



OFFICE OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Darlene A. Kloeppel, County Executive

MEMORANDUM

TO: County Board Members
FROM: Darlene Kloeppel, County Executive
DATE: November 9, 2022
RE: *County Workforce Recommendations*

As part of the current job market experiencing the “great resignation” and younger generations entering the marketplace post-pandemic, county workforce issues will be one of the biggest challenges for all county departments in the next few years. Realizing a vision for Champaign County government as a leading community employer will require:

- Department heads that accomplish the county’s work in a fiscally responsible manner, minimizing liabilities to the county and improving the quality of life for county residents
- Supervisors that attract, hire, train and retain the best talent available
- Employees that are competent, efficient, ethical and engaged

Baseline Workplace Environment

In 2019, the Executive’s Office solicited all departments’ input for suggestions to position the county as an employer of choice. A proposed workforce plan incorporating those suggestions was presented, but not adopted by the board at that time. Focusing on items that could be implemented within their resources and despite the pandemic, department heads successfully worked on the following ideas to recruit and support staff since that time:

Recruitment/onboarding -

- New employee onboarding templates were developed and posted online for reference; a curriculum for in-person 1-day orientation was developed, but was tabled shortly thereafter due to the pandemic
- Supervisor templates were developed and posted online for reference; a curriculum for in-person ½ day training for new supervisors was developed, but was tabled due to the pandemic
- Board member onboarding resources were developed and posted online for reference
- Added 9 positions to reduce overtime - Sheriff, Animal Control, Coroner, Public Defender, IT
- Expanded recruitment events/postings/networking (difficult during the pandemic)
- Increased use of college interns
- Added lateral hire and sign-on bonuses for public safety staff
- Implemented revised AOIC qualifications for court services staff

Professional development -

- Provided user training for new/upgraded county software, vehicles and equipment
- Offered lunch-n-learn and workshop training opportunities for supervisors and middle managers

- Updated/expanded library of online trainings for employees on work-related topics - supervision, sexual harassment, diversity, insurance, health/mental health, legal issues, safety and best practices

Work environment/technology -

- Added wellness/lactation rooms at Brookens and Courthouse
- Added hallway art and revision of signage, including some Spanish and more Braille signage, at Brookens for better wayfinding
- Arranged summer food truck options at Brookens during the pandemic
- Offered regular on-site blood donation opportunity at Brookens
- Significant employment milestones and retiring employees were recognized annually
- Procured new ERP system to include payroll/personnel management modules - payroll is going live in November; other HR functions in 2023
- Developed and continue to offer some remote work options
- Improved security of county buildings

Baseline Compensation Environment

Personnel funds are the largest ongoing expense in the county's budget; with the 2023 personnel budget at \$67,459,514. Increased 13.3% from \$59,533,389 in 2019 - in addition to annual COLA raises, we:

- Moved all employees to at least \$15/hr. wage
- Procured an Employee Assistance Program
- Provided administrative leave, reduced/flexed work schedules and retained all employees through the COVID-19 pandemic with no lay-offs
- Provided ARPA-funded premium pay bonus for most employees
- Added a retirement plan advisor for our employee 457(b) Nationwide program participants
- Expanded stipend for employees that speak languages other than English, as needed by office
- Paid out accrued comp time for employees that were unable to take time off in a timely manner due to staffing shortages (if they preferred this option)

As staff turnover occurs, officials with larger staff/budgets have more flexibility than smaller departments to make many additional personnel decisions within their budgets that may increase future budgets, including. giving mid-year raises and hiring employees at higher than starting salaries. In 2022, there were 37 mid-year salary increases given to General Fund employees and over 50 transactions that were outside of the personnel/bargaining unit policies, some of which were used as a strategy to recruit or keep competent staff in an increasingly competitive labor environment. Wage compression is occurring between new hires coming in above entry level salaries and existing staff with tenure. Some departments are negotiating separate MOUs that are not transparently communicated nor equitable to all members of bargaining units. Staff are aware of inconsistencies within/among departments, lowering morale and leading to feelings of unfairness and lack of trust in management. Consistency is needed.

Baseline Employee Environment

Turnover of employees for the last 4 years has led to the following observations, which indicates a need for more flexible compensation packages and some redundancy in positions to reduce county risk when vacancies occur.

The Great Resignation –

- many employees hold key positions that only they know how to do
- training of entering employees is often done through call-back of previous employees

- 2-3 employees are needed to replace employees with years of institutional knowledge

Job Applicants –

- increasingly applicants are entering the workforce with “soft skill” deficits
- increasingly applicants are unwilling to work evening/night/weekend shifts
- increasingly applicants are unwilling to learn a job defined as “hard” or “complicated”
- employee values are more diverse regarding work/life balance, work loyalty, dress code, holidays, compensation priorities, etc.
- increasingly employees prefer a fast sequence of raises commensurate with learning skills needed
- increasingly employees prefer more time off to higher wages

Workforce Plan

In spring of 2022, Gallagher was hired to perform a Workforce Study to expand our understanding of the current work environment through a talent acquisition and retention assessment, an employee survey and focus groups, and a compensation administration analysis. Their recommendations are included in their presentation and concur with the workforce plan outlined previously.

Focused action steps will be needed to make progress on our consultants’ recommendations, and some recommended strategies will have impacts on future budgets. Again, I ask that the board consider adopting a 3-5 Year Workforce Plan with action steps that can be tied to the budget. As a start:

Year 1 –2023 already budgeted

Recruitment strategies

- Continue AIOC waiver for detention officers to enable a broader pool of applicants
- Continue hiring bonuses and lateral hires for public safety staff
- Implement ERP HR functions (onboarding, training, offboarding)
- A \$20,000 placeholder for some type of recruitment strategy (applications/social media/marketing)

Retention strategies

- January 1 wage increases
- Transition to different employee investment options through Nationwide 457(b) Plan
- Implement ERP HR functions for employee on-boarding, training, performance management

Work environment

- Increased IT support for courthouse departments
- Consolidation of the jails resulting in better depth of staffing coverage for corrections positions
- Renovations to County Plaza to accommodate space needs, better natural light in offices, better security of staff, a wellness/lactation room, coffee stations and break room on every floor
- Continuing support of the county’s facility routine maintenance and deferred maintenance plan

Year 1 - 2023 other tasks requiring department time/no additional funds

- Determine an updated job description format
- All departments review/update job descriptions consistent with recommended salary scales
- Begin offering regular (monthly) in-person onboarding for new employees and new supervisors
- Prioritize next steps in a 3-5-year plan that can be budgeted annually