiring departments to submit a requisition. Without this information, City leadership cannot identify problem areas in the process and hold hiring departments accountable for the hiring timeline.

The Administration cannot effectively oversee the process without reliable information.

Without systematic insight into the process, the phases in the process that take the longest, and the issues that arise across departments, the Administration appears to rely mostly on anecdotes rather than objective analyses to understand the issues in the hiring process. As a result, the Administration often points to Personnel as the major factor driving the hiring timeline, while the data from our sample indicates the majority of the timeline rests with hiring departments. While some of this time may be spent carrying out complex processes established by Personnel and the Civil Service Commission (as discussed in Finding 2), centralized monitoring by the Administration would help identify and quantify issues, and more effectively advocate for improvements and innovation.

The Administration often points to Personnel as driving the hiring timeline, while our data indicates the majority of the timeline rests with hiring departments.

The Civil Service Commission cannot effectively oversee the process without information from all key parties.

In addition to the Administration lacking insight into the process and timeline, the Civil Service Commission also does not receive information from all key parties on the hiring timeline and processes that may impact it. Although the City Charter charges the Civil Service Commission with overseeing the hiring process, the Commission does not receive regular updates on the hiring process or hiring timeline in its meetings. Recently, Personnel presented the Action Plan on its process changes, but the Action Plan does not contain updates on the hiring timeline and there was no presentation or comment from the Administration on the Action Plan.

Additionally, the Commission does not regularly receive information on concerns with the process raised by the Administration or any direct information from the hiring departments the hiring process serves. Without information from key stakeholders in the process, the Commission members rely on Personnel for their information, which may hinder the Commission's ability to oversee Personnel.

Centralized oversight of hiring departments and a more active role of the Administration is necessary to ensure an efficient hiring process.

Hiring departments' managers are busy overseeing the crucial tasks of operating the City—repaving damaged streets, confirming buildings are safe to live in, putting out fires—thus, hiring issues must compete with these critical responsibilities for the managers' time and attention. Further, much of the hiring process may fall upon the supervisors themselves, who often have to take on more work because of vacancies and then have the added task of interviewing and rating candidates to fill vacancies. However, when more than one in seven budgeted positions in the City is vacant, vacancies begin to have a negative impact on the operations of the City and hiring should be elevated to a priority.

The Administration could establish timeline goals and monitor trends within departments and Citywide.

If the Administration created a central point of oversight and coordination, it could establish timeline goals and monitor trends and timelines within departments and Citywide. The central point of oversight could work with hiring departments to continuously review timelines, determine what is contributing to them, and advocate for change. The Administration could present necessary changes to the City Council, the Civil Service Commission, or Personnel from the scope of all hiring departments, rather than hiring departments presenting issues to Personnel anecdotally and as they have time.

Creating a permanent role increases accountability and could ensure longer-term oversight.

Although our office, the Office of the Independent Budget Analyst (IBA), and the Personnel Working Group have made recommendations to improve the hiring process over time, no one party ensures that there is continuous improvement above and beyond those recommendations. In 2013 and 2014, the IBA found many of the same issues we found in this audit: hiring departments make up the bulk of the hiring timeline, Personnel's forms require a lot of administrative work, and the City should set timelines for key phases in the hiring process. We make recommendations to address these issues again in this audit, but these issues have been persistent for the last ten years and addressing them requires establishing centralized oversight and monitoring within the Administration.

In 2013 and 2014, the IBA found many of the same issues we found in this audit.

The persistent nature of these issues indicates working groups or periodic audits will not address the core issue—it is ultimately unclear who is responsible for driving hiring efficiency.

If the City shared more resources across departments through a central point, the hiring process could be more streamlined.

Collecting and reviewing the data for the timeline alone will not solve the persistent issues with the hiring timeline. Creating a central point of oversight and coordination for the Administration would make it clear who can hold Mayoral hiring departments accountable and who is ultimately responsible for driving efficiencies in the hiring timeline, including identifying and proposing efficiencies to the Civil Service Commission. This central point of oversight could also facilitate hiring as a City, rather than hiring being siloed between different departments. If the City shared more resources and information across departments through a central point, the hiring process could be more streamlined. For example:

- ***The City should require departments to record the results of their interviews and candidate ratings electronically in a centralized location, allowing the City to analyze the information to measure the quality of the applicants.*** Currently, Personnel requires departments to keep the results of their interviews and candidate ratings, but hiring departments are not required to store the results in a centralized location or electronically. By keeping the results electronically, the information could be used to analyze the success of the recruitment process and provide feedback on the quality of candidates on the eligible list. Several departments reported that the quality of the candidates on the list was subpar and wanted changes so that Personnel would provide higher quality candidates. However, departments do not keep the results of their interviews in a central location for analysis so there was no overall rating information on candidate pools.

By keeping interview results electronically, the Administration could give feedback on the quality of candidates on the lists Personnel provides.

- ***The City should allow departments, if they wish, to see and consider other departments' candidate ratings when selecting who to interview for their vacant position.*** Departments across the City occasionally hire for the same position using the same pool of applicants. Departments expressed interest in having access to how other departments rated the candidates (highly qualified, qualified, minimally qualified) on the list after the interviews. This information could allow departments further insight into which applicants they may want to interview for their own vacancy in the same position, saving the City time and resources overall.
- ***The City should require departments to close certifications in NEOGOV once the position has been filled.*** Personnel and hiring departments noted that old certifications can sit in NEOGOV

for years without being closed, creating confusion about which recruitments have finished and which have not. Position numbers may have 5–10 past certifications, forcing Personnel analysts and hiring departments to sort through additional data to confirm the position is vacant again. Additionally, when closing certifications, hiring departments fill out information about the process, including who was interviewed, who was not interviewed, and who was selected for the job. This information would be helpful to assess the efficacy of the recruitment and hiring process, but the information cannot be relied upon if departments do not consistently enter the information. If the certification has been open for 2 years, the maximum amount of time an eligible list is viable, and has not been filled, Personnel could close it in NEOGOV themselves. This would ensure hiring data is clear and up to date, and sets a clear deadline for departments to finish entering relevant information.

- ***The City should train departments on existing processes that may expedite the hiring process, including joint interviews, sharing interview results across departments, and transfer process options.*** Both hiring department directors and Personnel noted that Personnel will work with hiring departments to expedite the process or accommodate departments' needs when it can, departments just need to ask. While working with departments to meet the City's needs is commendable and appreciated, the City has hundreds of staff working in NEOGOV across numerous departments, according to Personnel. The City's processes and opportunities for efficiency would serve the City better if they were known to all hiring managers, rather than only those who call Personnel to ask. Identifying these expediting processes, such as only using an existing transfer list or using the "transfer name only" process, and training hiring managers on the best cases to use these options, could streamline some of the hiring processes and cut down on the questions hiring departments have to go to Personnel for.

Hiring processes and opportunities for efficiencies would serve the City better if they were known to all hiring managers.

The Administration and Personnel have begun working together to address some issues.

In 2022, the Personnel Working Group was created with members from Personnel and the Administration. The Working Group has been seeking to address the City's high vacancy rates and lengthy hiring process. Personnel created an Action Plan to address some of the Administration's concerns and has reported on it to the City Council and the Civil Service Commission. According to both Personnel and City leadership, this collaborative effort has generated positive ideas. Our recommendations would help strengthen this effort and would work to bolster the Administration's role and the quality of information provided to the City Council and the Civil Service Commission.

The hiring timeline is just one of many factors that may affect City hiring and potentially increase the vacancy rate.

The City Council, City Administration, and Personnel have all been working to address vacancies across the City and have raised several factors they believe contribute to the high number of vacancies. These factors also may affect the hiring timeline:

- ***Salaries have not been competitive.*** The City Council, City hiring departments, Personnel, and Civil Service Commissioners have all raised concerns that the City does not pay high enough salaries to attract and retain workers. According to the Personnel and hiring departments, this affects the hiring process by attracting fewer qualified applicants and in some cases means the recruitment and interview process needs to be done multiple times to identify sufficient candidates. In 2020, OCA's Strategic Human Capital Management Audit[14] found numerous impacts of low salaries on the City's workforce and made recommendations aimed at using a data-driven approach to compensation.[15] In addition, hiring departments, Personnel, and the Civil Service Commission have recommended salary increases for many classifications and City Council has approved salary increases in recent budgets.
- ***Outdated job classifications.*** According to the Administration, the job classifications for many positions in the City are outdated. This would make the hiring process more complex, as hiring

14 https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/20-011_humancapitalmanagement.pdf

15 As a result of this audit, the City has adopted a compensation philosophy and more consistently monitors turnover and recruiting trends.

departments must hire based on the job classification, rather than the specific position, and the job classification does not always accurately reflect the duties of the specific position. As a result, candidates on the eligible to hire list may not have the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a hiring department actually desires, delaying the hiring process. Alternatively, hiring departments may request a reclassification, which also delays the hiring process.

- ***Outdated technology.*** Hiring departments and Personnel complete much of the hiring process through individual forms, emails, memos, and sometimes paper files. In Finding 2, we detail the administrative burden this creates for hiring departments. The cumulative impact of these requirements contributes to the timeframe to hire, so we make recommendations for Personnel to streamline the required forms for hiring departments and applicants, and for the Administration to continue to identify and advocate for streamlined processes as well. However, according to some in the Administration, the process should be entirely automated. Our report does not prevent the hiring process from being automated. If automation streamlined the forms required for the process, it would likely implement Recommendation 2.2.

Recommendations

We compared the City with several large cities in California and entities the City may compete with for staff, listed in the textbox, and did not find a consistent model for hiring that appeared to increase the efficiency of the hiring timeline.[16] Some cities' Personnel Departments reported to the Mayor or City Manager instead of the Civil Service Commission, but their hiring timeline estimates sometimes took longer than similar timeframes in our sample. Some entities hire through a merit-based system but not through the civil service process, which appeared to be more expedient in some cases, although the entities reported that they did not have reliable data. However, in the City of San Diego, hiring outside of the civil service process still took 239 days, indicating significant issues exist beyond civil service hiring practices. Ultimately, the issues outlined above require a centralized, sustained approach and a clear entity with expertise in hiring to be accountable for the hiring timeline. OCA has no position on any existing or potential initiatives to have the Personnel Department report to the Chief Operating Officer. However, we found that regardless of the City's structure for hiring, the City Administration should designate a party who reports to the Chief Operating Officer that will maintain responsibility for overseeing, advocating for, and reporting on the hiring timeline and hiring initiatives. This can be achieved while keeping the existing structure of Personnel and the Civil Service Commission or could fit into any future structure of City hiring.

Recommendation 1.1

The Chief Operating Officer should designate a central point of oversight and coordination for hiring departments' hiring of classified employees. The designated party should be responsible for overseeing, monitoring, and reporting on the hiring timeline and hiring initiatives, and advocating for hiring improvements within the City Administration as well as the Personnel Department.

(Priority 2)

City Administration Management Response: Agree [See full response beginning on page 59.]

Target Implementation Date: January 31, 2024

16 Cities and public entities used for benchmarking: City of Fresno, City of Long Beach, City of Los Angeles, City of Sacramento, City and County of San Francisco, City of San Jose, City of Chula Vista, County of San Diego, Port of San Diego, and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

Recommendation 1.2

The City Administration's central point of oversight and coordination should collect data on the key phases in the hiring process by department (for all City departments) and report that data to a City Council committee and the Civil Service Commission on a regular basis, at least annually. The City Administration should share this information, as well as where each position is in the hiring process, with City departments through a dashboard or other accessible means so department directors may conduct regular monitoring. The key phases in the hiring process timeline reported on could include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Vacancy date to date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department;

b. Date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department to date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department;

c. Date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department to date the department began interviewing candidates;

d. Date the department began interviewing candidates to date the department made the conditional offer for the position; and

e. Date the department made the conditional offer to candidate's first day in the position.

The City Administration should also set goals for each timeframe in the hiring process, similar to the federal government's Office of Personnel Management. Development of this dashboard or other tracking system and timeframe should involve input from the Personnel Department.

(Priority 2)

City Administration Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 60.]

City Administration Target Implementation Date: To Be Determined

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 66.]

Personnel Department Target Implementation Date: December 2023

Recommendation 1.3

The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to establish a method to regularly provide information on the hiring timeline to the Administration, such as through providing read-only access to NEOGOV or periodic custom reporting that meets the Administration's needs. The Personnel Department should participate in the creation of any tracking systems or processes necessary to allow the Administration to implement Recommendations 1.2 and 1.6.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 66.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2023

Recommendation 1.4

The City Administration should establish a policy to determine, at least annually, if there are administrative requirements or other barriers contributing to the length of time phases of the hiring process take, such as the time to submit a requisition or the complex nature of the applicant tracking system, and propose changes to City practices, Personnel Regulations, or Civil Service Rules to make the process more efficient and effective.

(Priority 2)

City Administration Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 61.]

Target Implementation Date: To Be Determined

Recommendation 1.5

The Personnel Department should establish a method to ensure the City Administration can request to present to the Civil Service Commission as part of the docketed agenda at any Civil Service Commission meetings. The Personnel Department should communicate the process to the City Administration and the City Administration's central point of contact. The process should also be easily locatable on Personnel's website or intranet site.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 67]

Target Implementation Date: October 2023

Recommendation 1.6

The City Administration should facilitate sharing information across departments to allow hiring departments to expedite the hiring process, including but not limited to the following:

a. Provide information to the Personnel Department so it can create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access;

b. Require departments to begin assembling the interview packet and interview panel once they submit the requisition to the Personnel Department, while they wait for the list of applicants;

c. Require departments to record the results of their interviews and candidate ratings electronically in a centralized location;

d. Report on the overall percent of candidates interviewed from applicant lists and the percent that fell into each category rating (highly qualified, qualified, and minimally qualified). As needed, break this percentage out by position or recruitment to demonstrate necessary changes to recruitments or identify recruitments that went well.

e. Allow departments, if they wish, to see and consider other departments' candidate ratings (highly qualified, qualified, minimally qualified) when selecting who to interview for their vacant position;

f. Require departments to close certifications in NEOGOV once the position has been filled. If the position is not filled within 2 years, the maximum amount of time an eligible list is viable, the Personnel Department should systematically close the requisition in NEOGOV;

g. Coordinate joint interviews for positions shared by multiple departments, if the departments wish; and

h. Train departments on existing processes that may expedite the hiring process, including joint interviews, sharing interview results across departments, and transfer process options.

(Priority 2)

City Administration Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 63.]

City Administration Target Implementation Date: To Be Determined

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree [See full response beginning on page 67.]

Personnel Department Target Implementation Date: December 2024

Recommendation 1.7

The Personnel Department should create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access. The Personnel Department should obtain input from the City Administration on how to develop and maintain this bank so that it is useful to hiring departments.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 68.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2024

Recommendation 1.8

The Personnel Department should identify any changes necessary to better facilitate joint interviews across hiring departments. The Personnel Department should obtain input from the City Administration on what is difficult about the current process and design a process that considers the Administration's input. The Personnel Department should implement these changes or propose changes to the Personnel Regulations or Civil Service Rules to the Civil Service Commission and/or the City Council for their consideration, as necessary.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 68.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2023

Finding 2

The Personnel Department can better balance its focus on fairness in hiring with efficiency by streamlining Personnel regulations and practices.

Finding Summary

Because the Personnel Department (Personnel) is focused on safeguarding against a spoils system, it has created a detailed, extensive process to hire employees fairly. However, while each individual step in the process may have value, the totality of the requirements creates an administrative burden on hiring departments and applicants. The total process requires more than 60 steps and applicants on average did not start their new position until 224 days (more than 7 months) after they applied. Therefore, the process may currently favor applicants who can wait 7 months for a job over merit.

The City Charter, Civil Service Rules, and Personnel Regulations set out the classified hiring process that Personnel, hiring departments, and applicants must follow. As illustrated later in **Exhibit 12**, many layers of policy dictate the process. We found that the City Charter requirements and the Civil Service Rules related to hiring are largely broad enough to facilitate efficient and effective hiring practices while maintaining a fair civil service process. However, Personnel Regulations and Personnel Department practices used to carry out the process go beyond the requirements of the Civil Service Rules. In many cases, these requirements appear to slow the process without providing commensurate value.

In this finding, we recommend 14 specific process improvements that Personnel can implement to streamline the hiring process and place less of a burden on hiring departments, Personnel staff, and prospective employees. Additionally, as recommended in Finding 1, Personnel should collaborate with the City Administration to review the hiring process and make additional process and policy adjustments that will allow for more efficiency in the hiring process while still upholding merit principles. Quick hiring should not come at the cost of fairness, but fairness should not come at the cost of efficient and effective hiring.

It should be noted that Personnel has been actively working with the City Administration on process improvements, as detailed in the Personnel Department Action Plan. Changes include increasing the number of classifications continuously recruited for, increasing frequency of recruitment publishing, reinstating Outstation and Recruiting divisions, and distributing a recruitment experience questionnaire to departments to garner feedback.

The hiring process requires more than 60 steps, creating a cumulative burden for hiring departments.

The current hiring process for City classified not-sworn employees took approximately 9 months on average to complete and consists of more than 60 steps.[17] The process begins when a hiring department becomes aware of a vacancy and concludes when an employee is hired and begins work. **Exhibit 10** depicts the classified hiring process steps based on our reviews of documentation, interviews with several Personnel division staff, and interviews with several hiring departments.

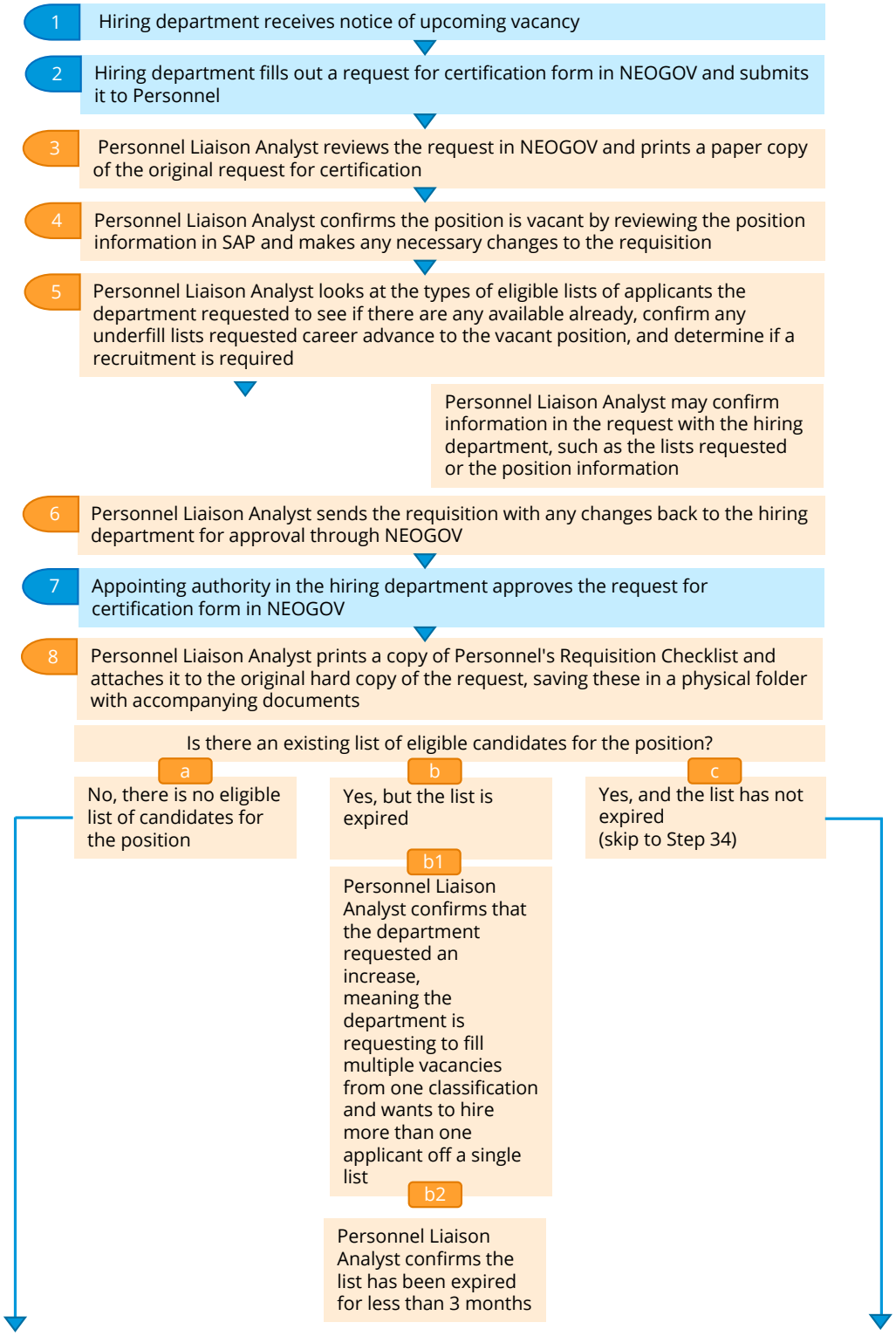
While each step individually may seem justifiable, collectively, the steps create an administrative burden that overwhelms the hiring process.

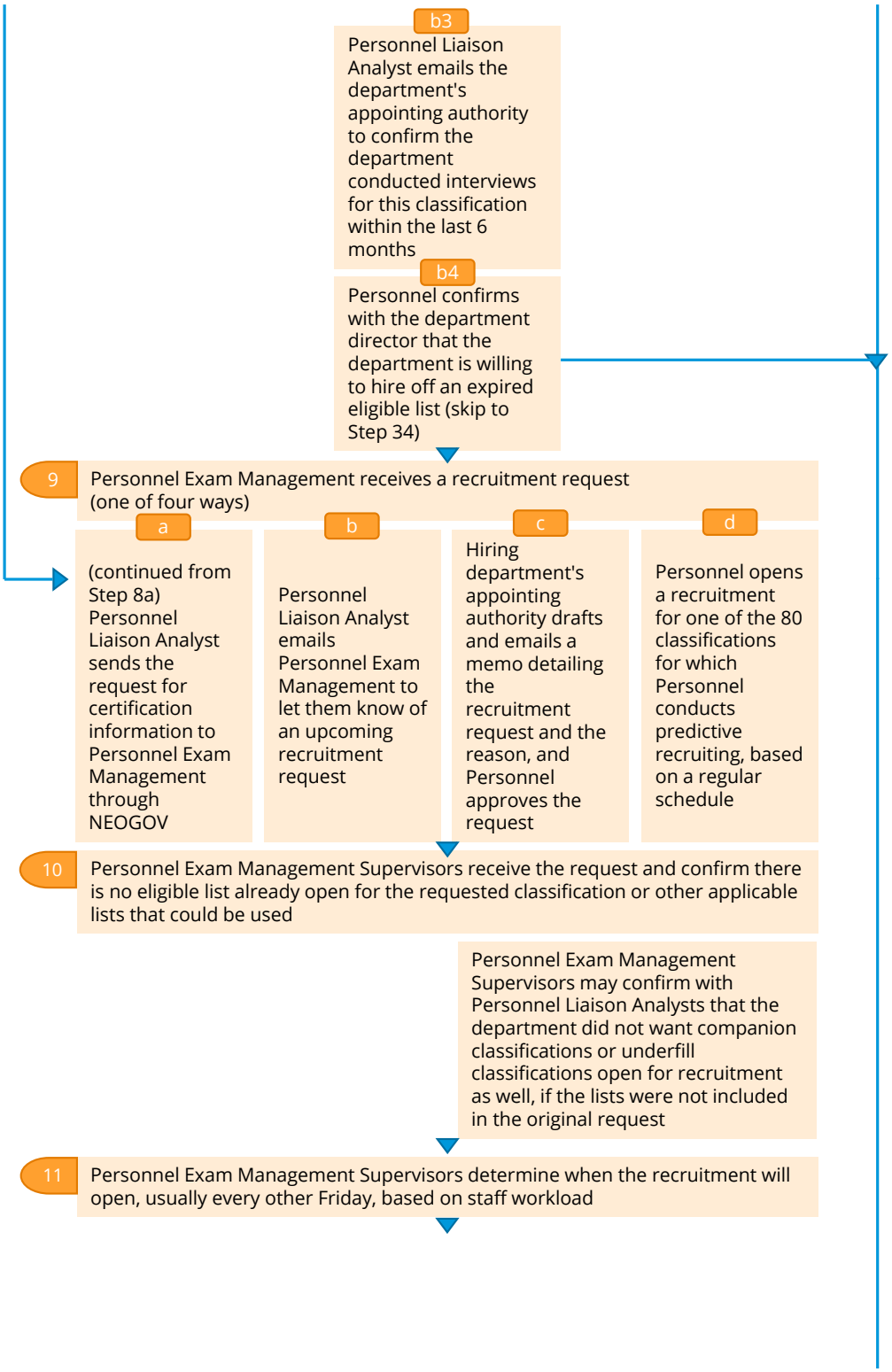
A hiring process that involves numerous steps can increase the time it takes to hire in several ways. Each additional step in the process requires applicants, Personnel, and hiring departments to invest time and resources. According to both hiring departments and Personnel, the back-and-forth exchange of forms and information between the parties involved also requires much coordination, which further lengthens the time it takes to fill a vacancy. A vast majority of the steps in the process involve feedback and decision making, especially when delays or appeals arise, as mentioned by the hiring departments. While each step of the hiring process may seem justifiable when considered individually, collectively, the steps create an administrative burden that overwhelms the hiring process.

17 The timeline is discussed in Finding 1.

Exhibit 10

The Current Classified Hiring Process Requires More Than 60 Steps and is a Mix of Entering Information in NEOGOV, SAP, Word Documents, PDF Documents, Emails, Memos, and Paper Copies




b3
Personnel Liaison Analyst emails the department's appointing authority to confirm the department conducted interviews for this classification within the last 6 months
b4
Personnel confirms with the department director that the department is willing to hire off an expired eligible list (skip to Step 34)
9
Personnel Exam Management receives a recruitment request (one of four ways)
a
(continued from Step 8a) Personnel Liaison Analyst sends the request for certification information to Personnel Exam Management through NEOGOV
b
Personnel Liaison Analyst emails Personnel Exam Management to let them know of an upcoming recruitment request
c
Hiring department's appointing authority drafts and emails a memo detailing the recruitment request and the reason, and Personnel approves the request
d
Personnel opens a recruitment for one of the 80 classifications for which Personnel conducts predictive recruiting, based on a regular schedule
10
Personnel Exam Management Supervisors receive the request and confirm there is no eligible list already open for the requested classification or other applicable lists that could be used
Personnel Exam Management Supervisors may confirm with Personnel Liaison Analysts that the department did not want companion classifications or underfill classifications open for recruitment as well, if the lists were not included in the original request
11
Personnel Exam Management Supervisors determine when the recruitment will open, usually every other Friday, based on staff workload

12 Personnel Exam Management Supervisors assign the certification request to an analyst and email the Exam Management Analyst the recruitment details

13 Personnel Exam Management Analyst sets up an exam plan for the recruitment in NEOGOV (this is not connected to the department's request made through NEOGOV)

14 Personnel Exam Management Analyst makes a folder in the shared Personnel drive of all documents for each request and receives or makes a hard copy folder of all prior exam announcements for the classification

15 Personnel Exam Management Analyst researches the classification to find any updates since the last recruitment for the classification, such as salary or minimum qualification changes

16 Personnel Exam Management Analyst drafts or updates the job posting; the position's minimum qualifications; the supplemental questions asked in the job application; the position's knowledge, skills, and abilities list; and other relevant information

17 Personnel Exam Management Analyst sends the requesting department and any department that hires the classification the job posting; the position's minimum qualifications; the supplemental questions asked in the job application; the position's knowledge, skills, and abilities list; and other information to review and confirm

18 The requesting hiring department's subject matter expert on the classification reviews the documents and provides edits or feedback

19 The other hiring departments' subject matter experts on the classification review the documents and provide edits or feedback, if they wish

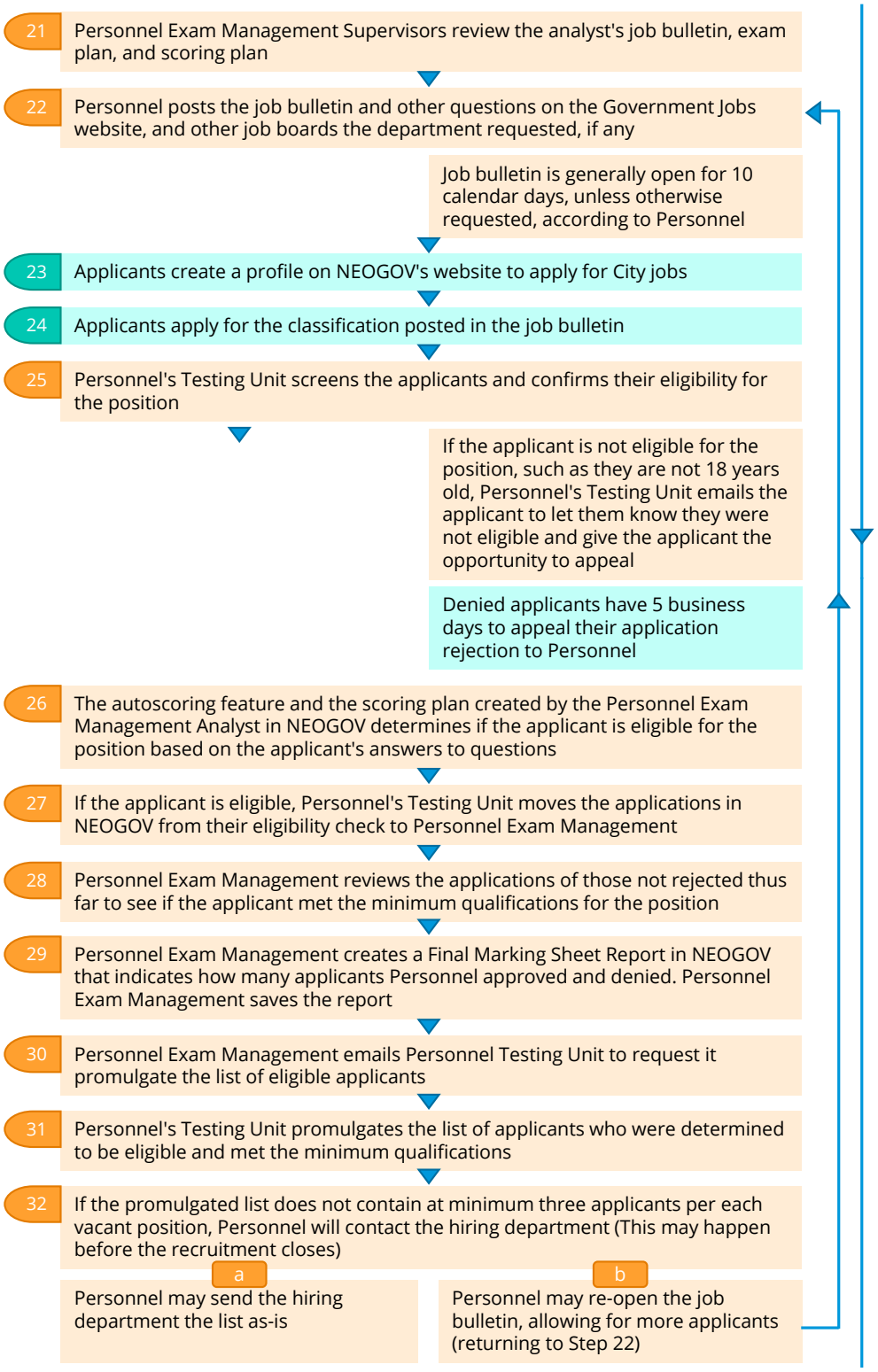
If departments request changes, the Personnel Exam Management Analyst emails those changes to the hiring departments for their review and input

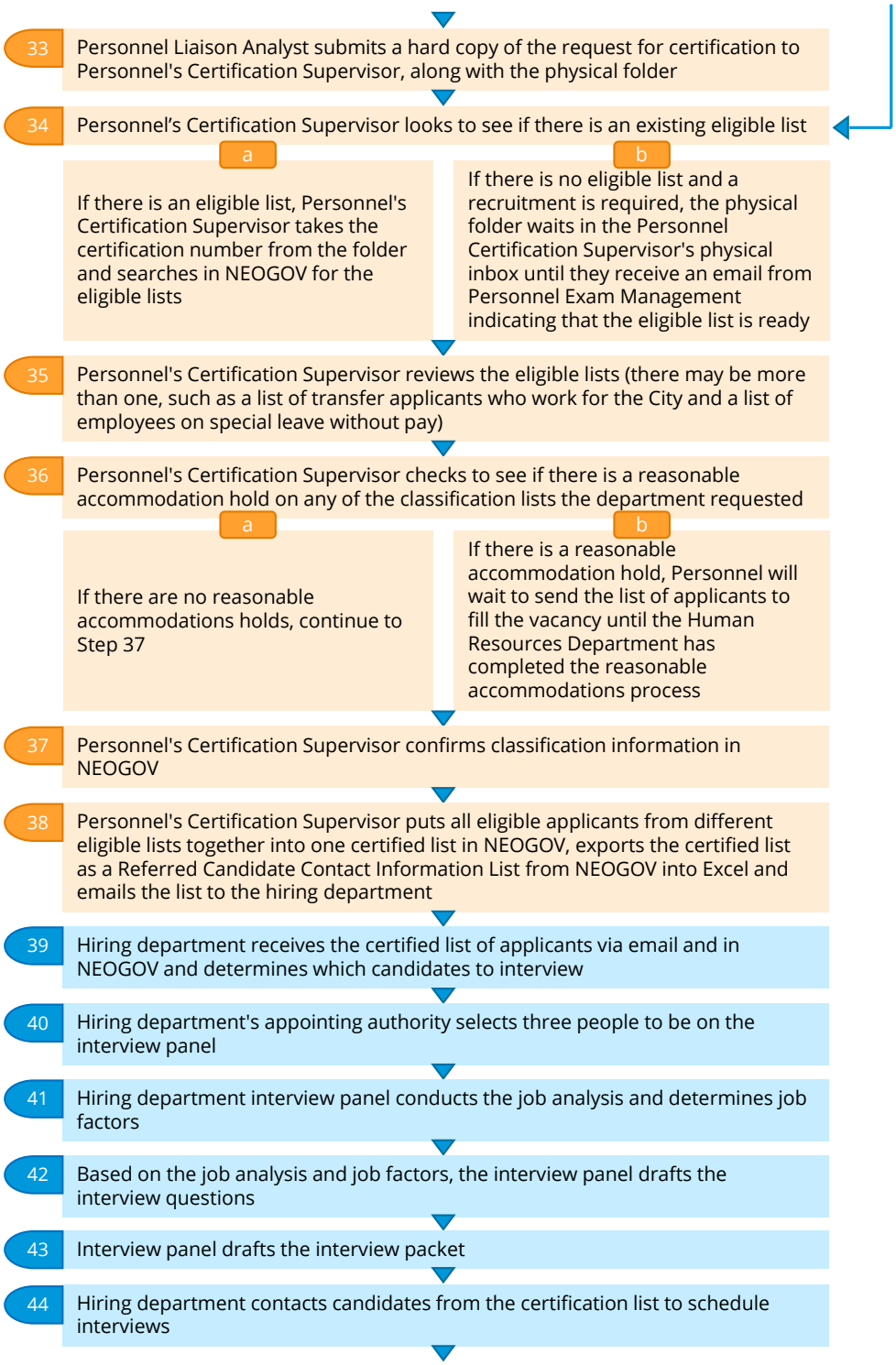
If the hiring department requests changes to the classification's minimum qualifications, Personnel requires the hiring department submit a memo describing the changes and why they are necessary

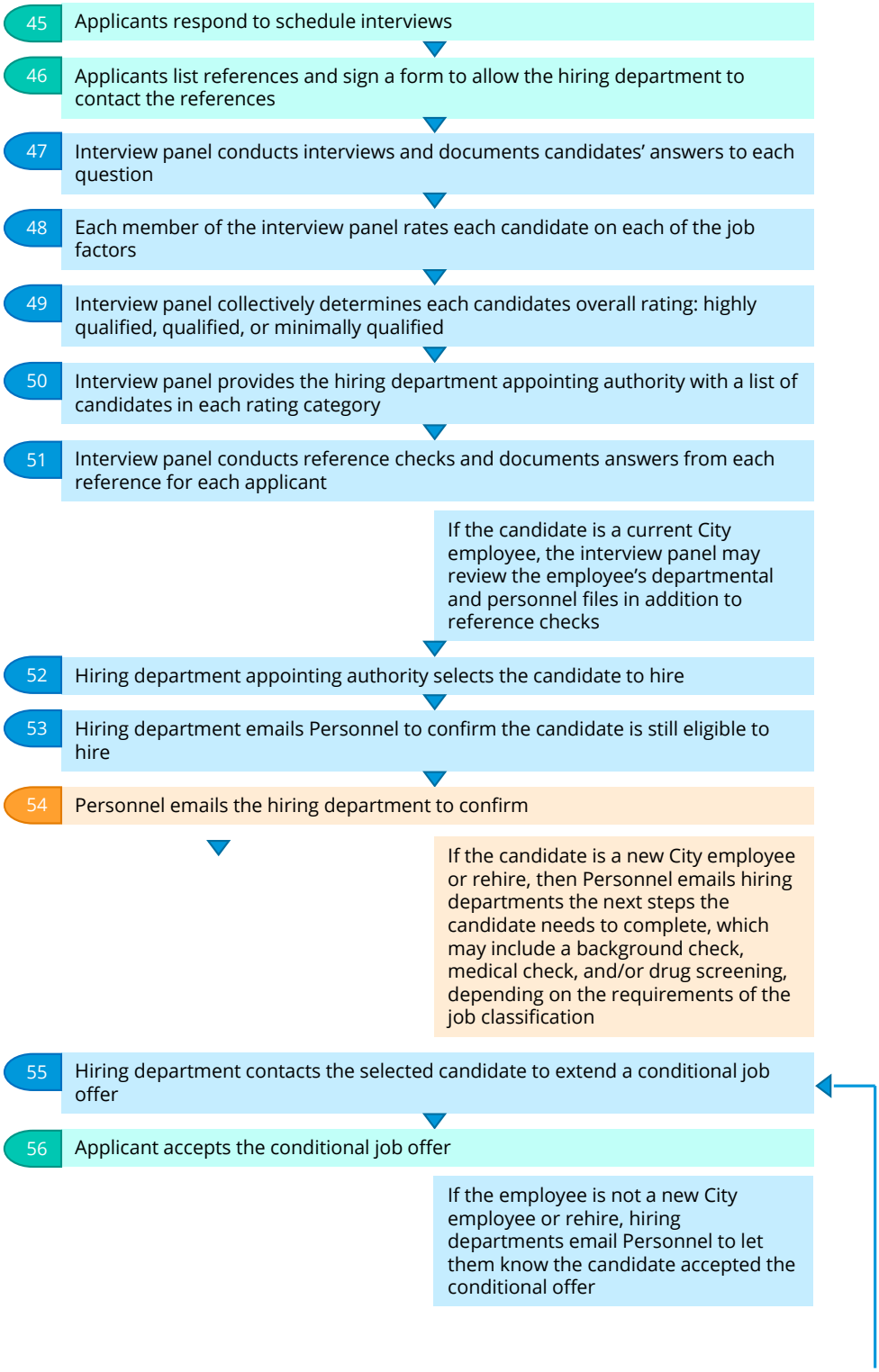
Personnel Exam Management Analyst reviews the memo and approves or denies the requested changes to minimum qualifications

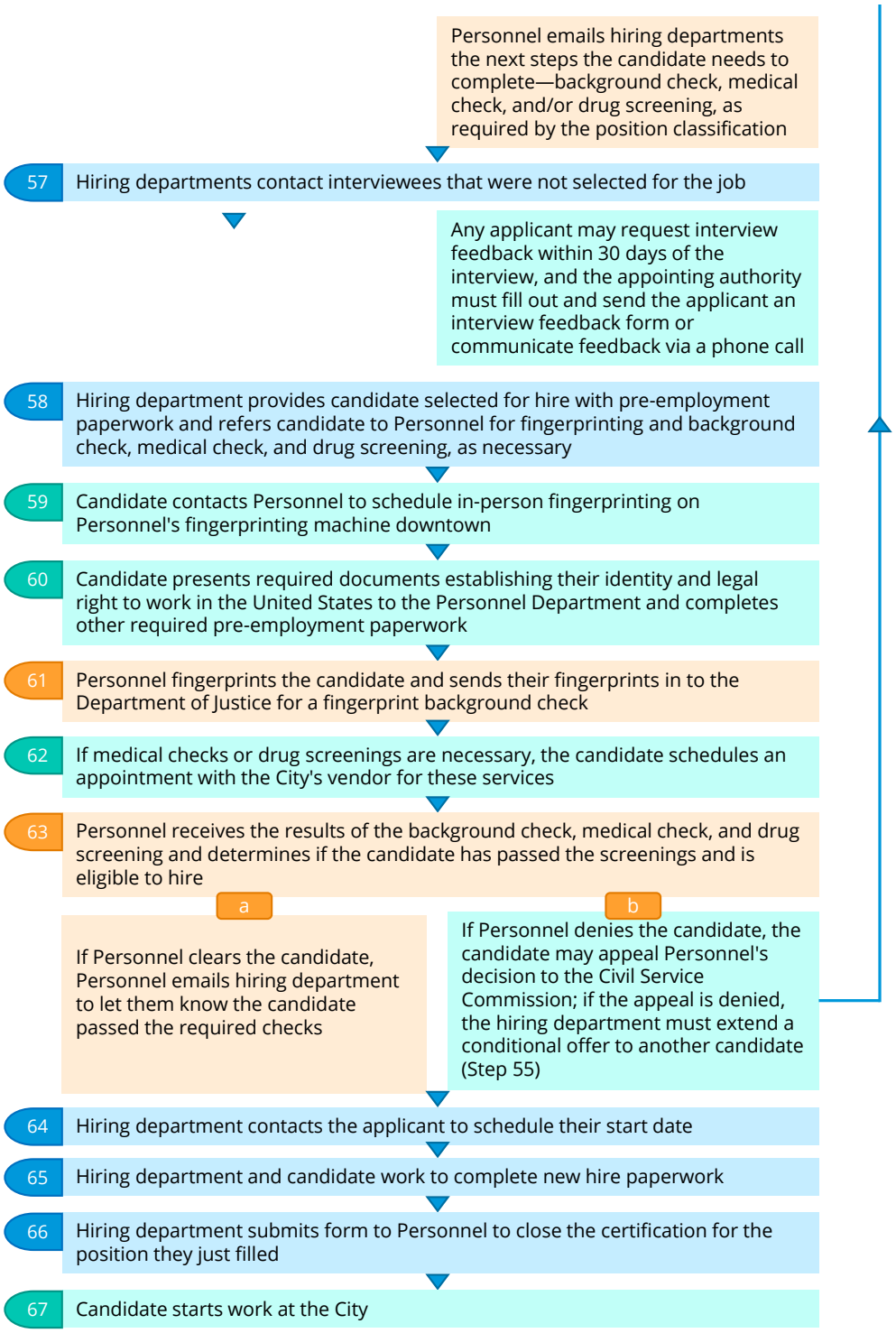
If denied, the hiring department may appeal to the Personnel Director

20 Personnel Exam Management Analyst creates a scoring plan in NEOGOV, so each application is autoscored based on answers to the minimum qualifications and supplemental questions


21 Personnel Exam Management Supervisors review the analyst's job bulletin, exam plan, and scoring plan
22 Personnel posts the job bulletin and other questions on the Government Jobs website, and other job boards the department requested, if any
Job bulletin is generally open for 10 calendar days, unless otherwise requested, according to Personnel
23 Applicants create a profile on NEOGOV's website to apply for City jobs
24 Applicants apply for the classification posted in the job bulletin
25 Personnel's Testing Unit screens the applicants and confirms their eligibility for the position
If the applicant is not eligible for the position, such as they are not 18 years old, Personnel's Testing Unit emails the applicant to let them know they were not eligible and give the applicant the opportunity to appeal
Denied applicants have 5 business days to appeal their application rejection to Personnel
26 The autoscoring feature and the scoring plan created by the Personnel Exam Management Analyst in NEOGOV determines if the applicant is eligible for the position based on the applicant's answers to questions
27 If the applicant is eligible, Personnel's Testing Unit moves the applications in NEOGOV from their eligibility check to Personnel Exam Management
28 Personnel Exam Management reviews the applications of those not rejected thus far to see if the applicant met the minimum qualifications for the position
29 Personnel Exam Management creates a Final Marking Sheet Report in NEOGOV that indicates how many applicants Personnel approved and denied. Personnel Exam Management saves the report
30 Personnel Exam Management emails Personnel Testing Unit to request it promulgate the list of eligible applicants
31 Personnel's Testing Unit promulgates the list of applicants who were determined to be eligible and met the minimum qualifications
32 If the promulgated list does not contain at minimum three applicants per each vacant position, Personnel will contact the hiring department (This may happen before the recruitment closes)
a
Personnel may send the hiring department the list as-is
b
Personnel may re-open the job bulletin, allowing for more applicants (returning to Step 22)


33 Personnel Liaison Analyst submits a hard copy of the request for certification to Personnel's Certification Supervisor, along with the physical folder
34 Personnel's Certification Supervisor looks to see if there is an existing eligible list
a
If there is an eligible list, Personnel's Certification Supervisor takes the certification number from the folder and searches in NEOGOV for the eligible lists
b
If there is no eligible list and a recruitment is required, the physical folder waits in the Personnel Certification Supervisor's physical inbox until they receive an email from Personnel Exam Management indicating that the eligible list is ready
35 Personnel's Certification Supervisor reviews the eligible lists (there may be more than one, such as a list of transfer applicants who work for the City and a list of employees on special leave without pay)
36 Personnel's Certification Supervisor checks to see if there is a reasonable accommodation hold on any of the classification lists the department requested
a
If there are no reasonable accommodations holds, continue to Step 37
b
If there is a reasonable accommodation hold, Personnel will wait to send the list of applicants to fill the vacancy until the Human Resources Department has completed the reasonable accommodations process
37 Personnel's Certification Supervisor confirms classification information in NEOGOV
38 Personnel's Certification Supervisor puts all eligible applicants from different eligible lists together into one certified list in NEOGOV, exports the certified list as a Referred Candidate Contact Information List from NEOGOV into Excel and emails the list to the hiring department
39 Hiring department receives the certified list of applicants via email and in NEOGOV and determines which candidates to interview
40 Hiring department's appointing authority selects three people to be on the interview panel
41 Hiring department interview panel conducts the job analysis and determines job factors
42 Based on the job analysis and job factors, the interview panel drafts the interview questions
43 Interview panel drafts the interview packet
44 Hiring department contacts candidates from the certification list to schedule interviews


45 Applicants respond to schedule interviews
46 Applicants list references and sign a form to allow the hiring department to contact the references
47 Interview panel conducts interviews and documents candidates' answers to each question
48 Each member of the interview panel rates each candidate on each of the job factors
49 Interview panel collectively determines each candidates overall rating: highly qualified, qualified, or minimally qualified
50 Interview panel provides the hiring department appointing authority with a list of candidates in each rating category
51 Interview panel conducts reference checks and documents answers from each reference for each applicant
If the candidate is a current City employee, the interview panel may review the employee's departmental and personnel files in addition to reference checks
52 Hiring department appointing authority selects the candidate to hire
53 Hiring department emails Personnel to confirm the candidate is still eligible to hire
54 Personnel emails the hiring department to confirm
If the candidate is a new City employee or rehire, then Personnel emails hiring departments the next steps the candidate needs to complete, which may include a background check, medical check, and/or drug screening, depending on the requirements of the job classification
55 Hiring department contacts the selected candidate to extend a conditional job offer
56 Applicant accepts the conditional job offer
If the employee is not a new City employee or rehire, hiring departments email Personnel to let them know the candidate accepted the conditional offer



Note: Some of these steps take significantly longer than others. For example, some steps conducted by Personnel, if there are no changes or questions, may be completed in a matter of minutes. On the other hand, if there are changes or questions, those same steps may take days of back-and-forth conversations with hiring departments. Additionally, in some cases, some of these steps may happen simultaneously or in a slightly different order.

Source: OCA generated based on process walkthroughs and interviews with Personnel, interviews with several hiring departments, the Appointing Authority Interview Training, and reviews of documents.

The extensiveness of the current hiring process makes it unclear and confusing.

Several hiring departments stated the hiring process is so extensive that they do not have a good understanding of all the steps it takes.

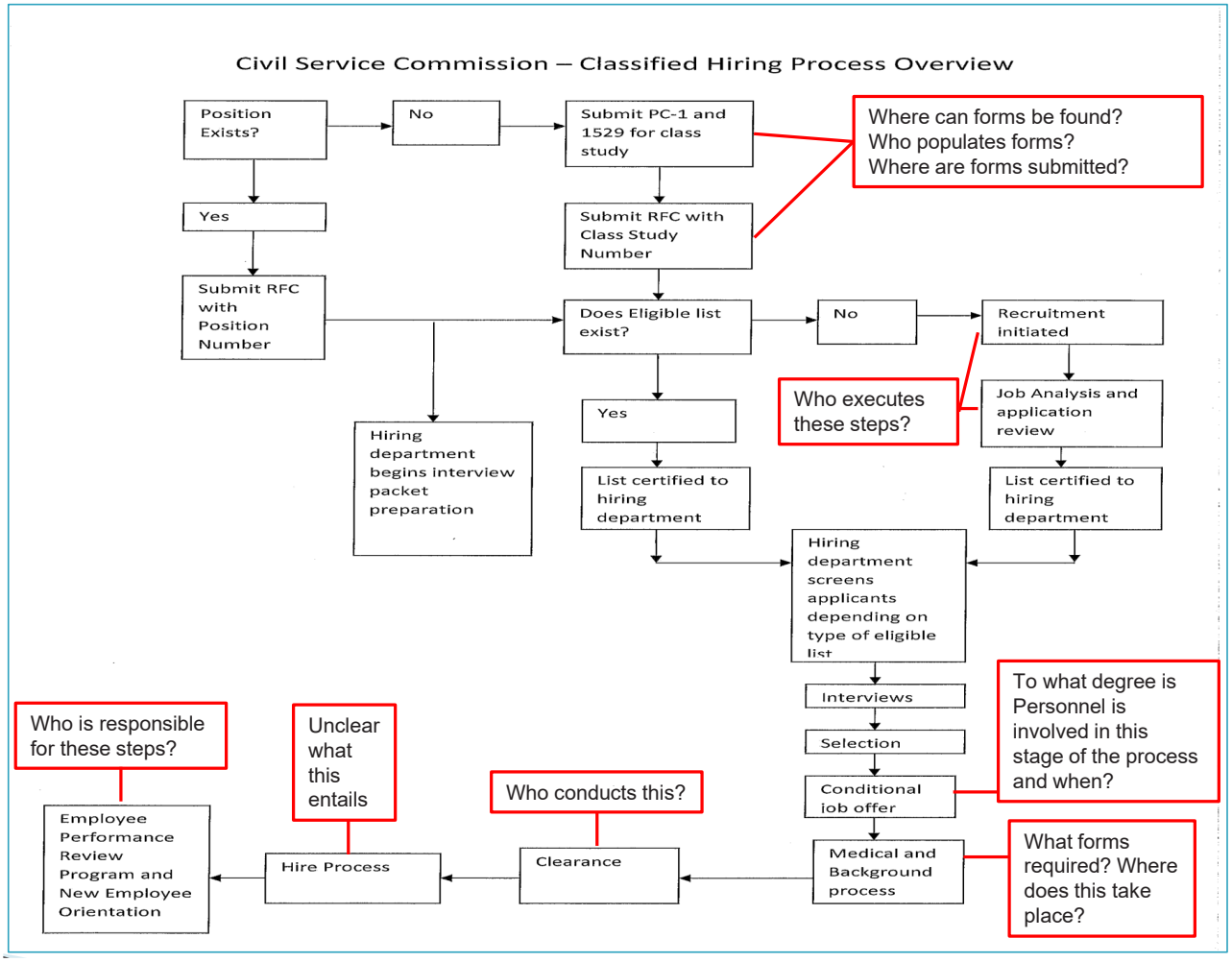
Several hiring departments we met with stated that the hiring process is so extensive that they do not have a good understanding of all the steps it takes to hire. Personnel, in a good faith effort to work with hiring departments, also compounds this problem by allowing departments flexibility in some of its requirements. For example, we identified areas that could be streamlined and presented those areas to Personnel; Personnel responded that it already makes exceptions to these requirements—but departments have to call Personnel to ask for the exception. Hiring departments expressed frustration with this arrangement. Allowing hiring departments to call Personnel and make requests is an informal workaround within the process, not a written practice, that hiring departments are unaware of unless explicitly informed. The process would be better understood and more transparent if Personnel requirements were streamlined across the board, rather than only when departments take time to call to request a streamlined process.

Additionally, Personnel has made efforts over time to educate hiring departments on the process. However, many hiring departments still expressed frustration with the lack of clear information on the process. We found that the City does not have a comprehensive guide explaining the City's classified hiring process and including all steps, forms, and exceptions.

Personnel placed resources online to inform hiring departments of the process, but we found the documents to be unclear and incomplete. For example, Personnel's PowerPoint explaining the hiring process does not always specify who is responsible for the action and does not include clear reference to or instructions on the many forms Personnel requires during the hiring process. **Exhibit 11** depicts a slide from this PowerPoint that is intended to give an overview of the hiring process steps, but the overview is not sufficiently detailed and omits pertinent information. The text in red callout boxes are auditor notes on process details that are unclear or missing from the presentation. A hiring department manager may have to go to several different guides or frequently asked questions documents to understand the process. However, the information is not always consistent across all trainings and guides, adding confusion.

Exhibit 11

Personnel Hiring Process Guides are Not Comprehensive and Lack Key Information



Note: The text in red callout boxes are OCA notes providing examples of key information missing or unclear in the guide.

Source: Hiring Process Overview PowerPoint Presentation created by the Personnel Department.

The Civil Service Rules are generally broad enough to allow flexibility and expediency in the hiring process, but Personnel Regulations go beyond requirements and create administrative burdens without sufficient benefit in some cases.

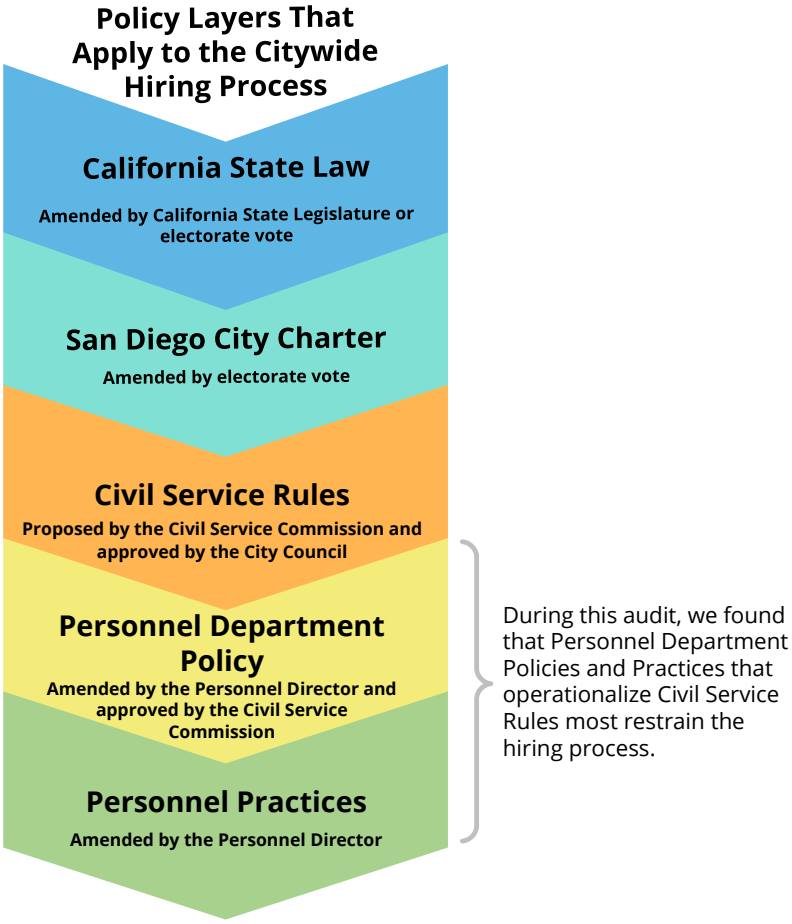
Many cities in California use a civil service system to hire employees, including the City of San Diego. The City Charter grants the Civil Service Commission the authority to oversee the selection of classified City employees. The Commission proposes Civil Service Rules, approved by the City Council, to implement the civil service process the City Charter

outlines. Beyond the Civil Service Rules, Personnel creates Personnel Regulations, policies, and practices that it, hiring departments, and applicants must follow through the hiring process.

We found that the City's Civil Service Rules are largely broad enough to allow for efficient and effective hiring practices while upholding a fair system. However, the Personnel Regulations, policies, and practices designed to implement the Civil Service Rules go beyond what the rules require and are burdensome for both applicants and hiring departments. Streamlining the requirements Personnel imposes may make the hiring process more efficient with little cost to fairness in hiring. As illustrated in **Exhibit 12** the Personnel Department can make changes to these requirements with the approval of the Civil Service Commission.

Exhibit 12

The City's Hiring Process Operates Under Multiple Layers of Public Policy



Source: OCA generated based on policy from the State of California, San Diego City Charter, City of San Diego Civil Service Rules, City of San Diego Personnel Department Rules, and Personnel practices observed and documented throughout this audit.

Many hiring departments believe Personnel requires positions to be fully vacated before hiring departments can request a list of certified candidates to hire from, in most cases.

Many hiring departments reported that in almost all cases, Personnel requires positions to be vacant before it will begin a recruitment or provide a list of applicants, which adds extra time to the hiring process. Some hiring departments can anticipate upcoming vacancies, such as when the department plans to fill a different vacant position with an internal candidate or when an employee provides notice that they will be leaving the City. Currently, Personnel may allow recruitment to start prior to a position becoming vacant if hiring departments contact Personnel and ask. This practice appears to be neither official written policy nor common knowledge among departments.[18] However, expanding knowledge of this practice could shave weeks off the hiring process timeline.

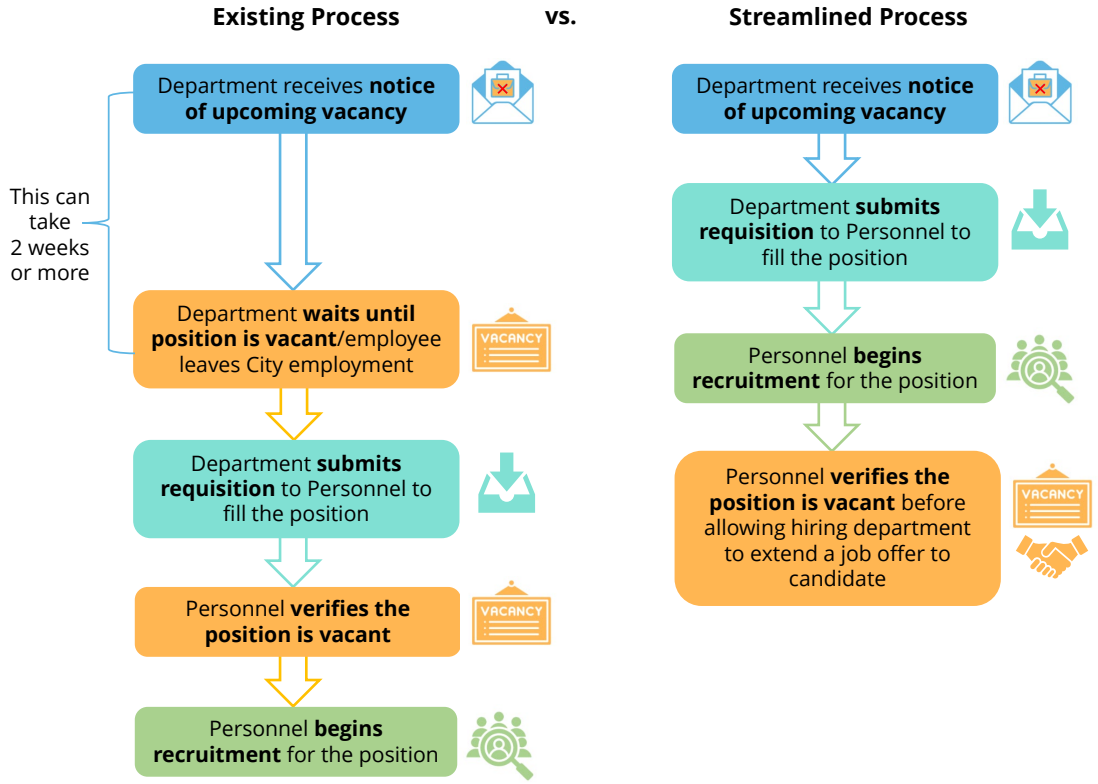
Submitting a requisition before the position is vacant could shave weeks off the hiring process timeline.

According to Personnel, the purpose of the vacancy requirement is for Personnel to prevent a single position from being filled by multiple employees, but Personnel can verify a position's vacancy later in the hiring process. For example, Personnel could confirm the position is vacant when hiring departments request to extend a conditional offer for the position. **Exhibit 13** demonstrates the difference between a current common understanding of the process in which Personnel does not begin recruitment until a position is completely vacant and our proposed adjustment in which it is clear Personnel begins recruitment for a position as soon as the department submits a requisition.

18 Some Personnel training materials mention that when submitting requisitions, hiring departments may set vacancy dates in the future but do not consistently explain the cases in which Personnel would accept this or the supporting documentation required for these cases.

Exhibit 13

Many Hiring Departments Believe That Positions Must Be Vacant Before Personnel Allows Recruitment to Begin, Unnecessarily Delaying the Hiring Process in Many Cases



Source: OCA generated based on process walkthroughs and interviews with Personnel, interviews with several hiring departments, the Appointing Authority Interview Training, and reviews of documents.

Personnel requires hiring departments to fill out more than 90 pages of forms during the interview process alone, many of which require duplicate information.

Personnel requires hiring departments to complete dozens of pages of forms for each hire, which can prolong the hiring process and take time away from regular job duties. An average interview packet for one position requires hiring departments to fill out more than 90 pages across at least 14 forms. This count does not include additional forms, memos, and emails required throughout the hiring process.

As an example, **Exhibit 14** shows two separate forms that are listed as part of the interview packet that hiring departments must fill out during the interview process. The forms require much of the same information to be filled out on each form. The Authorization of Board Composition form could be consolidated into the Interview Packet

The totality of the documentation requirements is such that the hiring process is inefficient.

form, as much of the same information is required on both forms and there is little added benefit in requiring both documents.[19] Personnel states that documentation of the entire interview process is critical to ensure hiring departments conduct interviews and selections in a fair, impartial, and consistent manner and may serve as a defense against any challenges to the interview process. In line with this overall finding, we agree the interview and selection process should be documented to meet the goals outlined by Personnel. However, forms in the hiring process could be streamlined, as the totality of the documentation requirements is such that the hiring process is inefficient.

The Department Action Plan Personnel presented to the Civil Service Commission in June of 2023 included a consideration to evaluate integration between NEOGOV and SAP, two systems used during the hiring process. Integrating these systems could help reduce duplicative data entry and may help cut down on the volume of forms required throughout the hiring process.

Exhibit 14

Personnel Forms Appear to Require Hiring Departments to Populate Redundant Information

DEPARTMENT
DIVISION

INTERVIEW PACKET
FOR
CLASSIFICATION TITLE

CERTIFICATION #: _____

SCREENING CRITERIA:
The list for _____ is a promotional list and all candidates would be offered an interview opportunity.
OR
The following criteria were used to determine which candidates would be offered an interview opportunity.
1)
2)
OR
Letters were sent to _____ candidates on the _____ list soliciting their interest in the current vacancy. This resulted in __ interested candidates who submitted letters of interest and/or resume prior to the imposed deadline. Letters of interest and resumes were reviewed by _____ _____, Chairperson.

In applying the above criteria, ____ candidates will be invited to participate in this interview process.

_____candidates requested an interview.

_____candidates attended the interview.

PANEL COMPOSITION:

Panel Member's Name:	Classification:	Department:	Division:	AAIT: Y/N

INTERVIEW DATE(S): _____

PREPARED BY: _____ _____ _____
Name Classification Date

APPROVED BY: _____ _____
Appointing Authority Date

MONTH / YEAR

DEPARTMENT
DIVISION / SECTION
CLASS TITLE

AUTHORIZATION OF BOARD COMPOSITION

Vacant Position: _____

Interview Chairperson: _____ **Classification:** _____

Board Member's Name	Classification	Department	Division	AAIT: Y/N

APPOINTING AUTHORITY:

☐ **Refer to additional name(s) for replacement:**
Name: _____ Class:
_____
Name: _____ Class: _____
Name: _____ Class: _____

☐ **Appointing Authority Approval:** _____ **Date:** _____
(Signature)

Source: Personnel forms available on Citynet.

19 Personnel's intranet site lists the forms separately and the Appointing Authority Interview Required Document Descriptions appears to list these as two forms. Personnel's example interview packet in its Appointing Authority Interview Workbook has these two forms combined; however, it is unclear from the guidance and provided templates that only the one form is required and not the other.

Personnel provides most forms used during the hiring process electronically, though many have not been converted into a fillable PDF format, which makes electronic form completion more difficult. According to hiring departments, amount of time it takes to populate these many forms adds up and contributes to the length of the overall hiring process.

Personnel Regulations require employees to be fingerprinted on a machine installed in the Personnel Department.

Other public employers allow candidates to be fingerprinted externally, with the results sent to the city's hiring office for review.

The Personnel Regulation G-3 Addendum on fingerprinting, record checks, and the identity verification program mandates that all employees be fingerprinted on the machine installed in the Personnel Department. This requirement places an unnecessary responsibility on candidates who are relocating to San Diego to spend time and personal funds traveling to Personnel to complete the pre-employment process. Personnel's current practice is not the only option available; other public employers, such as the City and County of San Francisco, City of Chula Vista, and City of Fresno, allow candidates to be fingerprinted externally, with the results sent to the city's hiring office for review. Additionally, other public entities, like the California Department of Motor Vehicles, require occupational driver's license applicants to be fingerprinted on a Live Scan machine, but allow applicants to complete the process at any Live Scan location.[20] There are numerous Live Scan locations across the country, some of which are listed on the California Attorney General's website.

Forms requiring candidates to disclose criminal history and previous drug activity may be redundant and add unnecessary time to the hiring process.

Candidates must fill out a form to self-disclose criminal and drug activity before Personnel completes background checks and any required drug and alcohol screenings. This can cause delays and may provide minimal benefit to the City and candidates. The Civil Service Rules require candidates to state under oath or attestation if they have been convicted of a crime, but a candidate's criminal history is also determined through the existing Department of Justice fingerprint background check process. Personnel requires candidates to self-disclose criminal and drug use history in part to then identify

20 As described by the California Department of Motor Vehicles, Live Scan is inkless electronic fingerprinting. With Live Scan fingerprinting, digital fingerprints and personal descriptor information are electronically transferred to the Department of Justice in a matter of seconds.

discrepancies that may arise between self-reported information and background screening results. If Personnel finds discrepancies, candidates who have accepted the conditional job offer may be denied the position and departments will have to go back to offer the position to another applicant.

Appeals to the Civil Service Commission can delay the hiring process by up to 2 months.

Candidates may also appeal their denial to the Civil Service Commission. The appeal process can delay the hiring process by up to 2 months, depending on when Civil Service Commission meetings are held. All five of the criminal and medical appeal cases brought before the Civil Service Commission due to discrepancies between information provided by candidates and background and medical screening results we observed between October 2022 and June 2023 were approved by the Civil Service Commission.

To avoid hiring delays, Personnel could collect all necessary background and drug screening information to determine a candidate's fitness for hire during the actual background and drug screenings, as it does now, and could omit self-disclosure questions. If necessary, Personnel could contact candidates to discuss any questions regarding the results of their background check and drug and alcohol screening.

Personnel requires pre-employment medical checks and drug screenings for many not-sworn classifications, while many cities simply require pre-employment drug screenings for candidates applying for safety-sensitive positions.

Pre-employment drug screenings and medical checks that are not required by federal regulations increase time to hire for not-sworn positions. According to public employers such as the City of San Jose, City of Fresno, San Diego Association of Local Governments, and Port of San Diego, they do not drug test as a condition of employment unless required by federal rule. According to the County of San Diego, it requires drug tests for certain positions but does not screen for cannabis unless required by federal rule. The Civil Service Rule already mandates a probationary period for classified positions, during which appointing authorities can assess a candidate's fitness for the job, including their physical ability to complete the work.

Personnel's pre-employment drug screening and medical check practices extend beyond what is required by state and federal law, which adds time to the hiring process and can be burdensome on candidates for hire. Pre-employment drug screenings and medical checks for these not-sworn, classified positions may be a process step

that does not add much additional benefit to the City as an employer, when there are existing systems in place to confirm a candidate is fit for hire.[21]

The City should confirm the required medical checks and drug screenings convey benefits that outweigh the costs of additional time and resources.

Personnel and the City Administration should confirm the medical checks and drug screenings the City conducts convey benefits to the City that outweigh the costs of additional time and resources in the hiring process for candidates, hiring departments, and Personnel. According to a discussion at a Civil Service Commission meeting, the City Attorney's Office may analyze the legal implications of removing marijuana drug screenings for not-sworn candidates, where applicable, as a result of a drug test appeal case recently brought before the Civil Service Commission.

Personnel still relies on physical forms and has not made it clear that it accepts electronic signatures on all forms.

Personnel's reliance on physical forms throughout the hiring process increases the risk of fraud, creates difficulties in document tracking and storage, and is time-consuming. Reliance on physical forms increases the likelihood of information entry errors when populating forms and then having to manually enter information from paper forms into an electronic system, which is also time-consuming. Physical forms also do not have a mechanism to track changes, nor do they contain metadata to log document creation, which can help identify any possible fraudulent activity. Additionally, physical forms require physical storage, which can be cost-inefficient and time-consuming compared to electronic storage alternatives.

According to Personnel, since the 2020 pandemic, Personnel now accepts electronic copies of forms it previously required departments or applicants to submit in hard copy. However, the instructions and the forms do not always make that clear. The instructions also do not clarify what Personnel will accept as an electronic signature and what it will not. The reliance on physical forms was also identified as an area for improvement in a 2014 Independent Budget Analyst (IBA) report on the City's hiring process.[22] The IBA recommended that Personnel consider establishing an electronic workflow process with automated forms to eliminate duplicative data entry and increase efficiency. Personnel points to improvements it has made in this area, but paper

21 Additionally, on January 1, 2024, California Assembly Bill 2188 will go into effect, prohibiting discrimination against applicants or employees for off-duty marijuana use in some cases.

22 https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/14_01_140107.pdf

files and duplicative data entry requirements still exist in the process for both Personnel and hiring departments.

Recommendations

The examples above demonstrate how some requirements that Personnel imposes on the hiring process lengthen the overall time it takes to hire in the City. We believe that our recommendations can assist in streamlining the hiring process while still maintaining equitable practices. Our proposed recommendations are intended to help streamline the hiring process for hiring departments while working within the existing civil service system.

Recommendation 2.1

The Personnel Department should formalize the practice of allowing hiring departments to begin the hiring process and receive an eligible list before there is a vacancy, but not allow the department to fill the position until the position is vacant. The Personnel Department should formalize this practice in a policy or memorandum and should include the information in any future trainings and guidance provided on the hiring process, such as the Appointing Authority Interview Training and the guide in Recommendation 2.3.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 68.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2023

Recommendation 2.2

The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to streamline the documents it requires departments and applicants to fill out. At minimum, the Personnel Department should:

a. Make all of its existing forms easily fillable for departments or fillable in an online applicant tracking system;

b. Reduce duplicative fields across forms or design forms that pre-populate already filled out fields across different pages to reduce duplicated effort;

c. Minimize the number of documents departments must fill out per candidate for the interview process; and

d. Ensure all documents clearly state that they can be submitted electronically with electronic signatures.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 69.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2024

Recommendation 2.3

The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to develop a hiring process overview and step-by-step guide that depicts the overall hiring process and details what forms must be sent by which specific party at each phase in the hiring process. The Personnel Department should obtain confirmation that the City Administration's point of contact agrees that the process guide is clear, understandable, up to date, and easy for all City stakeholders to locate. The Personnel Department should continue to provide educational outreach to hiring departments on the process, as it currently does, but with the recommended process overview and step-by-step guide.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 69.]

Target Implementation Date: December 2023

Recommendation 2.4

For classified not-sworn positions, the Personnel Department should create a background check, medical check, and drug and alcohol screening process that requires fewer steps and paperwork to be completed by the candidate for hire. For classified not-sworn positions, the Personnel Department should, at minimum:

a. Review current medical check requirements and confirm with the City Administration that existing requirements for each classification or position still align with City needs. The Personnel Department and the City Administration should consider if provisional hiring, contingent upon the applicant attesting they

can perform the necessary job functions and demonstrating as such during the probationary period on the job, would sufficiently mitigate risk for most job classifications and eliminate the need for most medical checks required by the City but not required by stipulations set by outside funding or grants.

b. Review current drug and alcohol screening requirements and confirm with the City Administration that existing requirements for each classification or position still align with City needs and conform with California Assembly Bill 2188.

c. Review the forms candidates need to fill out related to criminal history and drug use history and confirm with the City Administration the forms and the content on the forms still align with City needs.

d. Review the fingerprinting process for background checks and determine if there is a streamlined method for candidates outside of the San Diego area to be fingerprinted for background checks without having to travel to the Personnel Department's fingerprinting machine.

The Personnel Department should present its findings and conclusions from these reviews to the Civil Service Commission and provide the City Administration the opportunity to present comments on those findings and conclusions as well.

If changes to the Personnel Regulations or Civil Service Rules are required to implement these recommendations, Personnel should propose the appropriate changes to the Civil Service Commission and the City Council, as necessary.

(Priority 2)

Personnel Department Management Response: Agree. [See full response beginning on page 69.]

Target Implementation Date: July 2024

Appendix A

Definition of Audit Recommendation Priorities

The Office of the City Auditor maintains a priority classification scheme for audit recommendations based on the importance of each recommendation to the City, as described in the table below. While the City Auditor is responsible for providing a priority classification for recommendations, it is the City Administration's responsibility to establish a target date to implement each recommendation, taking into consideration its priority. The City Auditor requests that target dates be included in the Administration's official response to the audit findings and recommendations.

PRIORITY CLASS*	DESCRIPTION
1	Fraud or serious violations are being committed. Significant fiscal and/or equivalent non-fiscal losses are occurring. Costly and/or detrimental operational inefficiencies are taking place. A significant internal control weakness has been identified.
2	The potential for incurring significant fiscal and/or equivalent nonfiscal losses exists. The potential for costly and/or detrimental operational inefficiencies exists. The potential for strengthening or improving internal controls exists.
3	Operation or administrative process will be improved.

* The City Auditor is responsible for assigning audit recommendation priority class numbers. A recommendation that clearly fits the description for more than one priority class shall be assigned the higher priority.

Appendix B

Audit Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Objective

In accordance with the Office of the City Auditor's Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Audit Work Plan, we conducted a performance audit of the City of San Diego's (City)'s classified hiring process. The objective of this audit was to determine whether changes to the City's hiring process and Civil Service Rules would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process for classified employees.

Scope

The scope of this audit included the hiring process for budgeted classified not-sworn positions. We defined sworn positions as all classified positions represented by the San Diego Police Officers Association, the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 145, and the Teamsters Local 911 (which represents lifeguards at the City of San Diego), because these positions involve hiring processes, prerequisites, and recruiting factors that are unique to the profession beyond the anticipated level of variance expected in the other positions at the City. Therefore, these positions were excluded from our review, but could be reviewed in a hiring or recruitment audit in the future.

Methodology

To determine whether changes to the City's hiring process and Civil Service Rules would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process for classified employees, we:

- Reviewed previous City of San Diego Office of the City Auditor and Independent Budget Analyst reports on the Personnel Department, City hiring, human capital, and vacancies;
- Reviewed previous hiring, recruitment, and human resource management audits from the City of Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Chesapeake, Virginia; Chicago, Illinois; Honolulu, Hawaii; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Orlando, Florida; Portland, Oregon; Sacramento, California; Tallahassee, Florida; and Tempe, Arizona;
- Reviewed relevant California state law, the San Diego City Charter, City Municipal Code, Civil Service Regulations, the Personnel Manual, and Personnel processes;
- Reviewed federal hiring policy relevant to the City's hiring process;

- Interviewed directors or hiring managers from eight of the City's largest hiring departments:
  - Engineering and Capital Projects Department
  - Environmental Services Department
  - Fire-Rescue Department
  - General Services Department
  - Library Department
  - Parks and Recreation Department
  - Public Utilities Department
  - San Diego Police Department
- Interviewed Department of Personnel staff;
- Interviewed Civil Service Commissioners;
- Interviewed leaders of the Municipal Employees Association and ASFCME Local 127;
- Benchmarked hiring policies against California municipalities and public employers to determine hiring best practices. Public entities that we benchmarked with include:
  - City of Fresno
  - City of Long Beach
  - City of Los Angeles
  - City of Sacramento
  - City and County of San Francisco
  - City of San Jose
  - City of Chula Vista
  - San Diego County
  - Port of San Diego
  - San Diego Association of Local Governments (SANDAG)
- Attended Civil Service Commission meetings;
- Attended City job fairs;
- Analyzed budgeted classified not-sworn vacant position data and trends in department and position vacancy rates from 2018 to 2022 based on data from SAP;

- Analyzed budgeted classified not-sworn position hiring timeline for all positions vacant October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022 based on data from SAP;
- Analyzed a statistical random sample of positions that were vacant October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022 based on data from SAP, the Personnel Department, the hiring departments, and NEOGOV; and
- Analyzed the unclassified hiring process timeline for positions vacant October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022.

Sample Methodology

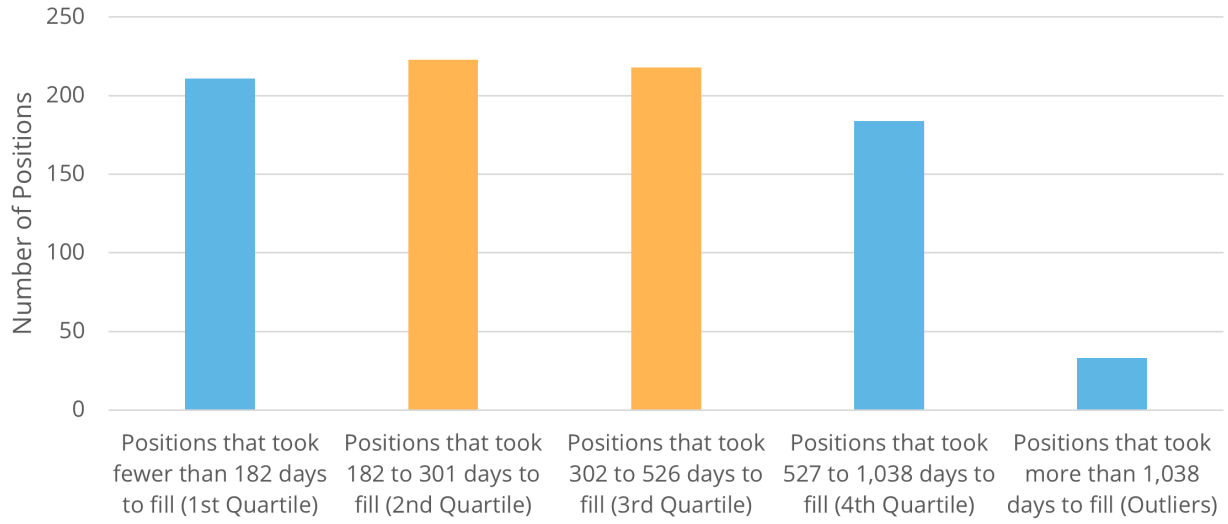
The City lacks data on several key milestones in the hiring process, so the audit team had to pull data for certain milestones manually. To analyze the time between milestones in the hiring process, we took a random sample of budgeted classified not-sworn positions that were vacant as of October 1, 2021 and filled as of December 19, 2022. The full population of positions that were vacant as of October 1, 2021 and filled by December 19, 2022 were vacant for an average of 396 days, but the standard deviation of the population was 301 days, due to the fact that 25 percent of the positions took between 526 days and 2,128 days to fill. Because the standard deviation of the full population was so large, we determined the sample size required for a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error was too large for OCA to feasibly conduct the audit in an efficient and timely manner.

Therefore, we determined we could add the most value by reviewing the hiring timeline for positions that followed the "typical" hiring process. We took a random sample of positions that were filled within the second and third quartiles of the population—meaning positions that took between 182 days and 526 days to fill. This sub-population represented about 50 percent of the total population and is illustrated by the orange bars in Exhibit 15 below. The sample size totaled 102 positions and had a confidence level of 95 percent with an error range of plus or minus 16 days.

We also took a judgmental sample of 10 positions that took fewer than 182 days to fill and 10 positions that took more than 526 days to fill.

Exhibit 15

We Sampled the Positions that Represented the Hiring Timeline Closest to the Median—Between 182 and 526 Days



Source: OCA generated based on data from SAP and Personnel.

Data Reliability

We primarily worked with data provided by the Personnel Department, data auditors extracted directly from NEOGOV, data from SAP, and data provided by hiring departments. We assessed the reliability of hiring data by conducting reasonableness testing, comparing some data sets to original source data, reviewing existing information about the data, and interviewing staff knowledgeable about the data. We found some information provided by hiring departments did not align with our source data, and therefore used source data instead, or found that departments did not maintain sufficient documentation for certain steps, so information was missing. As a result, we were only able to use hiring department reported data for certain portions of our analysis. We determined that the data we used were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Internal Controls Statement

We limited our review of internal controls to specific controls relevant to our audit objective, described above.

Compliance Statement

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 17, 2023

TO: Andy Hanau, City Auditor, Office of the City Auditor

FROM: Eric K. Dargan, Chief Operating Officer

SUBJECT: Management Response to the Office of the City Auditor's Performance Audit of Citywide Hiring

---

This memorandum serves as the Management Response to the Performance Audit of the Citywide Hiring (Performance Audit.) At the time this response was written, the draft Performance Audit provided to Management contained a total of two findings and 12 recommendations, four of which were directed to City Management.

Management appreciates the Performance Audit prepared by the Office of the City Auditor and thanks the staff involved. Management agrees with all recommendations and notes that successful implementation of the recommendations will require cooperation and collaboration among several departments, including the Personnel Department (Personnel).

The City of San Diego's hiring process is complex, sometimes confusing, and not neatly captured in one process document. The Performance Audit captures that complexity well when discussing the hiring process for the City's Classified positions. However, we note that Management's agreement with the recommendations relies in part on process changes that would need to come from the Personnel Department. While Mayoral departments have roles to play as part of the Classified hiring process, those roles are constrained or defined by the processes administered by Personnel and, often, driven by the City's Personnel Regulations. Management looks forward to working cooperatively with the Personnel Department to tackle the recommendations proposed by the Office of the City Auditor.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1: The Chief Operating Officer should designate a central point of oversight and coordination for departments' hiring of classified employees. The designated party should be responsible for overseeing, monitoring, and reporting on the hiring timeline and hiring initiatives and advocating for hiring improvements within the City Administration as well as the Personnel Department. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree. Management will create a Lead Hiring Manager position to be housed in the Human Resources Department. This position will provide a central point of oversight and coordination for departments' hiring of classified employees. Management notes, however, that the success of the expected outcomes tied to this position will be contingent upon the willing and ongoing collaboration of the Personnel Department, as further described in Management's response to Recommendation 1.2 below. We agree in full

to advocate for hiring improvements and further agree that more tracking of milestones and other critical data points within the operating departments' control would aid in goal setting and accountability.

Target Implementation Date: January 31, 2024.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2: The City Administration's central point of oversight and coordination should collect data on the key phases in the hiring process by department (for all City departments) and report that data to a City Council committee and the Civil Service Commission on a regular basis, at least annually. The City Administration should share this information, as well as where each position is in the hiring process, with City departments through a dashboard or other accessible means so department directors may conduct regular monitoring. The key phrases in the hiring process timeline reported on could include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Vacancy date-to-date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department;
b. Date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department to date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department;
c. Date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department to date the department began interviewing candidates;
d. Date the department began interviewing candidates to date the department made the conditional offer for the position; and,
e. Date the department made the conditional offer to the candidate's first day in the position.

The City Administration should also set goals for each timeframe in the hiring process, similar to the federal government's Office of Personnel Management. Development of this dashboard or other tracking system and timeframe should involve input from the Personnel Department. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree. Management agrees with the recommendation and notes that the full implementation of this recommendation will require the willing and timely cooperation of the Personnel Department who owns much of the necessary data and technology. Management appreciates the auditors' recognition of Personnel Department's data ownership, as noted in Recommendation 1.3.

Personnel oversees a technology solution, NEOGOV, currently used in the hiring process. This technology has been configured to only track the steps of the hiring process that are the responsibility of Personnel. We recommend that Personnel include the data points which will provide visibility of the entire hiring process to the technology solution currently in use. Purchasing, implementing, training, and managing an additional technology solution is not financially prudent and creates two systems for hiring managers to use for the same recruitment effort. Further, adding redundant technology detrimentally contributes to an already extremely cumbersome and inefficient process.

Management will provide resources from the Department of Information Technology, Performance and Analytics, and Human Resources Department (Human Resources will house the new Lead Hiring Manager position described in Recommendation 1.1) to collaborate with Personnel to implement the recommendation. Management envisions that this group of

departments will meet regularly as a working group and set goals for each timeframe in the hiring process that will then be reflected in data, reporting, and dashboards and available for use by all City departments. The Lead Hiring Manager will then review, monitor, and report on the hiring process data points as will be captured in NEOGOV.

We expect the monitoring of these data points will highlight areas for improvement and will provide valuable information to establish goals and ultimately decrease the time a position is vacant. Note this is not possible without the Personnel Department first implementing the data tracking portion enhancements to NEOGOV, with feedback and input from the working group and the Lead Hiring Manager.

Target Implementation Date: Management will set implementation goals within two months following the Personnel Department's implementation of the data capture, reporting, and dashboard tools.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4: The City Administration should establish a policy to determine, at least annually, if there are administrative requirements or other barriers contributing to the length of time phases of the hiring process take, such as the time to submit a requisition or the complex nature of the applicant tracking system, and propose changes to City practices, Personnel Regulations, or Civil Service Rules to make the process more efficient and effective. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree. Management will create an annual report that will include this information, contingent upon Management's receipt of the data listed below from the Personnel Department.

To assist in fulfilling this recommendation, we recommend that Personnel evaluate each step in the hiring process and provide the following in a written report to the Civil Service Commission, City Council, and to the working group recommended in Management's response to Recommendation 1.2:

a. An itemized list of each step of the hiring process including the responsible party, if the step is manual (including use of email) or automated through the use of NEOGOV or other process flow tracking software
b. A flow chart of the above list of steps
c. The purpose/intent of each step
d. Identifying if a step is required and cite which rule (i.e., Civil Service or Personnel Regulation) or if it is a Personnel Department Management required step
e. Identifying steps that could be automated
f. Identifying steps that are redundant
g. Identifying steps that are antiquated
h. Benchmarking against other public agencies specifically comparing the steps required in the hiring process
i. Compiling this information in a report to City Council and to the Administration with recommendations and implementation timelines

Management will work with Personnel to implement this functionality into the current technology. Management agrees to require hiring managers to utilize the tools and data

available to them and will utilize the new Lead Hiring Manager to report on the information as described with the intent of identifying the quality of candidates and the contributing factors to successful versus unsuccessful recruitments.

Management expects this information and the subsequent report from the Personnel Department will need to be completed first and used as a guide for implementation of the other recommendations in the Performance Audit before software expansion or development begins.

We further recommend the Personnel Department connect with the Performance and Analytics Department to discuss issues raised by operating departments in a recent internal survey on the hiring process for classified positions. Those issues and proposed solutions could be discussed in the working group outlined in Management's response to Recommendation 1.2, as well as included in the annual report.

Target Implementation Date: Management is targeting the creation of the first annual report to be six months after the implementation of Management's recommendations, as noted in the above responses to 1.2 and 1.4.

RECOMMENDATION 1.6: The City Administration should facilitate sharing information across departments to allow hiring departments to expedite the hiring process, including but not limited to the following:

a. Provide information to the Personnel Department so it can create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access;
b. Require departments to begin assembling the interview packet and interview panel once they submit the requisition to the Personnel Department while they wait for the list of applicants;
c. Require departments to record the results of their interviews and candidate ratings electronically in a centralized location;
d. Report on the overall percent of candidates interviewed from applicant lists and the percent that fell into each category rating (highly qualified, qualified, and minimally qualified). As needed, break this percentage out by position or recruitment to demonstrate necessary changes to recruitments or identify recruitments that went well.
e. Allow departments, if they wish, to see and consider other departments' candidate ratings (highly qualified, qualified, minimally qualified) when selecting who to interview for their vacant position;
f. Require departments to close requisitions in NEOGOV once the position has been filled. If the position is not filled within two years, the maximum amount of time an eligible list is viable; the Personnel Department should systematically close the requisition in NEOGOV;
g. Coordinate joint interviews for positions shared by multiple departments, if the departments wish; and,
h. Train departments on existing processes that may expedite the hiring process, including joint interviews, sharing interview results across departments, and transfer process options. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree. Management agrees that more centralization or collaboration between departments' hiring staff would be of benefit and will work to implement those sections of the recommendation that reflect this (for example, subsections b, f, h), although Management notes that full implementation of some of the elements of this recommendation (subsections a, c, d, e, g) rely on the collaborative work that will need to be done first by the working group discussed in Recommendation 1.2. Management also notes that two elements of this recommendation may unfairly and negatively impact individual City employees (as outlined in the following paragraph) and will likely not be implemented (subsections c, e.)

Management agrees to promote the appropriate subsections of the recommendation above and has in some instances (for example, encouraging departments to explore joint interviews). However, it is critically important to ensure the integrity of the interview process is not compromised. Interview questions, interview results, candidate ratings, etc., should only be visible and shared by authorized hiring managers; for example, a Supervising Management Analyst authorized as the hiring manager for Associate and Assistant Management Analyst recruitments should NOT be permitted to access any interview information for the position he/she current sits in or may apply to in the future. A similar security feature is currently utilized in NEOGOV for the same purpose, and therefore this recommendation cannot be fully implemented without the partnership of the Personnel Department.

Target Implementation Date: Management will review the staff's ability to implement subsections b, f, and h and will work collaboratively with the Personnel Department through the proposed working group to implement the other subsections. Similar to other recommendations, Management expects to leverage current technology rather than create a redundant technology solution, therefore, full implementation of this recommendation will require the willing and timely cooperation of the Personnel Department which owns much of the technology.

In summary, Management, like the Office of the City Auditor, sees the potential for great improvements in the hiring process and is looking forward to the implementation of the recommendations as noted in the responses above. Management agrees that a thorough and comprehensive review of the steps of the hiring process for classified staff is long overdue. A final recommendation from Management is for the Office of the City Auditor to engage with the Civil Service Commission and share these audit findings and recommendations with the Commissioners, as it is doing with operational department management. Further, we suggest that the management response come from the Civil Service Commission and not solely from Personnel Department management. Management encourages this approach in order to diversify the voices responding to this audit and encourage fresh viewpoints and perspectives on current processes.

Successful public service is reliant on its qualified and dedicated workforce, where employees turn policy visions into reality. We are eager to see these recommendations implemented as they will enhance our ability to serve the residents and visitors of the City of San Diego.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide responses to these recommendations. Management appreciates your team's professionalism throughout this review.

Page 6
Andy Hanau, City Auditor, Office of the City Auditor
July 17, 2023

Thank you,

Eric K. Dargan
Chief Operating Officer

ED/cmg

cc: Honorable Mayor Todd Gloria
Paola Avila, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst
Matthew Vespi, Chief Financial Officer
David Nisleit, Chief, Police Department
Colin Stowell, Chief, Fire-Rescue Department
Alia Khouri, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Casey Smith, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Kris McFadden, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Kristina Peralta, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Jessica Lawrence, Director of Policy, Office of the Mayor
Christiana Gauger, Chief Compliance Officer, Compliance Department
Doug Edwards, Director, Personnel Department
Julie Rasco, Director, Human Resources Department
Luis Briseño, Program Manager, Compliance Department
Tammy Lin, President, Civil Service Commission
Nicolaz Portillo, Vice-President, Civil Service Commission
Sunday Gover, Civil Service Commission Member
Will Moore, Civil Service Commission Member
Aaron Olsen, Civil Service Commission Member

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 14, 2023

TO: Andy Hanau, City Auditor

FROM: Douglas Edwards, Personnel Director

SUBJECT: Management Response to the Citywide Hiring Audit

The Personnel Department has reviewed the City Auditor's findings and recommendations in the Citywide Hiring audit report. We appreciate you and your staff addressing and analyzing the City's hiring process. Quickly hiring qualified employees is essential to providing excellent customer service. The Classified hiring process can be broken down into the following three components: Processes within the control of the Personnel Department - recruitment and certification of eligible lists; processes within the control of the hiring department – requisition and selection (e.g., certification request, interview, reference check, conditional job offer); and processes outside the control of the City - DOJ and FBI fingerprint check, medical evaluation, and candidates' availability to start work.

Improvements to the City's hiring process will require that the Personnel Department and City Administration continue working together to implement the recommendations cited in this audit report. Implementing all of these recommendations timely will require additional Personnel Department resources and staff. Likewise, additional investment in the City's human capital management, applicant tracking, and onboarding software will likely be required. As noted below, the Personnel Department agrees with the recommendations and is committed to timely implementation.

Personnel Department staff work hard to accomplish our mission of providing excellence in personnel service and championing the principles of the City's merit system and providing equal employment opportunities. While many improvements have already been made to the Classified hiring process this past year, more must be done. The Personnel Department is committed to these process improvements and is requesting the resources to implement them.

Our response to each of the 12 audit recommendations is documented below:

Recommendation 1.1: The Chief Operating Officer should designate a central point of oversight and coordination for hiring departments' hiring of classified employees. The designated party should be responsible for overseeing, monitoring, and reporting on the hiring timeline and hiring initiatives, and advocating for hiring improvements within the City Administration as well as the Personnel Department. (Priority 2)

Management Response: The City Administration will respond to this recommendation.

Recommendation 1.2: The City Administration's central point of oversight and coordination should collect data on the key phases in the hiring process by department (for all City departments) and report that data to a City Council committee and the Civil Service

Commission on a regular basis, at least annually. The City Administration should share this information, as well as where each position is in the hiring process, with City departments through a dashboard or other accessible means so department directors may conduct regular monitoring. The key phases in the hiring process timeline reported on could include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Vacancy date to date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department;
b. Date requisition submitted to the Personnel Department to date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department;
c. Date list of eligible candidates is provided to the department to date the department began interviewing candidates;
d. Date the department began interviewing candidates to date the department made the conditional offer for the position; and
e. Date the department made the conditional offer to candidate's first day in the position.

The City Administration should also set goals for each timeframe in the hiring process, similar to the federal government's Office of Personnel Management. Development of this dashboard or other tracking system and timeframe should involve input from the Personnel Department. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department currently provides the City Administration and individual departments with a monthly Vacancy Report which includes the date a position became vacant or was created, the date a request for certification was submitted to the Personnel Department, recruitment open and close dates (if applicable), the status of their certification request, and the date the certification list was issued to the department. The Personnel Department will continue to work collaboratively with the City Administration by providing data on requisition and hiring status for vacancies.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2023.

Recommendation 1.3: The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to establish a method to regularly provide information on the hiring timeline to the Administration, such as through providing read-only access to NEOGOV or periodic custom reporting that meets the Administration's needs. The Personnel Department should participate in the creation of any tracking systems or processes necessary to allow the Administration to implement Recommendations 1.2 and 1.6. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will continue to work collaboratively with the City Administration to create tracking systems necessary to further evaluate and report on the hiring timelines. Read-only access to NEOGOV has been granted to Human Resources and Performance and Analytics staff.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2023.

Recommendation 1.4: The City Administration should establish a policy to determine, at least annually, if there are administrative requirements or other barriers contributing to the length of time phases of the hiring process take, such as the time to submit a requisition or the complex nature of the applicant tracking system, and propose changes to City practices, Personnel Regulations, or Civil Service Rules to make the process more efficient and effective. (Priority 2)

Management Response: The City Administration will respond to this recommendation.

Recommendation 1.5: The Personnel Department should establish a method to ensure the City Administration can request to present to the Civil Service Commission as part of the docketed agenda at any Civil Service Commission meetings. The Personnel Department should communicate the process to the City Administration and the City Administration's central point of contact. The process should also be easily locatable on Personnel's website or intranet site. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will accommodate requests by the City Administration to present an item before the Civil Service Commission. Final determination of placing an item on the Civil Service Commission agenda is made by the Civil Service Commission President. Docketing instructions will be added to the Personnel Department website.

Target Implementation Date: By October 2023.

Recommendation 1.6: The City Administration should facilitate sharing information across departments to allow hiring departments to expedite the hiring process, including but not limited to the following:

a. Provide information to the Personnel Department so it can create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access;
b. Require departments to begin assembling the interview packet and interview panel once they submit the requisition to the Personnel Department, while they wait for the list of applicants;
c. Require departments to record the results of their interviews and candidate ratings electronically in a centralized location;
d. Report on the overall percent of candidates interviewed from applicant lists and the percent that fell into each category rating (highly qualified, qualified, and minimally qualified). As needed, break this percentage out by position or recruitment to demonstrate necessary changes to recruitments or identify recruitments that went well.
e. Allow departments, if they wish, to see and consider other departments' candidate ratings (highly qualified, qualified, minimally qualified) when selecting who to interview for their vacant position;
f. Require departments to close requisitions in NEOGOV once the position has been filled. If the position is not filled within 2 years, the maximum amount of time an eligible list is viable, the Personnel Department should systematically close the requisition in NEOGOV;
g. Coordinate joint interviews for positions shared by multiple departments, if the departments wish; and

h. Train departments on existing processes that may expedite the hiring process, including joint interviews, sharing interview results across departments, and transfer process options. (Priority 2)

Management Response: The Personnel Department will work collaboratively with the City Administration to implement these recommendations.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2024.

Recommendation 1.7: The Personnel Department should create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access. The Personnel Department should obtain input from the City Administration on how to develop and maintain this bank so that it is useful to hiring departments. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will work collaboratively with the City Administration to create a centralized bank of job analyses, job factors, and interview questions for all departments to access. The Personnel Department will submit a request for additional positions to create and maintain this centralized item bank.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2024.

Recommendation 1.8: The Personnel Department should identify any changes necessary to better facilitate joint interviews across hiring departments. The Personnel Department should obtain input from the City Administration on what is difficult about the current process and design a process that considers the Administration's input. The Personnel Department should implement these changes or propose changes to the Personnel Regulations or Civil Service Rules to the Civil Service Commission and/or the City Council for their consideration, as necessary. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will continue to work collaboratively with the City Administration to facilitate and expand joint interview processes across hiring departments. Joint interviews are already being conducted. As such, Personnel will review additional ways to increase the number of joint interviews.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2023.

Recommendation 2.1: The Personnel Department should formalize the practice of allowing hiring departments to begin the hiring process and receive an eligible list before there is a vacancy, but not allow the department to fill the position until the position is vacant. The Personnel Department should formalize this practice in a policy or memorandum and should include the information in any future trainings and guidance provided on the hiring process, such as the Appointing Authority Interview Training and the guide in Recommendation 2.3. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department currently opens recruitment processes and certifies eligible lists when vacancies are identified. This includes vacancies that will occur in the future. While Personnel Department training materials already state hiring departments can request to fill

positions that will be vacant in the future, the Personnel Department will distribute a memorandum, add a note in the process guide (see 2.3 below), and ensure this policy is clear during Appointing Authority Interview Training classes.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2023.

Recommendation 2.2: The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to streamline the documents it requires departments and applicants to fill out. At minimum, the Personnel Department should:

a. Make all of its existing forms easily fillable for departments or fillable in an online applicant tracking system;
b. Reduce duplicative fields across forms or design forms that pre-populate already filled out fields across different pages to reduce duplicated effort;
c. Minimize the number of documents departments must fill out per candidate for the interview process; and
d. Ensure all documents clearly state that they can be submitted electronically with electronic signatures. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will work collaboratively with the City Administration to streamline the documents it requires departments and applicants to fill out. The Personnel Department is committed to continuing to automate hiring processes and convert paper processes to an electronic format.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2024.

Recommendation 2.3: The Personnel Department should work with the City Administration to develop a hiring process overview and step-by-step guide that depicts the overall hiring process and details what forms must be sent by which specific party at each phase in the hiring process. The Personnel Department should obtain confirmation that the City Administration's point of contact agrees that the process guide is clear, understandable, up to date, and easy for all City stakeholders to locate. The Personnel Department should continue to provide educational outreach to hiring departments on the process, as it currently does, but with the recommended process overview and step-by-step guide. (Priority 2)

Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will work collaboratively with the City Administration to develop a hiring process overview and step-by-step guide that accurately details the Classified hiring process. The guide will explain which forms must be submitted and how to complete each form. Personnel Department staff will incorporate the guide into future training classes.

Target Implementation Date: By December 2023.

Recommendation 2.4: For classified not-sworn positions, the Personnel Department should create a background check, medical check, and drug and alcohol screening process that requires fewer steps and paperwork to be completed by the candidate for hire. For classified not-sworn positions, the Personnel Department should, at minimum:

a. Review current medical check requirements and confirm with the City Administration that existing requirements for each classification or position still align with City needs. The Personnel Department and the City

Administration should consider if provisional hiring, contingent upon the applicant attesting they can perform the necessary job functions and demonstrating as such during the probationary period on the job, would sufficiently mitigate risk for most job classifications and eliminate the need for most medical checks required by the City but not required by stipulations set by outside funding or grants.

b. Review current drug and alcohol screening requirements and confirm with the City Administration that existing requirements for each classification or position still align with City needs and conform with California Assembly Bill 2188.
c. Review the forms candidates need to fill out related to criminal history and drug use history and confirm with the City Administration the forms and the content on the forms still align with City needs.
d. Review the fingerprinting process for background checks and determine if there is a streamlined method for candidates outside of the San Diego area to be fingerprinted for background checks without having to travel to the Personnel Department's fingerprinting machine.

The Personnel Department should present its findings and conclusions from these reviews to the Civil Service Commission and provide the City Administration the opportunity to present comments on those findings and conclusions as well.

If changes to the Personnel Regulations or Civil Service Rules are required to implement these recommendations, Personnel should propose the appropriate changes to the Civil Service Commission and the City Council, as necessary. (Priority 2)

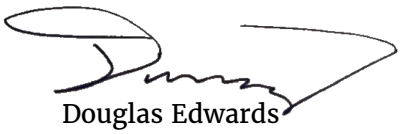
Management Response: Agree.

The Personnel Department will work collaboratively with the City Administration and Office of the City Attorney to review and endeavor to expedite and simplify background checks, medical checks, and drug and alcohol screening processes while adhering to required state and federal laws. As necessary, the Personnel Department will make recommended changes to the Civil Service Rules and Personnel Regulations to the Civil Service Commission and City Council. The City Administration is welcome to present comments at any Civil Service Commission meeting.

Target Implementation Date: By July 2024.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this audit.

Respectfully,



Douglas Edwards
Personnel Director

cc: Civil Service Commission

SAN DIEGO OFFICE of the CITY AUDITOR
• INDEPENDENT • OBJECTIVE • ACCURATE •