



Public Safety – Hiring Process Review: Detention Center

An audit of the hiring process for public safety offices within Doña Ana County was conducted as a special assignment. This audit focused on evaluating hiring procedures for the Doña Ana County Detention Center (DC), to assess the efficiency of current hiring practices. The audit evaluated the Detention Center's process for acquiring new hires and conducting internal promotions for the period of January 1, 2023 through May 31, 2023.

The following procedures were performed:

- Acquired hiring data for all new hires (Officer Trainees) and promotions (Lieutenants and Captains) for the period under review
- Obtained both Human Resources (HR) and Detention Center validation of hiring data
- Divided the hiring process into manageable phases or timeframes to identify areas of efficiency/inefficiency – See **Audit Focus**
- Evaluated attrition rates within each hiring phase

Audit Focus

Detention Center recruitment responsibilities include the following steps:

- 1 - Date department notified HR of position vacancy to date job was posted
- 2 - Date job posting closed to date interview questions/panel were remitted and approved
- 3 - Date of application submission to date department contacted qualified applicants
- 4 - Date of interview to date recruitment packet delivered to HR (with background checks)
- 6 - Date of receipt of compensation offer from HR to date contingent job offer made to applicant

Human Resources responsibilities include the following:

- 5 - Date recruitment packet delivered to HR to date compensation offer emailed to department

An in-depth analysis was conducted of the hiring process to 1) evaluate the time necessary for completion of each step, and 2) determine compliance with current Standard Operating Procedures and hiring protocols.

Audit Objectives

The audit objective was to analyze hiring timeframes for the period under review, in an effort to identify and address areas that could be made more efficient. The internal auditor met with the Doña Ana County (DAC) Detention Center's Captain of Administration, Recruiter-Trainer, Background Investigator, the Human Resources Director, and Human Resources Administrator to verify data accuracy and completeness, and discuss the duties they performed in the hiring of 16 Officer Trainee applicants (new hires) and 5 internal or higher level promotion applicants who started new positions during the period under review.

Observations, Department Input, Recommendations, & Conclusion

1. Date Job Posting Requested to Date Job is Posted

Observation(s): Hiring data indicated that this process could be completed within one day or take up to six working days. This process is initiated via the iCIMS software by the Detention Center, requiring authorization from Human Resources and Finance consecutively.

Detention Center Input: The Recruiter-Trainer's absence from work contributed to the six-day period. Under normal circumstances five working days should be a sufficient amount of time to complete this process.

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Detention Center responsibility.*

Recommendations: The Standard Operating Procedures should require each signing department to complete their authorizations within 24 – 48 hours of iCIMS notification. In addition, Detention Center management should ensure that there is a designee in the event of an absence to avoid delays in processing.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process, for repetitive job postings, can be completed in four to five working days after the vacancy notification.

2. Date Job Posting Closed to Date Department is Ready to Interview

Observation(s): Results indicated that interview questions or panelists were not submitted to Human Resources for up to 25 working days after the job posting closed, for 6 of the 16 new hires interviewed. The normal period of Human Resources approval for interview questions received and interview panels received was the same day, or the next day. Thus, the Audit focus was upon the time lag between a job posting closing and submission of interview questions or interview panelists for approval by the Detention Center.

Detention Center Input: The Detention Center cited three areas that cause delays -

1. An applicant may not be available to interview until a later date, thus neither interview questions nor panelists may be necessary until applicant availability.
2. The assembling of an approved, representative panel of interviewers can on occasion take longer than expected.¹

3. The preference is to have at least four applicants available to interview before assembling an interview panel. Attempting to reach this minimum number could cause some applicants to wait longer for an interview.²

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Detention Center responsibility.*

Recommendations: Detention Center management should consider having recruitment staff:

- 1) Remit the interview questions to HR for approval before the job posting close date;
- 2) Remit a perspective panelist list to HR within three working days after completion of determining the list of qualified applicants;
- 3) Develop and maintain a listing/log of perspective panelists for future interviews; and,
- 4) Adhere to the current Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as applicable, which does not stipulate a minimum number of applicants necessary to conduct an interview.

As an approved test is currently required for internal promotions to the rank of Lieutenant, it is further recommended that Detention Center management acquire and get Human Resources authorization for an approved test vendor, within the next 30 days.

It is also recommended that Human Resources set a standard timeline for the approval of updated or new interview questions and add this to the current SOP.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process can be completed within three working days after determining the list of qualified applicants.

- ¹ - The current SOP allows for all interview panelists to be county staff when hiring Officer Trainees, relaxing the requirement to acquire a non-county panelist.
- ² - The current SOP does not require a minimum number of applicants for interviews.

3. Date Application Submitted to Date Department Determined Applicant Eligibility

Observation(s): The time between receipt of applications until the department contacted those applicants ranged from the same day to 15 working days (for new hires) and up to 35 working days (for promotions).³

Detention Center Input: The reason(s) for the large variances were indeterminate.

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Detention Center responsibility.*

Recommendations: Detention Center management should consider:

Fully utilizing the current iCIMS recruiting software to better screen applications, including the use of screening questions and the Text Engagement functionality.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process (reviewing for minimum qualifications and contacting qualified applicants to schedule an interview) can be completed within five working days of application submission.

- ³ - The current SOP requires application reviews within three days of application submittal; however, a timeframe has not been set for the initial contact of qualified applicants.

Auditor's Note: An evaluation of the steps above indicated that the Detention Center lost 24% - 32% of its *Officer* applicants during this time period. Before the interview date in the next section, statistics indicated that the DC had lost 76% - 82% of its *Officer* applicants.

4. Date of Interview to Date Background Check Completed

Observation(s): This audit revealed the time between the completions of interviews until a completed recruitment packet is delivered to HR to be as few as 3 and as many as 30 working days for internal promotions⁴ and 5 to 118 working days for new hires.

Detention Center Input: Common challenges that would have caused the time delays when performing reference checks and background investigations were reported as:

1. Date discrepancies between an applicant's application data and data on the Personnel Information Questionnaire (PIQ) often require the applicant to be called back to make corrections in-person.⁵
2. Missing information in the packet delivered to HR, such as dates of employment, will cause the packet to be sent back to the department for updates.
3. Incomplete dates of employment for applicants that may have worked for the same employer on multiple occasions can require the applicant to make corrections in writing.⁵
4. There may be elongated waiting periods for applicants to respond to follow-up information requests.
5. Postponement of requested information from current employers of applicants.

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Detention Center responsibility.*

Recommendations: The internal auditor learned that 1) departments have a checklist of required data for employment packets that can be followed to reduce incidents of missing information, and 2) Information Discovery Services (IDS) is a contractor that has been used by another department to deliver to Human Resources the required applicant data within 15 – 30 calendar days, in a consistent, professional, and complete report.

The Audit recommends that Detention Center management employ the following guidelines:

- 1) Recruiting personnel should verify reference contacts while with applicants, ensuring that applicants submit a listing of job references in the desired detail and hierarchy (with current contacts), informing them that outdated references could greatly delay the hiring process;
- 2) For data that can be corrected by staff, do not require the applicant to appear in-person;
- 3) Set a time limit for applicants to provide requested follow up information; and
- 4) Set an initial submission of recruitment packet delivery to Human Resources, of 30 days after interview completion; or
- 5) Consider the **costs* versus benefits of employing the services of an IDS type of contractor (many organizations offer such services), on a trial basis, and assess the results. *The Audit recommends consulting with HR if this option is selected, as the organization using such services would be subject to additional statutory requirements per the Fair Credit Reporting Act.*

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process can take the greatest amount of time, however the recommendations above should result in completion of this process within 20 - 25 working days.

⁴ – This portion of the hiring process for internal promotions only requires a review of their personnel file, as background checks were completed upon initial hire.

⁵ – Human Resources protocol allows for verification of corrected information with the applicant telephonically, allowing updates to be put on the background investigation form by staff; thus applicants can avoid a return trip.

* Estimates for IDS services for public safety personnel equate to approximately \$1,000 - \$1,200.00 per applicant, while estimates of DAC personnel costs for the background checks made on 16 applicants ranged from \$11,600.00 - \$12,900.00 (approximately \$725 - \$806 per applicant, per Human Resources input).

Auditor's Note: An evaluation of the steps above indicated that the Detention Center had lost 85% - 93% of its original *officer* applicants by the time this process was completed.

5. Date Packet Delivered to HR to Date HR Rendered Compensation Offer

Observation(s): Human Resources may respond to the department within the same day or take up to 12 working days to render a final compensation offer.

Human Resources Input: Human Resources notes the completeness versus incompleteness of background checks as a reason for the large fluctuations in this phase of the hiring process. Incomplete background packets have to be returned to the Detention Center for updates, thereby extending the time needed to complete this phase of the hiring process.

Detention Center Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Human Resources responsibility.*

Recommendations: When it comes to the completeness of recruitment and background packets, the Detention Center should conduct a quality control review before remitting packets to Human Resources. Also, the Audit refers Detention Center management to recommendations #1, #4 & #5, as cited above in the previous bullet.

The Audit recommends that Human Resources management set a goal/standard of two to three working days for the completion of this process, upon receipt of complete recruitment packets.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process should be completed within three working days.

6. Date HR Rendered Compensation Estimate to Date of Job Offer

Observation(s): The above process took from 1 to 10 working days to complete. As this process requires P1 approval, six signatures/approvals via iCIMS should be a seamless, digital process.

Management Input: This process requires signatures from the Detention Center, Human Resources Information Systems Specialist, Human Resources Administrator, Human Resources Director, Budget & Research Officer or Finance Director, and County Manager.

Human Resources Input: While the Detention Center initiates this process, HR also has approval responsibilities.

Recommendations: The Audit recommends that Standard Operation Procedures direct a two to three working day timeframe to complete this process, requiring notification of Detention Center management in each event wherein this deadline is not met. Management in each applicable department should ensure that a secondary designee is identified for each of the required approvals to prevent delays in the event the primary approver is unavailable.

Conclusion: Because this is an all-digital process wherein all county signatories are notified via computer, it should be completed within two to three working days.

Auditor's Note: An evaluation of the steps above indicated that the Detention Center had lost up to 96% of its original *officer* applicants by the time a job offer was made.

Period of Time from Job Interview to Job Offer

The internal auditor deemed the period from the job interview until receipt of a contingent job offer as a most critical time period for determining if the County would actually acquire the sought-after talent or lose out on the recruitment opportunity. Analyses indicated that the Detention Center could notify a perspective applicant with a job offer in as little as 9 total calendar days after an interview, or take as long a 195 total calendar days to make such an offer after the interview.

The Detention Center currently requires applicants to manually fill out a 32-paged paper PIQ. A paper checklist is used to record pass or fail scores for applicants. The use of paper documentation in both cases can be inefficient. Thus, the Audit recommends that DAC Senior-level Management provide the option of digital PIQ and checklist documents.⁶

As some protocol have been updated and established but not yet chronicled within the Standard Operation Procedures since the original May 2022 Hiring Process SOP, it is recommended that Human Resources (in collaboration with the Detention Center) update the SOP. Updated protocols should be added on at least an annual basis, and shared with the applicable department.

Conclusion

While each phase of the hiring process is designed to eliminate those who are not qualified to serve as Detention Center Officers, implementation of the recommendations above should allow for a higher retention of qualified Detention Center Officer candidates. If estimated timeframes are to be met, all personnel must consistently comply with the current May 2022 Hiring Process SOP and Human Resources protocol. This includes extending to Human Resources a minimum 5-day notice when Detention Center hiring practices are updated, as Human Resources review and approval is necessary. As the Detention Center is in the best position to understand the *Day 1 & 2* time requirements, the onus is on the Detention Center (in collaboration with Human Resources) to revisit the current SOP as necessary and convene with Senior-level Management concerning adjustments required to the established time lines.

In comparing current estimated hiring timelines with institutions comparable to Doña Ana County's Detention Center, the following hiring timeframes are reported:

Santa Fe County DC:	Data Unavailable: Extended Recruitment Periods
Luna County DC:	40 – 60 total calendar days
Sandoval County DC:	30 total calendar days
Eddy County DC:	58 – 59 total calendar days
El Paso County DC:	Data Unavailable: Continuous Recruitment
DAC Detention Center:	33 – 217 total calendar days
*Integrity HR:	90 – 120 total calendar days
Audit recommended timelines:	30 – 45 total calendar days (estimate accounts for holidays)

* Integrity HR conducted a diagnostic audit of DAC's Human Resources function in 2019, citing the typical range of time needed to fill vacant positions.

NOTE: Neither volume of applicants nor staffing levels of departments were considered in the comparison above.

⁶ - A discussion with the Information Technology Director resulted in the following options to consider for the PIQ (not applicable to the checklist):

- The use of a SharePoint site,
- Password protection of documents, or
- Provide an FTP site or web portal wherein applicants access our site and upload documents as necessary.

This both ensures that only the applicants make necessary updates, and enforces information security, allowing for shorter turnaround periods to make updates/corrections. Such precautions may not be necessary for the digitized checklist.

ATTACHMENTS

Detention Center Trainee Hiring Process SOP

Detention Center Recruitment Process Analysis



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Date

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