



**Snohomish County
Office of County Performance Auditor**

**AUDIT OF THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY
HIRING PROCESS**

Final Report

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Acronyms, Terms, and Definitions:

Centralized	In a centralized system of recruitment and selection HR is responsible for implementing and monitoring the hiring process.
Controls	Controls comprise those elements of an organization (including resources, systems, processes, culture, structure and tasks) that, taken together, support people in the achievement of the organization's objectives.
Decentralized	In a decentralized system of recruitment and selection departments and offices are responsible for implementing and monitoring the hiring process.
Hiring Officials	The supervisor or manager for the open position.
HR	Human Resources. Usually Snohomish County Human Resources.
HR staff	Staff members in Snohomish County's Human Resources Department who coordinated recruitment and selection efforts prior to 2004 and who currently act as resources to recruitment and selection staff.
Labor force availability	Percentage of individuals available and qualified for the types of jobs that exist in county government based on U.S. Census EEO data.
Protected class	A group of people intended to be protected by a law or regulation.
Recruitment	Activities involved in attracting job applicants.
R/S staff	Snohomish County staff members who coordinate the recruitment and selection process for their own departments or offices.
Selection	Activities involved in choosing a job candidate for hire.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Summary of Results*

The process of hiring Snohomish County employees, recruitment and selection, is undertaken primarily by individual departments and offices with guidance from Human Resources. There is a high level of commitment to quality of this process within the departments and offices; however, additional structure and accountability is needed to ensure a quality process. This audit is not recommending re-centralizing the hiring process; it is an effort to strengthen what is already in place.

Controls

General recruitment and selection planning, coordination, and general tracking should be the role of Human Resources. Currently no one Snohomish County entity is responsible for strategic management of recruitment and selection. Planning, coordination, and general tracking will assist the county in meeting its recruitment and selection objectives.

To help ensure an effective, consistent, and legal recruitment and selection process, controls should be put in place. Policies and procedures, checklists, ongoing staff training, file audits, data collection, and a communications system need to be put in place across the county to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is effective.

Recruitment

Snohomish County recruiting efforts meet criteria, but there are opportunities for improvement. Strong recruiting results in a sufficient number of qualified, diverse candidates from which to hire. Performance related to quality and quantity of applicants varied across department and position type. Diversity initiatives have not been implemented consistently.

Selection

Snohomish County's first year turnover rate has increased in the past five years. First year turnover is one way to evaluate selection effectiveness. The rate of new employees in Snohomish County leaving within the first year of employment doubled from 2001-2005. Processes will need to be implemented to determine the reason for this change. Resources could be more effectively spent by retaining a higher percentage of new employees.

Efficiency

The average time to fill an open position has decreased in the last five years. In 2005-2006 the average time between posting a job and the new employee beginning work was 57 days. In 2001-2003 it took an average of 70 days. The change occurred as there was a transition to department and office responsibility for recruitment and selection.



1.2. **Government Auditing Standards 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.

1.3. **Strengths and Challenges of County Recruitment and Selection**

Strengths:

- Without exception, all R/S (recruitment and selection) staff understand the importance of maintaining a legally sound recruitment and selection process.
- Departments and offices consistently reported that they like the current process in which they are responsible for their own recruitment and selection processes.
- All departments and offices reported that Human Resources (HR) is available and helpful when they request assistance with the recruitment and selection process.
- The Executive's Office recently enacted countywide background checks for all new employees, temporary workers, and volunteers.
- During the course of the audit, the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer submitted an EEO Plan to County Council as required by county code chapter 3.57.
- The Human Services Department has put a robust set of internal controls in place to ensure that the recruitment and selection processes are done correctly within their department. In addition, they consistently use recruiting approaches aimed at attracting diverse applicants.
- The Department of Corrections has implemented creative and aggressive recruiting practices to address the unique challenges facing their department. In addition, Corrections has effectively implemented recruiting practices that have resulted in a more diverse workforce and utilizes standardized, validated tests.
- The Department of Public Works uses detailed checklists designed to guide the recruitment and selection process within their department and utilizes spreadsheets and other methods to track and monitor the hiring process.
- Snohomish County's Diversity Council meets regularly and promotes events and educational programs that celebrate diversity within the county.
- The Diversity Council is in the process of developing a "Diversity Toolkit" that includes a "candidate sourcing guide" that is intended to serve as a resource for recruiting diverse candidates.



- Large departments have learned from running numerous recruitments and have established recruitment and selection (R/S) processes that work for them.
- Snohomish County hiring officials are an integral part of the R/S process, which ensures that expectations for the new hire are communicated and likely to be met.
- The recruitment and selection process information found on HR's shared drive provides basic guidance to departments.

Challenges:

- Oversight, consistency and efficiency are inherently more difficult to achieve in more decentralized processes.
- Small departments and offices recruit and hire infrequently, making it more difficult to learn from experience.
- Small departments and offices have less flexibility in shifting workload to cover the responsibilities of recruitment and selection.
- Large departments often have multiple recruitments occurring simultaneously, creating a heavy but inconsistent workload.
- Though the majority of R/S staff indicated that there was adequate staff to perform the R/S function, interviewees from 7 different departments and offices reported that the recruitment and selection workload taxes current staff levels.

1.4. Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The audit team evaluated recruitment and selection practices from 2001 through 2006. Objectives and the section of the report where they are described are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

CATEGORY	OBJECTIVE	REPORT SECTION
Background	1. What is the history and context of the recruitment and selection process?	1
Controls	2. Is the structure of the current recruitment and selection process sufficient to meet laws, regulations, goals, and expectations?	2
Recruitment	3. Has the recruitment process been consistent with recognized best practices and benchmarking?	3
Selection	4. Has the selection process been consistent with recognized best practices and benchmarking?	4
Efficiency	5. How efficient has the recruitment and selection process been?	5



To obtain information the audit team:

- Analyzed electronic data from:
 - ✓ High Line (new payroll and human resources data system)
 - ✓ Cayenta (previous payroll and current budget data system)
- Conducted 75 interviews¹ with:
 - ✓ Snohomish County officials and employees
 - ✓ HR officials and staff from other jurisdictions
- Reviewed documents:
 - ✓ Analyzed 127 closed job files from 2001-2006 from a total population of 1,316 that included a mix of management, line, and clerical positions and at least one job opening from every audited department
 - ✓ Snohomish County general information and R/S process documentation
 - ✓ General information from other jurisdictions
- Identified best practices
- Reviewed applicable literature²
- Reviewed federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines

This audit did not analyze recruitment and selection data from the following departments and offices:

- Sheriff's Office
- Board of Equalization/Boundary Review Commission
- Hearing Examiner
- Department of Emergency Management
- Superior and District Courts

1.5. **Notes**

Audit Support

The auditors would like to thank interns Patricia Terry and Ethan Phelps-Goodman for their invaluable support and assistance with this project.

Acknowledgement

The auditors would like to acknowledge the commitment of the auditees to the audit process. The time and efforts of department and office staff, especially HR, were significant and much appreciated.

¹ See detail in Appendix A.

Interview data included two offices, Council and Auditor, from whom the Performance Auditor is not independent.

² See detail in Appendix B



Auditee Communications

Interim reports and other early communications regarding audit findings were discussed with audit participants to obtain feedback and to begin addressing issues prior to the completion of the audit. A letter was provided to management as a supplement to this report.

Limitations

Insufficient documentation limited some audit analysis and independent verification.

Conversion of computer systems from Cayenta to High Line in 2004 led to duplicated data and/or missing data that made analyzing the recruitment and selection data from that year difficult. Unless there was an alternate method of verifying data accuracy for 2004, the year's data has been removed from analyses.

High Line

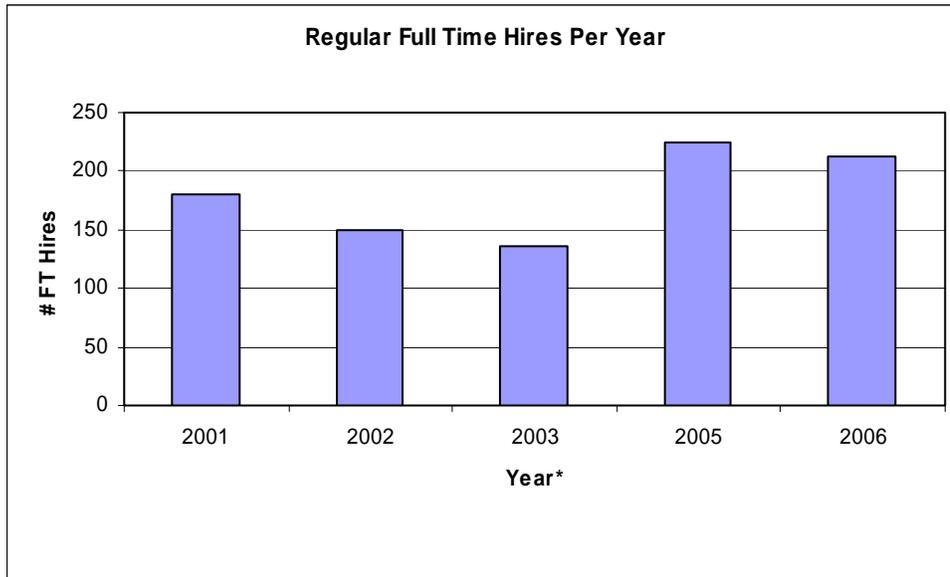
In 2005 Snohomish County began transitioning to an HR Information System called "High Line." High Line currently handles payroll, benefits, employee and manager self-service, and other functions. In 2008 HR plans to deploy a comprehensive, substantially automated recruitment and selection module of High Line. All processes, policies, and forms used in recruitment and selection will have to be transferred into High Line, making it timely to revise and standardize recruitment and selection policy. Implementation of the recommendations in this report will be directly relevant to and will better inform the design of the High Line recruitment and selection module.

1.6. Background

Snohomish County's current total workforce of 2,815 individuals includes 2,737 regular full-time and 78 part-time employees. Figure 2 below shows the number of regular full time hires per year.



Figure 2



*2004 data was not reliable due to the convergence of data systems that year so was not included in analysis.
**Total workforce in 2001 = 2688, in 2002 = 2714, in 2003 = 2708, in 2005 = 2760, in 2006 = 2887

1.6.1 History of recruitment and selection responsibility

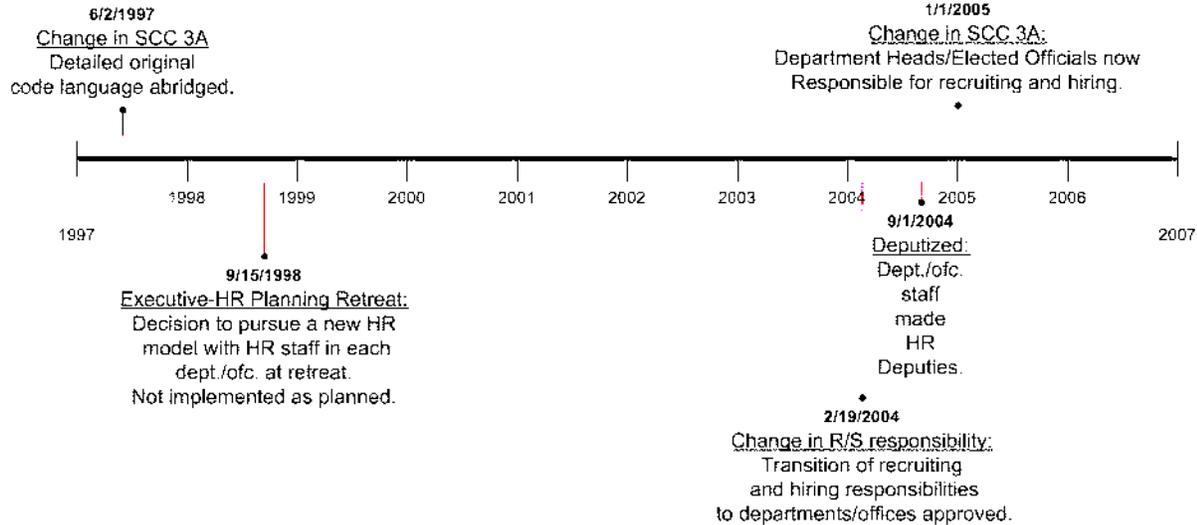
The responsibility for recruitment and selection in Snohomish County has gradually shifted away from Human Resources and toward individual departments and offices. Some of the reasons given for this shift are:

- HR staff budget cuts;
- inadequate numbers of HR staff to handle the volume of county employment growth; and
- department and office concerns about the R/S process taking too long and being overly cumbersome.

Figure 3 below shows a timeline of the significant shifts in recruitment and selection responsibility from 1997 to the present.



Figure 3



Centralized and decentralized HR models

There is a continuum of control over R/S processes with centralized at one end and decentralized at the other. “Centralized” means recruitment and selection activities occur in HR. “Decentralized” means recruitment and selection activities occur in departments and offices or are contracted out to a third party. During the audit period Snohomish County’s R/S process has shifted from being more centralized in 2001 to more decentralized in 2007. See Appendices C and D for detail on the process pre- and post-2004.

Industry literature discussed the pros and cons of the two approaches to recruitment and selection shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

CENTRALIZED	DECENTRALIZED
PROS	PROS
More likely to be neutral	More department and office autonomy
More likely to be equitable	More streamlined
More likely to be consistent	Needs of departments and offices prevail
HR professionals administer processes	More likely to be flexible
Efficiencies through economies of scale	
Tight controls can be established	
CONS	CONS
Can be rigid regarding rules/processes	Increases opportunities for inequities
Can be complex	Can be inconsistent
Can be slow	R/S staff often lack technical knowledge
Can be unresponsive	Lose economies of scale
	Controls are more difficult to implement



Other jurisdictions

HR officials from 71% of similarly sized jurisdictions³ report that their recruitment and selection process is centralized. Shifting back and forth between centralized and decentralized R/S functions has been common in these jurisdictions. HR officials from centralized entities report being more confident that laws and regulations are being followed than did decentralized entities. HR officials in decentralized entities report more legal action relating to recruitment and selection than centralized entities.

Guidance on Recruitment and Selection - The “G: drive”

Under the county’s decentralized recruitment and selection process, departments and offices utilize R/S information provided by HR on the shared “G: drive”. The G: drive is the global drive on the county’s computer network that allows departments and offices the ability to share files and folders and gain access to central information. HR’s G: drive information contains a “hiring process overview” with links to forms, instructions, tips and techniques. Though some of the information is outdated and limited in scope, departments and offices use or have used this information as the basis for recruitment and selection activities.

1.6.2 *Applicable laws, regulations, and contracts*

There are many laws, regulations, and contracts that impact recruitment and selection processes. Those shown in Figure 5 below are the most relevant to the objectives of the audit. There is some redundancy between federal, state and local rules.

Figure 5

Federal
Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII
Fair Labor Standards Act - 29 USC
Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Act USC 4212
ADA 29 CFR Part 1630
State
RCW 40.14.060-Public Records Retention
RCW 41.04.010-Veterans
RCW 49.60-Discrimination
WAC 162-Discrimination
Local
SCC 2.600 Department of Human Resources
SCC 3A-Personnel Rules
SCC 3.57 Affirmative Action
SCC 4.26.120-Vacancies, Reclassifications
Snohomish County Union Contracts (36 separate agreements)

³ Six similarly sized counties from across the country and nine Washington State counties were surveyed for this audit. See Appendix A.



2 CONTROLS

A system of effective internal controls would provide reasonable assurance that Snohomish County's recruitment and selection objectives are being met. This would include compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

2.1 ***General recruitment and selection planning, coordination, and general tracking should be the role of HR.***

Human Resources should play a stronger role in planning, coordinating, and tracking the recruitment and selection process. Analysis should be conducted to determine if additional resources will be needed for HR to carry out this function. There is currently no one entity in Snohomish County responsible for the strategic activities of recruitment and selection. This may be a result of the transition away from a centralized model of recruitment and selection shown in Figure 3. Human Resources is the entity which conducts strategic recruitment and selection activities in other jurisdictions. In general, the educational and experiential backgrounds of Human Resources staff lead them to have expertise in recruitment and selection processes.

Currently, SCC Chapter 3A identifies department heads and elected officials as the parties responsible for their own recruitment and selection and SCC Chapter 2.600 states that HR shall act in an advisory capacity to departments.

2.6.1 **HR Staffing**

Snohomish County HR has fewer staff responsible for recruitment and selection than other jurisdictions or private industry. Prior to 2004, HR had the equivalent of 3 full time staff dedicated to recruitment and selection. Today there are none; however, HR staff respond to questions from departments and offices. In each of the 6 decentralized jurisdictions⁴ surveyed there was a minimum of one full time recruitment and selection staff person in HR.

To ensure an effective and legally defensible recruitment and selection process, HR should broaden their role to include planning, coordinating, and general tracking of recruitment and selection.

⁴ Decentralized Counties = Cobb County, Georgia, Multnomah County, Oregon, and Thurston County, Spokane County, King County and Skagit County in Washington.



Recommendation 1:

Snohomish County Code 3A should be revised to make HR responsible for countywide planning, coordination, and general tracking of the recruitment and selection processes. HR should determine and request any resources needed to fulfill an expanded role in the recruitment and selection process.

2.2 *Controls that help ensure an effective, consistent, and legal recruitment and selection process should be put in place.*

Background

Objectives of Snohomish County's recruitment and selection process as defined by HR officials and available documents are:

- Follow all laws, regulations and contracts
- Be consistent, fair, accurate, and complete
- Attract and select high quality, high performing employees
- Be efficient and timely
- Address current and future needs

In order to determine if the recruitment and selection process and controls guiding the process were effective 127 closed job files were reviewed. There were inconsistencies in R/S practices across departments and offices and four instances in which regulations were not applied correctly. Records have not been retained as required.

2.6.1 Risk and mitigation

Other public and private sector organizations have been involved in costly litigation in two areas related to recruitment and selection; negligent hiring and discriminatory hiring. In negligent hiring, entities are potentially liable for hiring a person that they knew or should have known was unfit for the job if that employee causes harm. In discriminatory hiring, entities are potentially liable for using unfair hiring practices such as discriminating based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age (40 and over), HIV/AIDS status, disability, or retaliation.

HR literature suggests that jurisdictions can mitigate recruitment and selection risk by:

- ensuring a consistent, fair, defensible, and documented recruitment and hiring process⁵;
- retaining all required documents for prescribed periods;

⁵ See section 2.2.



- ensuring that hiring practices do not negatively impact protected classes and are clearly job-related;
- documenting reasons for not hiring highest scorers on assessment instruments;
- using extra care when hiring workers with public contact or access to sensitive information;
- verifying information given by job candidates in interviews and log attempts to get information;
- checking job references thoroughly; and
- following up on missing records and/or gaps in employment.

In order to most effectively mitigate risk, the activities noted above should be included in development of a comprehensive system of controls for Snohomish County's hiring process.

2.6.2 Guidance and Expectations

Policies and Procedures

Snohomish County Code Chapter 3A and union contracts provide general recruitment and selection guidance. In addition, the G: drive contains general information regarding recruitment and selection. Current policies and procedures lack sufficient detail to effectively guide the county's decentralized process. Standards for internal controls developed by the Government Accountability Office state that, "Policies and procedures should be in place for hiring." In analyzing the closed job files, insufficient policies and procedures contributed to inconsistencies in the recruitment and selection process, increasing risk for the county.

Recruitment and selection policies and procedures should be developed to ensure clarity and consistency and to reduce risk.

Recruitment Plan and Program

Although recruitment materials are available for R/S staff on the county's shared drive, a recruitment program with the components required in Snohomish County Code Chapter 3A is not in place or communicated to employees. Currently, recruiting efforts differ in consistency and effectiveness across county departments and offices (see Section 3 for more information regarding recruiting). A strong recruiting plan visible both internally and externally to the county would help to achieve both short and long term goals for quality staffing.

An in-depth recruitment plan and program should be developed and communicated.



Affirmative Action Plan

During the course of the audit, an Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (Affirmative Action Plan) was submitted to County Council, as required in Snohomish County Code 3.57. Prior to the audit, the last time an Affirmative Action Plan was submitted to County Council was in 1989. The plan is designed to eliminate barriers and to improve employment opportunities for under-represented groups, women and racial minorities, within county government.

Snohomish County officials state that the diversity of county employees should mirror the diversity of the community's labor force. Currently the county government workforce is made up of 8% people of color. According to 2000 U.S. census data, Snohomish County's labor force is made up of 13% people of color. Overall 20% of the county's population consists of people of color.

An Affirmative Action Plan should be developed, implemented, and monitored for effectiveness on a yearly basis.

2.6.3 Authorization

Job Requisitions

Job requisition forms that verify that a department or office is authorized to fill an open position are not submitted to the Executive's Office consistently and could be better utilized. Job requisitions are used by HR to check layoff lists, facilitate ADA placements, and to track job openings. Snohomish County Code 4.26.120 requires that job requisitions for each job opening be created by departments and offices and submitted to the Executive's Office for approval.

The job requisition process and form should be reviewed to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

2.6.4 Completeness

Checklists

Checklists are useful tools to ensure that critical R/S steps have been completed. In 2001-2003 checklists were found in 81% of the closed job files. In 2005-2006 they were found in only 40%. A checklist was part of the packet of electronic resources provided to R/S staff years ago, but it is not currently available on the G: drive. Some departments and offices have developed their own R/S process checklists. Without a standardized checklist, the recruitment and selection process may be carried out in an inconsistent manner.

HR should develop and disseminate a standardized hiring process checklist.



2.6.5 Accuracy

Well trained staff

Ongoing training has not been required for R/S staff. In 2004, HR held an extensive training session for representatives from each department on the recruitment and selection process. Since that time, no training specifically targeted to R/S topics has been offered to R/S staff. Currently 17% of R/S staff report that they have had no R/S training. Interviews with R/S staff found that many would be interested in training on recruitment and selection topics. One industry report states that, "No agency representative should ever be allowed to conduct an interview without basic training in HR liabilities and how to prevent and mitigate them."

Basic training levels should be required for R/S staff and ongoing training should be offered.

2.6.6 Review

File Audits

In 2004, as responsibility for recruitment and selection shifted more to departments and offices, HR planned to audit closed job files. The planned auditing was not implemented. In our review of closed job files, most did not have complete documentation. Problems could be identified and documentation improved using a file audit process.

A plan to audit closed job files should be created and implemented.

2.6.7 Quality Assurance

Data collection, analysis, and response

To make the recruitment and selection process efficient and effective, key information must be tracked, shared, and acted upon. HR tracks and disseminates minimal R/S data. Decisions regarding data collection should mirror the goals and objectives of the recruitment and selection process. Other jurisdictions and HR best practice organizations recommend collecting data on the following:

- Length of time each recruitment and selection takes
- Recruitment sourcing and effectiveness
- Impact of diversity initiatives
- Unintended impacts on protected classes in testing
- Quality of new hires

Data should be collected in order to better understand, communicate, and inform the county's hiring practices.



2.6.8 Coordination between departments and offices

There is no system in place to encourage departments and offices to assist each other or to share R/S ideas and information although some coordinate informally. A number of Snohomish County departments and offices are involved in creative and effective R/S initiatives that could be shared more broadly. Other decentralized jurisdictions have established R/S forums or committees made up of R/S staff that encourage sharing of information and advice, and provides R/S updates on a regular basis.

A countywide committee or group made up of R/S staff could serve as a valuable resource for those involved in the hiring process.

Recommendation 2:

HR should plan, institute, and monitor a comprehensive set of controls including:

- risk mitigation strategies;
- policies and procedures;
- Affirmative Action Plan;
- Recruitment Plan;
- effective and efficient job requisition process and form;
- a countywide recruitment and selection process checklist;
- basic and ongoing training for R/S staff;
- closed job file audits;
- data collection, analysis, and response plan; and
- establish a countywide information sharing forum for R/S staff.



3 RECRUITING

Effective recruiting attracts sufficient pools of qualified applicants from which to select and minimizes the number of unqualified candidates in the pool.

3.1 ***Snohomish County recruiting efforts meet criteria, but there are opportunities for improvement.***

Most R/S staff report that they use the Snohomish County website as their primary method to advertise open positions. However, some departments and offices use a variety of strategies that broadly advertise positions, target for specific skill sets, and/or encourage diverse applicants. Almost all departments and offices stated that more assistance with recruitment strategies would be welcomed.

3.6.1 **Results**

Effective recruiting programs result in sufficient numbers of qualified, diverse candidates that apply for open positions while the numbers of unqualified candidates that apply are minimized.

Qualified/Unqualified candidates

In reviewing the closed job files, the county's performance related to the quality and quantity of applicants varied across department and position type. Most recruitments appeared to have an appropriate pool of qualified candidates from which to choose. However, in some cases there were insufficient numbers of qualified candidates that applied and in other cases there were significant numbers of unqualified candidates that applied.

More recruiting resources and guidance for R/S staff could help ensure that effective outcomes are consistently achieved for each job opening.

Diverse candidate pool

Industry literature includes diversity as a criterion for effective recruiting. A number of Snohomish County initiatives are designed to increase diversity among its workforce; however, many of these efforts have not been consistently implemented. In addition, no one within county government has taken responsibility for overseeing diversity efforts related to recruitment and selection.

With some notable exceptions, most R/S staff indicated that they do not actively recruit for diverse applicants nor do they have specific diversity goals.



Many of the R/S staff said that they would welcome assistance with diversity recruitment.

Although some of the following strategies are being selectively employed in Snohomish County government, industry reports and other jurisdictions recommend the following activities to increase the diversity of candidate pools:

- Build a reputation for acceptance and diversity
- Determine if there is under-representation of protected classes and target recruitment accordingly
- Target recruitment efforts to include diverse newspapers, affinity groups, associations, organizations, radio stations
- Attend targeted career and diversity fairs
- Encourage employee referrals
- Send every job posting to a comprehensive list of diverse recruiting sources

The county will benefit from the development and implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (previously identified as the Affirmative Action Plan) as stated in Recommendation 2 above.

3.6.2 Recruiting Difficulty

Most departments report that they encounter some obstacles when recruiting for vacancies. These include increasing difficulty finding qualified candidates for specific technical positions, skilled and experienced managers, diverse candidates, and project/temporary positions. Additional barriers reported include competition from the private sector and other regional governments.

Recommendation 3:

With the assistance of HR, departments and offices should develop short- and long-term recruiting plans for particularly difficult-to-fill positions.



4 SELECTION

Effective selection would ensure that the most qualified and best fit candidates are hired. Effective selection increases productivity, work quality, and reduces turnover.

An effective selection process is one in which the highest quality candidate is selected. Though quality is difficult to define, measures often used to ascertain quality include performance evaluations and first year turnover rates.

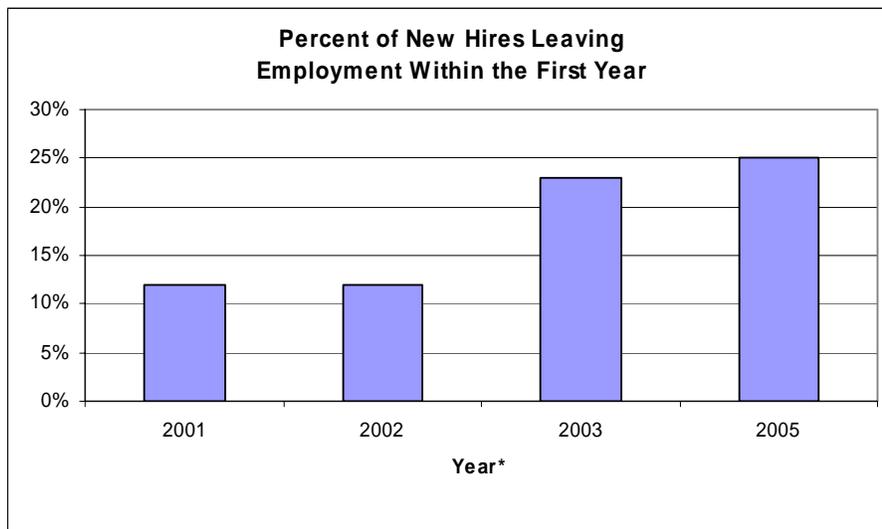
4.1 *Snohomish County's first year turnover rate has increased in the past five years.*

4.6.1 First year turnover

The rate of new regular employees in Snohomish County leaving within a year of being hired doubled from 2001 to 2005, see Figure 6. In 2005 a quarter of new hires left within the first year⁶. When new hires leave within their first year of employment it can be indicative of a poor hiring decision, changing regional economic conditions, the shifting generational approach to employment, or other factors.

Resources would be more effectively spent and productivity maintained if a higher percentage of new hires could be retained.

Figure 6



*2004 data was not reliable due to the convergence of data systems that year so was not included in analysis.

⁶ An HR industry benchmark showed that the average cost of replacing one employee for all industries surveyed was \$3,910.



Exit interviews are often used by organizations to better understand their turnover rates as they can assist an organization in identifying areas where improvements could be made in the working environment, culture, management/leadership and training.

The county could benefit from further analyzing the reasons behind its first year turnover rate.

Recommendation 4:

HR should develop an exit interview program to determine the reasons for increasing first year turnover rates and identify strategies to decrease early separations.



5 EFFICIENCY

An efficient recruitment and selection process would decrease the amount of staff time spent on hiring and decrease the amount of time the hiring process takes.

5.1 *The average time to fill an open position has decreased in the last five years.*

Efficiency gains in recruitment and selection have two positive benefits:

1. Savings in staff hours devoted to the hiring process are realized when processes are clear and policies are standardized.
2. Less time spent on filling vacancies can improve overall organizational performance and may have an impact on the quality of hire.

5.6.1 Time to Fill

Snohomish County's time to fill open positions is longer than comparable government benchmarks reported by HR industry groups. Recruitment and selection staff stated that on occasion, high quality candidates have accepted other competing offers while waiting for the completion of Snohomish County's hiring process. Time to fill open positions is calculated from the time a job is posted to the time the new employee starts work – it does not include the time between a vacancy occurring and the beginning of the hiring process.

A review of the closed job files showed that in 2005-2006 the average time between posting a job and the new employee beginning work was 57 days. In 2001-2003 it took an average of 70 days⁷. Figure 7 shows the time taken from posting to hire from the sample of closed job files. This chart shows that faster hires occurred in 2005 – 2006 compared to 2001 – 2003. Further decentralizing the recruitment and selection process appears to have reduced the time it takes to fill a vacancy.

⁷ Because all data points were not available for each job file, the average number of days for the parts of the process do not add up to the average number of days for the whole process. In addition, because of inconsistent usage of job requisition forms figures do not include the time taken between requisitioning and posting the job.



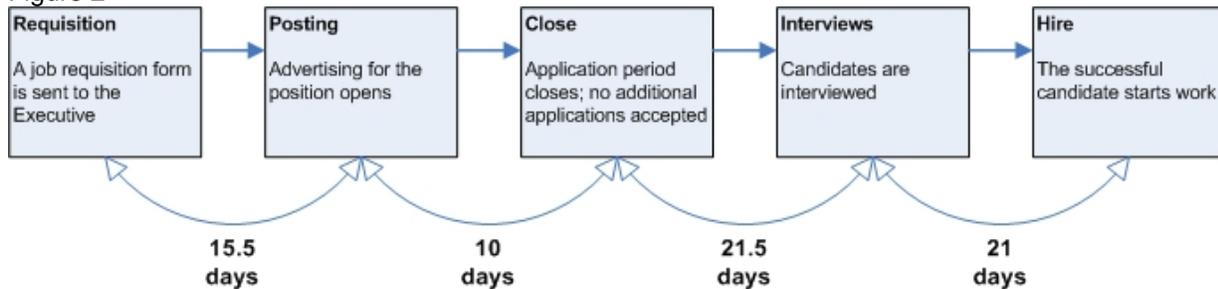
Figure 1



1.6.1 Breakdown of the Recruitment and Selection Process

The recruitment and selection process can be broken down into five primary milestones: Requisition, Posting, Close, Interviews, and Hire. Figure 8 shows key points in the R/S process and the median number of days between each point for 2005-2006.

Figure 2



The two parts of the recruitment and selection process that provide the most opportunity for increased efficiency are the time between the job requisition and the job posting and the time between the close of a job posting and the interview. Other parts of the process are relatively fixed.



Job Requisition to Posting

R/S staff have different practices surrounding job requisitions. Though SCC 4.26.120 states that all job requisitions require executive approval and there is information on the G: drive regarding requisitions, in practice, departments and offices have not had consistent guidance for this process. The requisition process currently occurs in one of three ways:

- R/S staff does not submit a job requisition for approval.
- R/S staff requests executive office approval and waits to proceed.
- R/S staff requests executive office approval then continues on with the process pending the approval.

Due to the inconsistent policy surrounding job requisitions, time between requisition and posting varies more than any other part of the process.

Posting Close to Interview

Analysis of closed job files showed that there is an average of 22 days between job closing and start of the interviews. This length of time is a function of:

- the complexity of screening and assessment tools utilized;
- the number of applicants screened;
- availability of interview panel members and interviewees; and
- R/S staff workload.

Other jurisdictions recommend using supplemental tests that are standardized and/or easy to score in order to make the testing process more consistent and efficient.

Recommendation 5:

HR, in consultation with departments and offices, should determine if the county's time to fill positions is acceptable and make policy changes accordingly.

5.2 ***Efficiency could be improved by coordinating countywide recruitment and selection efforts.***

5.6.1 **Eligibility Registers**

Eligibility registers are lists of candidates who have been previously assessed and ranked for a specific position and can then be selected for final interviews as individual openings occur.

HR-managed eligibility registers

Efficiencies may be gained if HR managed a single job pool for some positions. For example, 13 different departments hired 56 Office Assistant IIs and three departments hired 19 Office Assistant Is in 2005-6. Industry reports



recommend recruiting continuously for hard-to-fill and high-volume job classes. Many departments and offices mentioned that they would find central recruiting for some job classes helpful to them.

Department/office-managed eligibility registers

Some departments are currently using department-generated eligibility lists, but they could be used more extensively to improve efficiency. A number of departments and offices hire many people in the same job classification over the course of a year and could benefit from establishing an on-going, active list of applicants from which to select.

Union rules must be consulted when utilizing eligibility lists.

Eligibility registers can improve efficiency by eliminating the need for a separate recruiting process for each individual opening.

Recommendation 6:

HR should explore developing and maintaining eligibility registers for the use of all departments and assist departments in identifying job classifications for which department/office-managed eligibility registers could improve efficiency.



6 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

During the course of the hiring process audit, a number of issues surfaced that did not fall within the audit's scope. The county may benefit from additional attention and research in these areas:

Job Reclassification Efficiency and Effectiveness

An equitable, consistent and timely process for determining job reclassifications is an important component of recruitment and retention efforts. Staff across multiple departments raised concerns about the length of time the county's reclassification process takes and the consistency of compensation across similar job titles and job types.

Regional Competitiveness

Given the county's close proximity to a major metropolitan market and private sector demands, county government must remain competitive in its recruitment and retention efforts. A number of departments noted that they have lost quality candidates and current employees to neighboring jurisdictions and the private sector. Evaluation of salary competitiveness and other employment benefits could be of value.

Discipline and Termination

During the development of audit objectives there were requests for the review of discipline and termination processes. Although it did not fit into the scope of the current audit, as the area of employment risk grows, it will be important for the county to carefully review discipline and termination practices to ensure that they meet objectives.

7 OFFICIAL RESPONSES



Aaron Reardon
County Executive

July 31, 2007

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3000 Rockefeller Avenue
Everett, WA 98201-4046
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FAX (425) 388-3579
TTY (425) 388-3700
1-800-562-4367

Ms. Kymber Waltmunson
Snohomish County Performance Auditor
3000 Rockefeller Avenue
Everett, WA 98201

RE: Audit of the Snohomish County Hiring Process

Dear Ms. Waltmunson:

I provide this letter response pursuant to SCC 2.700.060.

You and your team have reviewed the decentralized recruitment and selection processes used by departments with general guidance provided by my department, Human Resources (HR). Your report clearly describes these processes together with challenges the various departments and HR experience in recruitment and selection. You have made recommendations for further action.

Recommendation 1 seeks to return control of countywide planning, coordination, and general tracking of the recruitment and selection processes to HR together with a review of HR staffing to carry out these duties. I agree with this recommendation. I will review this recommendation to determine how best to implement this recommendation. The staff needed to perform this new overarching control needs careful evaluation, beginning with an analysis of best practices.

Recommendation 2 calls for HR to plan, institute, and monitor a comprehensive set of controls. I will review this recommendation to determine how best to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 3 calls for HR to develop an exit interview program. I agree with this recommendation. HR will begin developing resources for use by departments.

Recommendation 4 calls for HR to work with departments to evaluate the time needed to fill a job from vacancy to job offer, and to make adjustments if necessary to

shorten the time to fill. I agree with this recommendation. This should include an assessment of satisfaction with our own hiring times.

Recommendation 5 calls for HR to assist departments in developing recruitment plans to fill difficult-to-fill positions. I agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation 6 calls for HR to explore the development of eligibility registers for job classifications frequently vacant. Eligibility lists are more efficient than multiple individual recruitments. This is a strategy HR used when the county's recruitment and selection processes were centrally controlled. This is a labor-intensive strategy that may pay dividends in terms of shortening the time to hire. However, in a decentralized environment, such as strategy warrants further analysis, as the recommendation states.

The implementation of these recommendations will require analysis as how best to fit that implementation into the current work load of HR and other departments. Staffing requirements will also need to be reviewed and prioritized. The implementation is also impacted by the approximately 40 separate labor agreements in addition to the County personnel rules.

Thank you for the careful and considerate manner in which you and your staff proceeded through the audit of the recruitment and selection processes of Snohomish County. I enjoy working with you and share your interest in human resources-related strategies and outcomes. Please do not hesitate to call on me for assistance if ever you need me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bridget Clawson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Bridget Clawson
Director of Human Resources



8 APPENDICES

8.1 *Appendix A: Officials Interviewed and Consulted*

County Staff

Airport

1. Susan Kern, Business Manager

Assessor

2. Linda Hjelle, Chief Deputy Assessor
3. Darlene Joseph, Office Supervisor
4. Stephen Lightle, Residential Appraiser Manager

Auditor

5. Carolyn Ableman, Deputy Auditor
6. Diane Mickunas-Ries, Recording Manager
7. Betty Scrapper, Administrative Secretary

Clerk

8. Mark Allen, Case Management/Document Control Manager

Corrections

9. Janet Hall, Chief of Administration
10. Mary Halberg, Admin. Asst.
11. Kira Hiester, Senior Secretary

County Council

12. Marcia Isenberg, Chief of Staff
13. Kathy Bratcher, Clerk of the Council

Executive's Office

14. Mark Soine, Deputy County Executive
15. Peter Camp, Executive Director
16. Mark Knudsen, EEO Officer

Facilities Management

17. Al Garcia, Administrative Operations Manager

Finance

18. Diane Weber, Risk Manager
19. Sharyl Raines, Controller

Human Services

20. Janelle Sgrignoli, Director
21. Mike Fulcher, Division Manager
22. Wanda Staples, Support Services Supervisor
23. Mary King, Division Manager

Human Resources

24. Ranger Hamilton, Generalist
25. Bridget Clawson, Director



- 26. Jackie Anderson, Generalist
- 27. Susan Thornton, Analyst
- 28. Lois Bridger, Office Assistant
- 29. Tina Larsen, Generalist
- 30. Gregg Ohlsen, Analyst
- 31. Sandi Cook, Analyst

Information Services

- 32. Ron Knight, Applications Manager
- 33. Randy Manley, Systems Manager
- 34. Lisa Goldsworthy, Info. Services & Admin. Manager
- 35. Laurel Ornelaz, Administrative Specialist
- 36. Cathy Klaus, Programmer Analyst

Medical Examiner

- 37. Carolyn Sanden, Deputy Director

Office of Public Defense

- 38. Beth Cullen, Attorney Administrator

Parks and Recreation

- 39. Bridgid Smith, Administration Manager
- 40. Kay Akerlund, Capital Funds Specialist

Planning and Development Services

- 41. Debbie McPherson, HR Manager
- 42. Pam Miller, Division Manager
- 43. Barbara Mock, Admin. Manager

Prosecuting Attorney

- 44. Linda Scoccia, DPA Civil Division
- 45. Steve Bladdek, DPA Civil Division
- 46. Bob Lenz, Operations Manager
- 47. Renee Anderson, Office Manager, Criminal Division
- 48. Pam Meggers, Office Management Coordinator
- 49. Charlotte Comer, DPA Civil Division
- 50. Tad Seder, Asst. Civil Chief

Public Works

- 51. Debbie Terwilleger, Admin. Operations Manager
- 52. Lynn Seely, HR Assistant
- 53. Pat Walter, Administrative Assistant
- 54. Bobann Fogard, Engineering Division Director
- 55. William Leif, Env. Programs Compliance Specialist

Treasurer

- 56. Jerry Lindsey, Accounting Manager
- 57. Barb Storey, Tax Supervisor

Diversity Council

- 58. Ben Young, Chair



Washington Counties – Human Resources

- 59. Clark County, Joe Hertig, Manager
- 60. King County, J. Wes Moore, Service Delivery Manager
- 61. Kitsap County, Sue Wohleb
- 62. Pierce County, Erik Hendrickson, Asst. Director
- 63. Skagit County, Billie Kadrmas, Director
- 64. Spokane County, Heather Kvokov, Recruitment Specialist
- 65. Thurston County, Alberto Lara, Director
- 66. Whatcom County, Karen Goins
- 67. Yakima County, Judy Kendall, Manager

Other Jurisdictions with Populations of 600,000 – 800,000

- 68. San Mateo County, California, De Williams-Ridley, Asst. HR Director
- 69. Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, Dan Matthews, HR Director
- 70. DeKalb County, Georgia, Reggie Banks, HR Recruiting Manager
- 71. Multnomah County, Oregon, Travis Graves, HR
- 72. Cobb County, Georgia, Kathleen Daniels, HR Manager
- 73. Monmouth County, New Jersey, Dina Valiente, HR

Other

- 74. James Trefry, Staff Representative, AFSCME
- 75. Tom Fitzpatrick, Attorney



8.2 Appendix B: Reference Documents

A list of documents reviewed during the course of this audit follows in alphabetical order.

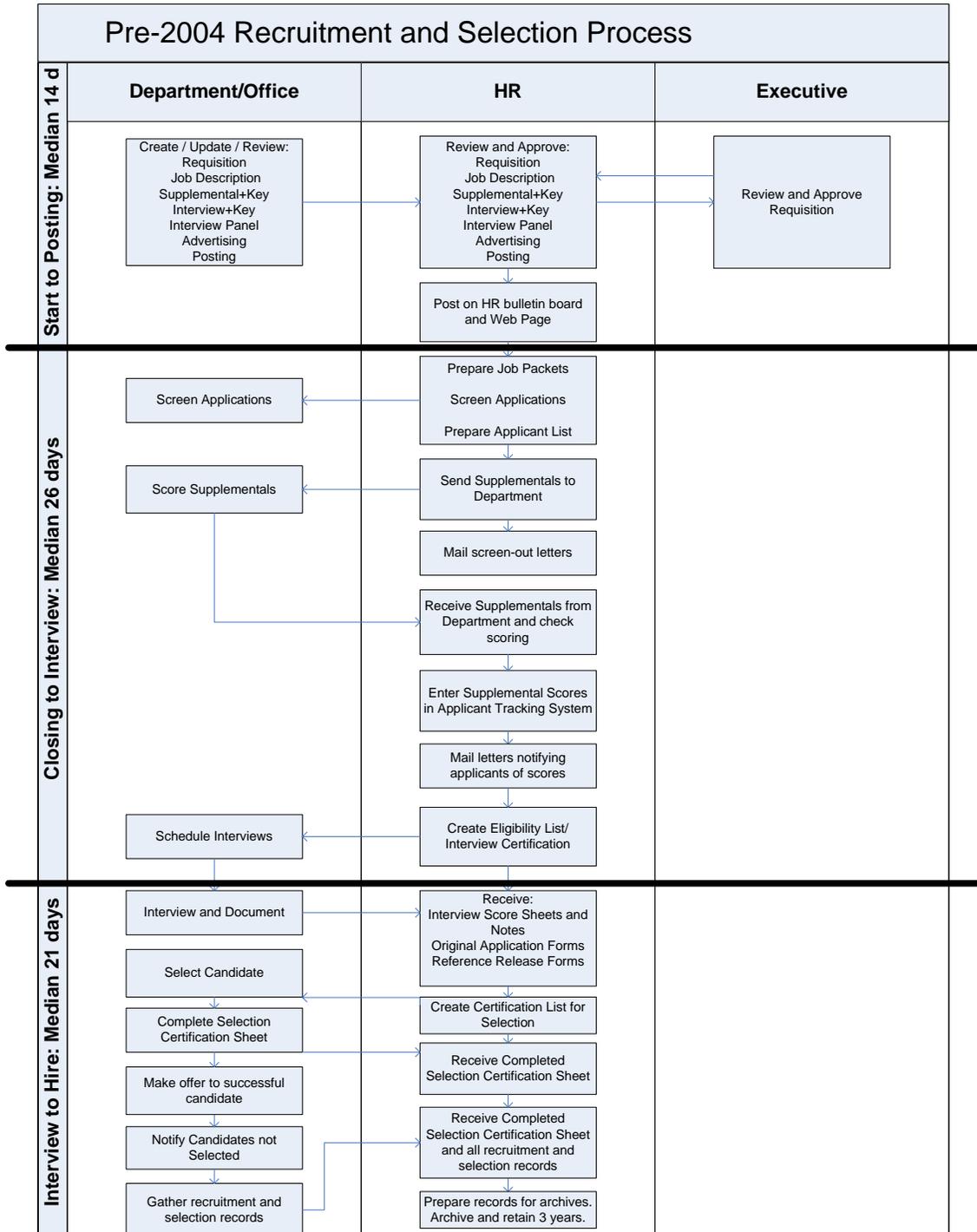
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28. Human Rights Commission Complaints for Western Washington Counties, 2000-2007
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37. *Recruiting*, SHRM White Paper, June 2002
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8.3 Appendix C: Pre-2004 Recruitment and Selection Process





8.4 Appendix D: Post-2004 Recruitment and Selection Process

