

MEMORANDUM

April 20, 2001

TO: Management and Fiscal Policy Committee

FROM: Sue Richards, Program Evaluator
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: *Worksession on OLO Memorandum Report 2001-4, An Overview of the Hiring Process in County Government*

On April 30, the MFP Committee will hold a worksession on the OLO report on an overview of the hiring process in County Government. The purpose of this report is to give the Council an overview of the hiring and classification processes and to provide information to shape the Council's assumptions about the time it takes to hire new employees approved through the budget process.

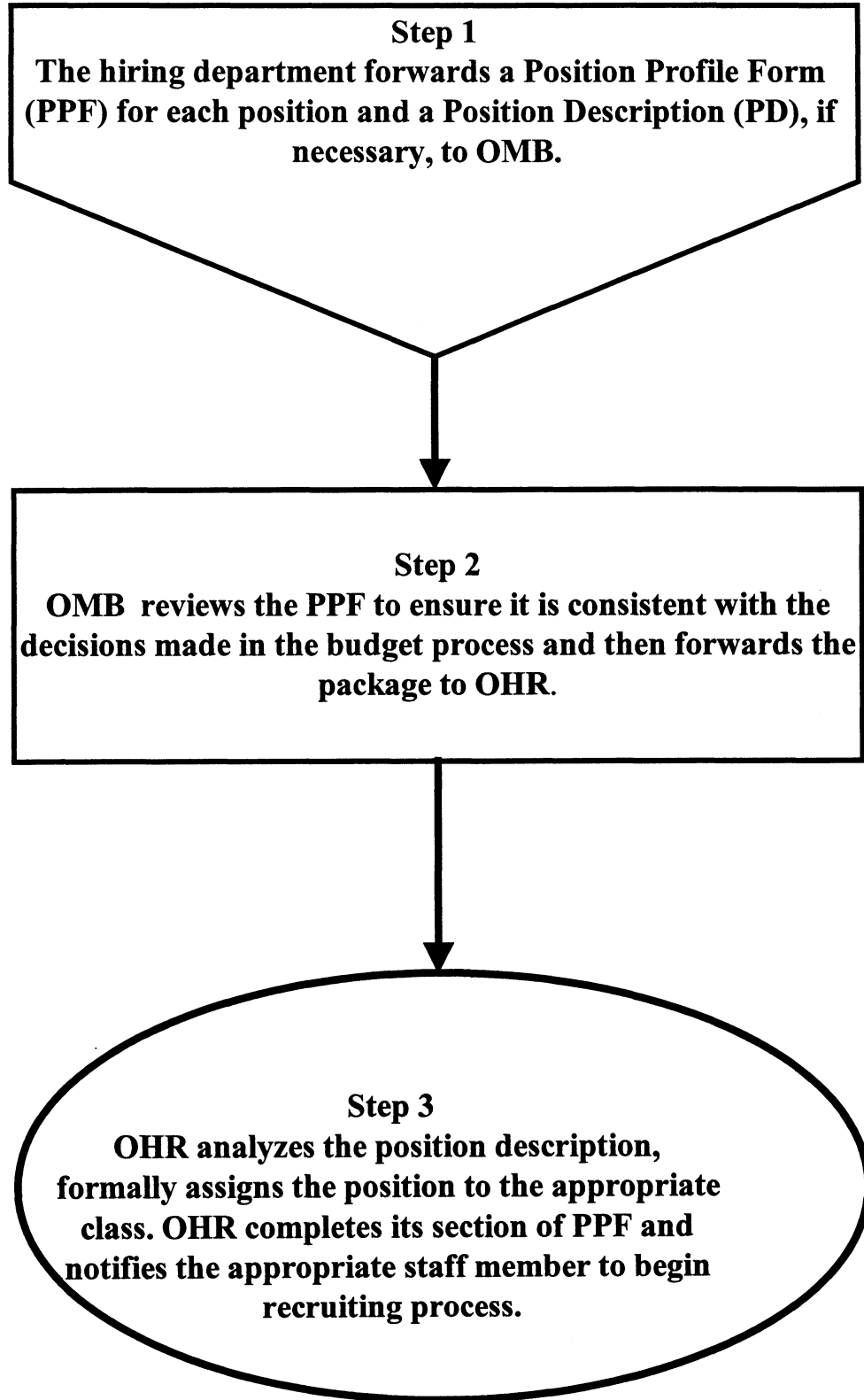
Representatives from OHR will be at the MFP Committee worksession to answer questions about the report. The key findings are summarized below.

I. Summary of Findings

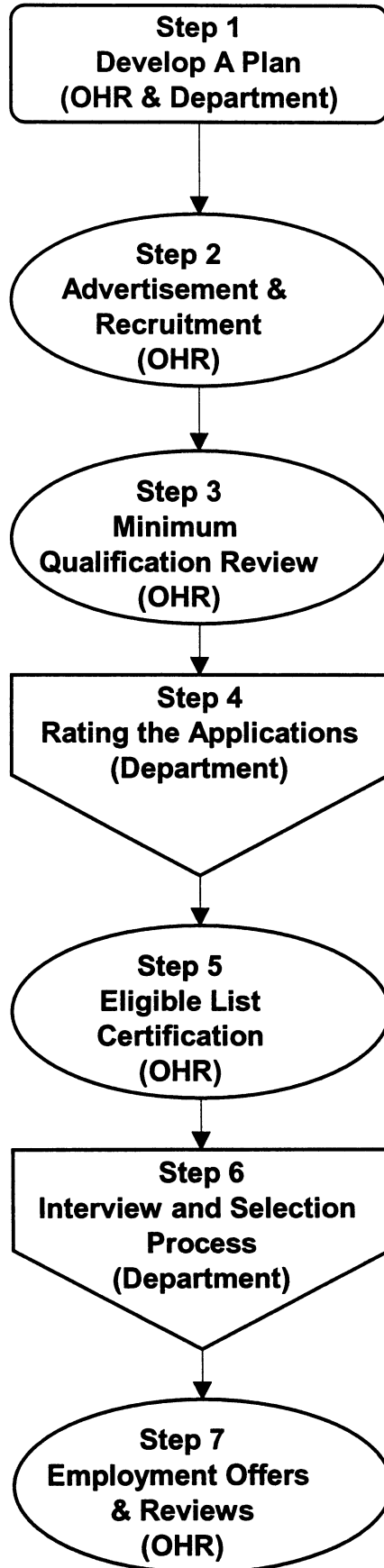
The attached OLO report examines the hiring process in the County Government. Specifically, it identifies the steps in the hiring process and describes the variations in the process created by the requirements of the County's budgeting process and/or classification system.

The process steps. When the Council voted to release the report, Councilmember Praisner requested a flow chart of the process. The charts on the next two pages show the classification and the hiring processes. There are three steps in the classification process and seven steps in the hiring process. The classification process must be completed before the hiring process begins. The steps within each process are sequential. The posting period is the only step with a required time: the Personnel Regulations require a minimum two week advertisement and recruitment period.

STEPS IN THE POSITION CREATION AND CLASSIFICATION PROCESS



STEPS IN THE HIRING PROCESS FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Responsibilities. OLO found that the responsibilities in the hiring process are usually shared by OHR and the hiring department. The chart below identifies the lead responsibilities for each step and notes exceptions to these roles as applicable.

STEP	TASK	RESP.	EXCEPTIONS
1	Develop a plan	Shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCPD completes this step for all positions unique to the Police Department. • Recreation completes this step for all temporary, seasonal employees. • Department of Libraries completes this step for all library pages.
2	Posting period – Advertisement and recruitment	OHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCPD completes this step for all positions unique to the Police Department. • Recreation completes this step for all temporary, seasonal employees. • Department of Libraries completes this step for all library pages.
3.	Minimum Qualification Review	OHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCPD completes this step for all positions unique to the Police Department. • Recreation completes this step for all temporary, seasonal employees. • Department of Libraries completes this step for all library pages.
4	Subject Matter Expert Review	Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open continuous recruitments skip this step.
5	Eligible List Certification	OHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCPD completes this step for all positions unique to the Police Department. • Recreation completes this step for all temporary, seasonal employees. • Department of Libraries completes this step for all library pages. • Open continuous recruitments skip this step.
6	Interview and Selection	Department	
7	Conditional Offer, Medical History Review or Physical Examination, Education Verification, Background Check and Final Offer	OHR/OMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All departments are authorized to negotiate and determine salaries at or below the midpoint and make conditional and final offers for temporary positions. • DHHS is responsible for employment offers, reference checks and investigations for all temporary and permanent employees. • DPWT has authority to conduct medical reviews for bus operator positions and some fleet management positions. • DOCR has the authority to conduct medical reviews for its correctional officers. • DFRS has the authority to conduct medical reviews for entry level firefighters. • All public safety agencies are responsible for security background checks.

Elapsed time. OLO found that the elapsed time to hire a new employee for an existing position is three to four months. This estimate is based on two OHR analyses that examined only steps 3 through 6 of the process. The average elapsed times for these steps were:

- 83 days (12 weeks) for all recruitments;
- 44 days (6 weeks) for open continuous recruitments; and
- 56 days (8 weeks) for recruitments conducted after the County's contract with ALEXUS compared to 91 days for the recruitments conducted in the pre-ALEXUS period.

OLO added five weeks to the eight to 12 week range in the OHR analysis to arrive at the estimate of three to four months for the total process. The five weeks assumes two weeks for the advertising period, two weeks for the employee to give notice, and one week for a medical history review. Several factors may shorten or extend the three to four month estimate. For example:

- Jobs that are difficult to fill may require a recruitment period longer than two weeks;
- OHR can usually complete the eligible list certification more quickly if the subject matter expert panel has already ranked the applications as part of its review; and
- The medical and physical examinations and security checks required for public safety positions may take from six weeks to two months to complete.

II. Discussion

The MFP Committee may wish to ask OHR to respond to the report's findings. The Committee may also wish to explore with OHR whether ways exist to shorten the time to complete the hiring process if the Council identifies an urgent need. Finally, the Committee may want to ask OHR to briefly discuss how it collects and report data related to the time it takes to complete the hiring process.

MEMORANDUM

May 22, 2001

TO: Marta Perez, Director
Office of Human Resources

FROM: Marilyn Praisner, Chair *MJP*
Management and Fiscal Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Follow-up questions on OLO Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process
in County Government

Thank you for attending the MFP Committee worksession on OLO Memorandum Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process in County Government. I found the discussion very helpful and enlightening. Based on the points you made during the worksession, I would appreciate if you could address the following questions in more detail. Specifically,

1. Could you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of centralizing or decentralizing the tasks of investigation checks for County departments?
2. What other actions could we take to reduce the amount of elapsed time that the hiring process takes without adversely affecting the quality of the candidates or the County's credibility?
3. Do you have comparable data from other counties that we could use to benchmark the elapsed time data that OHR is collecting?

If you would forward a written response to these questions, I will share it with the other MFP Committee members and let you know if any additional follow-up work is needed. Thanks again for your cooperation.

Personnel



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Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

Marta Brito Perez
Director

July 27, 2001

TO: Marilyn Praisner, Chair
Management and Fiscal Policy Committee

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FROM: Marta Perez, Director
Office of Human Resources *[Signature]*

SUBJECT: OLO Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process

This is in response to your memorandum of May 22, 2001, in which you asked for a further clarification of several issues that were discussed in the work session.

Issue #1 Advantages and disadvantages of centralizing or decentralizing the tasks of investigation checks for County Departments.

The issue of the centralization vs. the decentralization of the conduct of background investigations has not been thoroughly explored. Background investigations are currently conducted primarily for public safety positions (Police, Fire, Sheriffs and Corrections). Currently, each agency conducts the background investigations for their respective positions. It may be difficult to centralize the conduct of background investigations because:

- Each agency has different state-mandated requirements and standards that prospective employees must meet.
- The conduct of the investigations is timed to the specific need of each agency, depending upon the number and timing of their recruit classes.
- Background investigations are conducted at different times in the hiring process, depending on the hiring agency.

On the other hand, the Department of Police currently employs fourteen background investigators. Each of the other three agencies has one employee devoted approximately half-time to background investigations. Perhaps some consolidation of resources may be possible.

Issue #2 Actions that can be taken to reduce the amount of elapsed time that the hiring process takes without adversely affecting the quality of the candidates or the County's credibility.

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The OLO report demonstrates the fact that the use of "open continuous" recruitments has a distinct impact on the time it takes to fill positions. The use of this type of recruitment provides departments with immediate access to a pool of well qualified candidates for vacant positions, thus reducing the overall time in the hiring process. The current Personnel Regulations limit the use of "open continuous" recruitments to entry level classes. The revised Personnel Regulations will allow the Office of Human Resources more flexibility to conduct "open continuous" recruitments for additional classes.

The Office of Human Resources is currently reviewing proposals for an upgraded automated resume management system. One of the requirements of the new system will be an enhanced query capability. Through use of the query function, OHR will have the capability to rank the candidates without the need for departmental raters. The OLO report shows that the use of departmental raters adds an average of approximately ten days to the hiring process. By eliminating the use of departmental raters, the hiring process can be reduced by a similar number of days.

Issue #3 Data from other counties that could be used to benchmark the elapsed time data that OHR is collecting.

The Office of Human Resources has contacted numerous surrounding local governments, including Alexandria City, Anne Arundel County, Arlington County, Baltimore County, Fairfax County, Fredrick County, Howard County, Prince George's County and Prince William County and inquired as to the average time it takes to fill vacant positions in their jurisdictions. We also contacted others described as similar to Montgomery County by Arther Andersen, LLC including the City of Phoenix, the City of Detroit, the City of Virginia Beach, the City of Charlotte, St. Louis County, Hennepin County, and Mecklenburg County and made the same inquiry. While none tracked the actual time, two tracked workdays associated with the process, and several tracked only the time HR was involved in the process. The rest offered their best guess that it took an average of sixty to ninety days.

I trust I have addressed the issues in your memorandum. If I can be of further assistance, please call me.



OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

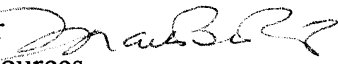
Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

Marta Brito Perez
Director

November 29, 2001

TO: Sue Richards
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Marta Perez, Director 
Office of Human Resources

SUBJECT: OLO Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process Follow Up

This is in response to your request for further clarification of two issues involving the hiring process.

Issue 1: Mrs. Praisner believes that some consolidation of resources may be possible for the Sheriff's Office, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the Department of Fire and Rescue Service.

The issue of the centralization vs. the decentralization in the performance of background investigations continues to be explored, as do other currently decentralized tasks. It is the opinion of the Office of Human Resources, that in the areas of recruitment, reference checks, and advertising there are economies of scale yet to be realized.

In the area of background investigations, while we are still exploring the possibilities, we believe more can be accomplished in the combining of resources in the future. However, at present, combining the limited resources of these departments is difficult since there are not a lot of dedicated resources to background investigations. In addition,

- each agency has different state-mandated requirements and standards that prospective employees must meet;
- the conduct of the investigations is timed to the specific need of each agency, depending upon the number and timing of their recruit classes;
- background investigations are conducted at different times in the hiring process, depending on the hiring agency;
- DFRS supplements the current investigator with retired Chiefs to expedite the process. The investigator has other primary duties;
- DOCR investigator also is the primary contact for recruitment issues;
- Sheriff utilizes a Captain as the primary investigator and other available Deputies to expedite the process.



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Issue 2: Mrs. Praisner believes that the role of departmental raters is valuable and wonders if departmental raters could rate applicants on line in order to save process time.

The hiring process is well documented in your April 2001 "An Overview of the Hiring Process in County Government" memorandum to the County Council. You accurately noted that "On average, the elapsed time for all recruitments was 83 days; on average, 75% of the time was spent on departmental tasks and 25% was spent on OHR tasks." The chart depicted in the memo illustrates the time spent in each portion of the process; please note that the preponderance of time is spent in the rater review.

As you know, we are at the end of a procurement process that will secure the services of a Web-based applicant processing system. When fully implemented, the system will significantly enhance and expedite our service delivery, including the rating process. We are concerned that to continue to require departmental subject matter experts to review and rank each candidate individually, even if the rating were conducted on-line, would not significantly reduce the overall time taken in this phase. Managers will have significant input into the query criteria used to rank the candidates and will be called upon, when necessary, to assist the OHR specialists in verifying the validity of the rankings.

We are confident that utilizing the capability of the new Peopleclick system to automatically rank applicants for departments, will reduce the time spent in the rating process. The utilization of the query function in the ranking process will allow hiring managers and department representatives to focus their time and energies on the interview and selection process instead of the more tedious resume screening process.

I trust that this memo has addressed your concerns. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.



OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

Marta Brito Perez
Director

February 8, 2002

TO: Sue Richards, Manager II
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Marta Brito Perez, Director
Office of Human Resources

SUBJECT: OLO Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process Follow Up

This is in response to your request for further clarification of two issues surrounding the OLO Report 2001-04, An Overview of the Hiring Process.

Issue #1

The first issue addresses an objective of mine to utilize our experience and expertise to aid the Department of Police, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, and Fire and Rescue Service to find efficiencies in the recruitment and hiring process of entry level positions. OHR has convened a work group consisting of representatives of OHR and the public safety departments to identify commonalities in their respective processes and opportunities for efficiency gains.

Discussions are being held in a number of critical areas that impact the overall efficiency of the hiring process. Some of those areas are:

- Background investigations
- Finger printing
- Physical examination scheduling
- Utilization of a common applicant data base
- Conducting polygraph examinations
- Management of work flow during peak periods of applicant processing

The group has identified and is in the process of discussing solutions to several issues that have surfaced as possible barriers to a centralized background investigation process. Some of the challenges faced by the group are:

- Each agency has different state-mandated requirements and standards that prospective employees must meet.



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- Conducting background investigations are timed to the specific need of each agency, depending upon the number and timing of their recruit classes.
- DFRS supplements their current investigator with retirees to expedite the process. The investigator has other primary duties.
- DOCR investigator also is the primary contact for recruitment issues.

These bullets show the level of detail being considered by the public safety agencies and indicate our willingness to address these challenges with them.

Issue #2

The second issue concerns the role of departmental raters in the recruitment/examination process; a process that is well documented in your April 2001 "An Overview of the Hiring Process in County Government" memorandum to the County Council. In that report you note that "On average, the elapsed time for all recruitments was 83 days; on average, 75% of the time was spent on departmental tasks and 25% was spent on OHR tasks." The preponderance of time spent on departmental tasks is spent in the rater review process. We would like to reduce the review time to further streamline the hiring process.

While no decision has been reached by the CAO, reviews of possible alternatives are being discussed. OHR has surveyed departments to assess their views on system generated rankings which could yield process flow efficiencies. There was a broad range of responses. Some would like to retain the status quo, by reviewing every paper application; others were in favor of system generated rankings. There were still others who were in favor of a process by which the first cut would be done by the system and the final ranking would be provided by departmental subject matter experts, either on-line or on paper.

OHR is continually seeking ways to create efficiencies that are consistent with our customers' needs and desires. There is no doubt that to continue to require departmental subject matter experts to review and rank each candidate, even if the rating were conducted on-line, would not significantly reduce the overall time taken in this phase. Providing hiring managers the option of utilizing the capability of the new system to automatically rank applicants will significantly reduce the processing time. However, much discussion still remains on this issue.

We will continue to explore these issues. I trust that this memorandum has addressed your concerns. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

cc: Parker Hamilton
Gordon Aoyagi
Charles Moose, Ph.D.
Art Wallenstein

MEMORANDUM REPORT

April 5, 2001

TO: County Council

FROM: Sue Richards, Program Evaluator
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: *OLO Report 2001-4: An Overview of the Hiring Process in County Government*

INTRODUCTION

The County Council has approved funding to create many new positions in the County Government over the past four or five years. Subsequently, through the annual budget process or periodic committee meetings, the Council has observed differences in the time it takes to fill these newly approved positions. In some cases, the Council has learned that individuals have been hired and service delivery is underway; in other cases, services have not started as promised because of problems with the hiring process.

This project responds to the recurring complaints that the Council hears about the length of time it takes the County Government to hire new employees once a decision is made to create a position to carry out a specific function. This report identifies the steps in the process to hire an employee for an existing position. It also describes the variations in this process created by the requirements of the County's budgeting process and/or classification system. The purpose of this report is to give the Council a cursory understanding of the hiring and classification processes and to provide information to shape the Council's assumptions about the time it takes to hire new employees approved through the budget process.

This project was conducted by Joan Pedersen and Sue Richards, Program Evaluators, and David Cohen, Public Administration Intern. OLO received excellent cooperation from everyone involved with this study. Specifically, OLO interviewed staff in the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Management and Budget, and several departments to learn about the hiring process. The departments included the Office of the County Attorney, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Liquor Control, the Department of Public Libraries, the Department of Recreation, the State's Attorney Office and the Department of Public Works and Transportation. OLO also reviewed documents and an analysis of FY 2000 recruitments provided by the Office of Human Resources.

This report is organized as follows:

- Chapter I summarizes the written guidelines for the hiring process;
- Chapter II presents the steps in the hiring process for an existing vacant position;
- Chapter III describes variations in the process;
- Chapter IV examines the delegation of some tasks to select departments;
- Chapter V presents an analysis of the elapsed time in the hiring process;
- Chapter VI describes the hiring process for a new position approved during the budget process; and
- Chapter VII presents OLO's findings.

I. WRITTEN GUIDELINES FOR THE HIRING PROCESS

The Montgomery County Charter, Chapter 33 of the Montgomery County Code, the Personnel Regulations, an administrative procedure, and various collective bargaining agreements provide the written guidelines for Montgomery County's hiring/classification process.

A. Charter

Articles 2, 4 and 5 of the Montgomery County Charter address hiring and employment practices in the County Government.

Article 2. Executive Branch. Article 2 of the County Charter discusses the duties of the Executive Branch. The key sections:

- give the County Executive the power to set rules and regulations (Section 201);
- authorize the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to supervise departments, agencies and offices within the executive branch (Section 211);
- discuss the appointment of department heads and nonmerit employees (Section 215); and
- address the appointment of merit employees (Section 216).

Article 4, Merit System and Conflicts of Interest. Article 4 discusses the County Merit System with regards to employment and formation and enforcement of the merit system laws.

- Section 401 requires the County Council to establish in law a merit system that enables the County to recruit, select, and develop an effective nonpartisan and responsive workforce where employment is based on merit and fitness. The Charter requires the merit system to cover all County Government

employees except for Councilmembers, the County Executive, the CAO, department heads; and other select positions. By law, the County Council may exclude temporary, term, and probationary employees from some or all provisions of the laws governing the merit system. However, all such employees must be hired and promoted on the basis of merit and fitness.

- Section 402 requires the County Executive to establish personnel regulations for the administration and implementation of merit system law. This section also gives the CAO the responsibility for administering the County's merit system.
- Section 403 establishes a Merit System Protection Board. The Charter states the board shall be composed of three members appointed by the Council.
- Section 404 provides a hearing before the Merit System Protection Board for any merit system employee who is removed, demoted, or suspended. Section 404 also authorizes the board to conduct special studies and to comment on proposed changes to the merit system law or regulation.

Article 5. General Provisions. Sections 510, 510A, and 511 in Article 5 address the collective bargaining agreements for police officers, firefighters, and general government employees respectively. In practice, these agreements may establish certain hiring practices which are binding by law.

B. Chapter 33

Chapter 33 of the Montgomery County Code, *Personnel and Human Resources*, addresses a range of personnel and human resource matters. Specifically, this chapter establishes the merit system, sets forth the County's equal opportunity and affirmative action policy, discusses the use of classification standards and salary plans, institutes the Employees' Retirement System and the Employees' Retirement Savings Plan, and addresses the County's collective bargaining policies.

C. The Personnel Regulations

On September 1, 2000, the Council received proposed Regulation 12-00, *Montgomery County Personnel Regulations*, which proposes comprehensive changes to the County's existing Personnel Regulations. The MFP Committee held a public forum on the proposed regulations and held 12 Committee worksessions to conduct a section by section review of the proposed regulations. The MFP Committee is scheduled to complete its review in June and forward its recommendations to the full Council, which will complete its review in July.

This portion of the report examines those sections of the *existing* Personnel Regulations that address hiring. The next section summarizes the MFP Committee's discussion of these sections.

Section 1. Section 1 authorizes the Montgomery County Executive to adopt and amend the Personnel Regulations, states that the Personnel Regulations apply to all merit system positions, and assigns to the CAO the responsibility for rendering interpretations of the Personnel Regulations.

- Section 1-4 establishes the CAO's authority to administer the merit system. Section 1-4(a) enumerates the CAO's responsibilities for administering the Personnel Regulations.¹ Section 1-4(b) gives the CAO the power to designate a representative to implement any provisions of the Personnel Regulations. The CAO has designated his authority to the Office of Human Resources (OHR) for provisions related to hiring standards, as well classification.
- Section 1-5 prohibits a County employee from hiring a relative for a position if the employee has jurisdiction over the position. This section also prohibits an individual from accepting employment for a position if a relative has jurisdiction. A "relative" is defined as "any individual related to an employee by blood, marriage, or adoption."
- Section 1-15 gives the CAO the authority to shorten or extend the period of time in those instances where the personnel regulations or an administrative procedure requires or allows an act to be done within a specified period of time. The CAO must receive a written request and the decision to grant or deny the request is solely within the discretion of the CAO.

Section 3 Section 3 establishes the definitions for the administration of the Personnel Regulations. The following definitions in Section 3 relate to the steps in the hiring and classification processes.

- A *merit system employee* is defined as "all persons who are employed by the County in full-time or part-time year-round positions in any department/ office/agency of the executive or legislative branches of the County Government or in any other position specifically so designated by law and who have satisfactorily completed the required probationary period."

¹ It states the CAO should develop the necessary administrative procedures and rules to carry out the regulations, direct and supervise all administrative activities involving County personnel management, maintain a classification and compensation plan, supervise the operation of recruitment, employment, promotion and equal employment opportunity programs, maintain up to date personnel records, establish training programs, advise management on personnel requirements and evaluate all County personnel programs.

- A *merit system position* refers to “all positions in the executive or legislative branches of the County Government, the Office of the County Sheriff, and all other positions designated by local or State law, except positions excluded in Section 1-2 of the regulations.”
- A *full-time position* is a position that requires employment for forty or more hours per week on a continuing year-round or school year basis. A full-time position includes a position created for a special term, program, or project; a position which receives partial or complete funding from federal, state, or private organizations; and a position which is designated by the State of Maryland as a merit system position and is also classified under the County’s merit system.
- A *part-time position* requires employment for 20 or more regularly scheduled hours per week. A part-time position includes a position created for a special term, program, or project; a position which receives partial or complete funding from federal, state, or private organizations; and a position which is designated by the State of Maryland as a merit system position and is also classified under the County’s merit system.
- A *temporary position* is a position required for a specific task for a period not exceeding 12 months or a position which is used intermittently on an as-needed basis, such as seasonal or substitute positions. The CAO may authorize the continuance of a temporary position in excess of 12 months. The Personnel Regulations state a temporary position must not be used in lieu of a full-time or part-time position as a means of circumventing the requirement to provide benefits to which merit system employees are entitled.

Section 4 Section 4 addresses the County’s standards for equal employment opportunity. The section provides information on the County’s equal employment policy and County implementation of the County’s affirmative action program.

- Section 4-1 establishes the County’s equal employment opportunity policy. It states that, pursuant to Section 33-9 of the merit system law, it is the County’s policy to conduct all personnel activities in a manner which will assure equal employment opportunity to all individuals on the basis of merit, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, handicapping condition, or other nonmerit factor. The policy includes practices related to the employment process, promotion, demotion, transfer, and other personnel actions.
- Section 4-2 establishes an appeal process in the event an individual believes the County has violated the policy.

- Section 4-3 requires the CAO to develop and implement an effective affirmative action program to assist in achieving the full realization of equal employment opportunity.

Section 5. Section 5 sets forth the application and examination procedures for the hiring process in Montgomery County. The section addresses procedures for announcements, applications, review of the applications, reference checks, examinations, the rating process and medical requirements.

- Section 5-2 requires the County to advertise positions for at least two weeks. It also requires the announcement to include specific information about examinations, minimum qualifications, duties, and other relevant job factors.
- Section 5-3 requires that CAO to set a reasonable deadline for the receipt of applications for announced vacancies and to provide for open continuous examinations for entry-level positions. The County may accept applications at any time for future consideration, but may not consider applications received after an announced deadline.
- Section 5-4 requires the County to review each application to ensure that it meets the minimum qualifications needed to compete in an examination for a position. The County may disqualify an application from further consideration for several reasons. These reasons include the lack of proper credentials (required education, experience, license, or certification), falsification of an application, a poor record of service while employed by the County, evidence of recent unsatisfactory work performance, evidence of a job-related factor which may hinder adequate job performance, or failure to comply with reference and investigation requirements.
- Section 5-5 requires the CAO to establish reference and investigation requirements to verify relevant prior work experience, performance, and job-related personal characteristics of each applicant. All applicants must comply with the established reference and investigatory requirements to be considered for a vacancy or participate in the examination process.
- Section 5-6 requires the County to administer an examination for the purpose of establishing an eligibility list for employment. An examination may be written, oral, a demonstration of physical skill or ability, an evaluation of experience and education, or another professionally acceptable selection instrument which fairly appraises qualifications, fitness, and ability of competitors.
- Section 5-7 authorizes the CAO to waive examinations for positions involving unskilled manual labor or for other positions for which examinations are impractical.

- Section 5-8 requires an examination to be completely or partially invalidated if the CAO determines that there is an impropriety in the examination, the examination process is discriminatory, or the examination is not job-related.
- Section 5-9 authorizes the CAO to establish procedures for scoring and rating the applicants' examinations and to announce these procedures before the examination.
- Section 5-10 states that after the examination OHR must certify the names of all individuals found qualified for the vacancy for placement on an eligible list. OHR must place the names of qualified applicants on an eligible list in a manner that reflects the individuals' relative standings.
- Section 5-11 authorizes the CAO to establish a limited or priority eligible list to meet affirmative action goals or to facilitate the placement of employees who are subject to layoff or who are unable to perform in their present job because of a disability or injury.
- Section 5-12 requires the CAO to implement a system of medical examinations and standards for applicants to ensure a candidate is healthy enough to perform the assigned tasks. An applicant must complete a medical examination and submit a written report containing the physician's evaluation of an applicant's physical fitness for the position. An applicant's medical report must be considered part of the employee's official medical record for the County. If an applicant refuses to complete a medical examination or provide a medical history, the County may dismiss the application. The County must provide reasonable accommodations when it evaluates the medical records of a disabled individual.

Section 6. Section 6 of the Personnel Regulations establishes rules for appointments and ratings. This section defines an appointment as the assignment of an eligible candidate to a merit system position by a department head. Section 6-2 provides that appointments may be full-time, part-time, or temporary. Section 6-3 sets forth the selection procedures for filling a position. It states that the appointing authority must be provided an eligible list that has been certified by OHR. It states that a department head may select any candidate from the highest rating category. A department head who wants to select a candidate from a lower-rated category must seek written approval from the CAO.

Section 26. Section 26 addresses the issues associated with a reduction-in-force. This section defines reduction-in-force, discusses the County's reduction-in-force policy, and addresses requirements for notification, reinstatement, and appeals.

- Section 26-1 defines reduction-in-force as the elimination of a position or positions due to lack of sufficient funds, a change in the approved program design for a department, an administrative reorganization of a department, or a technological change or innovation that impacts the workforce needs.

- Section 26-2 establishes the County's reduction-in-force policy. It states the demotions, transfers, and terminations that result from a reduction-in-force must be based on service needs, seniority, or work performance and that the reduction-in-force is only applicable to employees in the same class and department as the eliminated position. The section prohibits the lay-off of a merit system employee if there is a probationary or temporary employee in the same class and department. This section also permits the CAO to furlough some or all of the employees who are subject to a reduction-in-force and to establish guidelines for implementation of furlough procedures.
- Section 26-3 requires that an employee subject to a reduction-in-force receive a minimum 30-day written notice.
- Section 26-4 addresses the reinstatement rights of an employee who is terminated as a result of a reduction-in-force. It states that any employee whose position has been terminated due to a reduction-in-force must be placed on a re-employment list for two years and given priority consideration for any position that is at or below the grade of the position the employee previously held. This section further prohibits a new employee from being hired to any vacant position as long as there is a qualified individual for that position on the re-employment list.

D. MFP Committee Actions

The MFP Committee discussed the following changes to those sections of the personnel regulations related to the hiring process.

- The MFP Committee approved in concept a proposal for the OHR Director to designate positions at any level for "open continuous" and "open until filled" recruitment. The OHR Director explained that the current regulations provide for open continuous recruitment only for entry level positions because, in the past, much County Government recruitment was at the entry level. The proposed language to permit the OHR Director to designate positions at any level for "open continuous" and "open until filled" recruitment reflects that vacancies and recruitment are now occurring at all levels.
- The MFP Committee approved the current two-week application deadline for any position to be filled and approved re-instating a provision to allow the CAO to shorten the deadline in unusual circumstances. (The OHR Director explained that this provision had been deleted inadvertently.)

The MFP Committee also approved requirements concerning the establishment of a priority eligible list and veteran's credits, and approved moving requirements about references and investigations from Section 5 to Section 6.

E. Collective Bargaining Agreements

The County Government negotiates collective bargaining agreements with the police and the firefighters as well as the service, labor and trades bargaining unit and the office, professional and technical bargaining unit of the Montgomery County Government employees organization. These four separate agreements contain provisions that can affect the steps and timing of the hiring process. For example, each of these agreements contains a provision that requires seniority to be taken into account in a hiring decision in certain labor and trades positions as long as a candidate is in the highest rating category of the eligible list established for a position. This provision may shorten the steps in the hiring process described below.

II. THE HIRING PROCESS STEPS

The process to hire an employee for an established (vacant) position has seven steps and involves the participation of the hiring department and the Office of Human Resources. This section describes each step and discusses the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources and the hiring department.

1. Develop a Plan

When a department notifies OHR of a vacancy, the OHR specialist and department jointly develop a recruitment plan. This plan addresses the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) the job requires beyond the minimum qualifications in the class specification, the length of the recruitment period, possible subject panel experts to rate the applications (including the development of a scoring matrix), and potential interview questions.

The OHR specialist and the department may discuss the plan informally or OHR may use an Examination Planning Worksheet form to record the recruitment plan decisions. This form distinguishes between a non-competitive and a competitive selection.

- If the selection is non-competitive, the department must indicate whether the selection is a transfer, a non-competitive promotion, a demotion, re-employment or re-appointment, a public administration intern, an intradepartmental recruitment or a selection from the special eligible list for persons with disabilities or employees adversely affected by a reduction-in-force.
- If a selection is competitive, the department and OHR must decide the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and essential functions (Efs) that the job requires, how to advertise the job, what recruitment sources to use, whether to establish a closing date, and what type of selection process to use. OHR and the department establish an estimated date for the eligible list and report the justification for any delays, if they occur.

The recruitment plan also includes a worksheet to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and essential functions for the job.² The KSA/EF worksheet lists each of the specific skills. For each skill, the department staff and OHR determine whether the skill is critical, whether the skill must be tested, and the type of selection method.

2. The Posting Period - Advertisement and Recruitment

After OHR and the department finalize the recruitment plan, the second phase begins. This is the posting period or the advertising and recruitment phase. The purpose of this phase is to widely publicize a vacancy and solicit applications. In this phase, the department prepares the advertisement for the County's employee bulletin, with assistance from OHR as needed. The department and OHR will also discuss whether a media advertisement is warranted.

OHR and the department work together to identify advertising and recruitment opportunities. OHR places the advertisement in the employee bulletin, which receives nationwide distribution because it is regularly swept by *The Washington Post*. OHR also posts the advertisement on its County web page, which receives the highest number of hits of any County web page. Additionally, OHR engages in a multitude of outreach activities including advertising in foreign language publications and on bi-lingual radio stations and working with various agencies that assist the disabled to secure employment.

OHR also coordinates attendance at job fairs, especially with many of the public safety departments, which have their own recruiting budgets. Many of these job fairs are targeted to reach minority and disabled candidates. OHR has also forged a partnership with the Department of Police to enhance outreach recruitment efforts through innovative methods such as community focus groups and employee referrals.

OHR also convenes a monthly meeting to discuss recruitment issues with interested departments. OHR sponsors speakers and solicits potential contacts and advertising opportunities from department staff.

The recruitment period refers to the time between the advertising date and the closing date for a position. OHR and the department jointly determine the length of the recruitment period based on the type of position that needs to be filled. The Personnel Regulations establish a minimum recruitment period of two weeks.

- A department will use *a recruitment period with a specific closing date* when many well-qualified applicants are expected to apply for the position. The recruitment lasts for a defined period and once the closing date has passed, OHR will not accept any more applications.

² The KSA/EF form states that essential functions are "the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation." It states that critical KSAs are "the knowledge, skills and abilities that a candidate must possess at the time of application; these KSAs are not learned within a six or more month period."

- A department will use an *open until filled recruitment period* for a position that may be difficult to fill or for a position that requires an extensive or prolonged recruitment effort. This approach creates the flexibility to leave a position open and then move quickly when a pool of qualified applicants exists.
- A department will use an *open continuous recruitment period* for a position that may have frequent vacancies because of the number of positions that exist and the normal turnover period. This type of recruitment period establishes a pool of qualified candidates. When a vacancy occurs, a department may hire immediately from this applicant pool.

3. The Minimum Qualification Review - Initial Review of the Applications

The third step of the hiring process consists of an initial review of all of the applications received during the recruitment period. OHR conducts this initial review to pull out any applications that do not meet the minimum qualifications for the position. The minimum qualifications are set in the class specification for the position.

OHR conducts the minimum qualifications review either manually or online. OHR conducts a manual review primarily for blue collar and entry level positions. A manual review requires data entry on the part of OHR and OHR relies on interoffice mail to forward the applications to the department for the next phase of the review.

OHR conducts an online review for most professional and managerial positions, using ALEXUS, a web-based, automated resume management system which became operational in April 2000. OHR's contract with ALEXUS allows resumes and attachments to be scanned into a database and accessed using a WEB browser. According to OHR, the benefits of an online review system include the following:

- The computer automatically creates the list of applications for a position;
- The OHR specialist, the hiring department and the subject matter review panel can review the applications on-line; and
- OHR and the department can e-mail the applications, resumes and results of the ranking to each other as the review progresses.

OHR's contract with ALEXUS expires in August 2001. OHR has issued a Request for Proposal for a Web based contractor that requests enhanced query capabilities, increased speed, and report production. The RFP also asks for a requisition system that would allow departmental managers access to directly enter a sample job advertisement and the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). Currently, an OHR analyst performs the minimum qualification review by scrolling through each application. Eventually, OHR expects to further automate this process by having the computer use the KSAs to query the applications and resumes and then generate a report.

4. The Subject Matter Expert Review - Rating the Applications

The fourth step in the hiring process ranks those applications that meet the minimum qualifications. The hiring department plays the lead role in this phase of the hiring process. The hiring department convenes a panel of subject matter experts to perform the initial rating process and forwards the completed package to the OHR specialist when the review is complete.

A department's initial rating process may take one of several forms. A department may delegate one or more employees who are familiar with the duties of the position to independently score each application using a form with the skills from the KSA/EF worksheet filled out as part of the recruitment plan. Alternatively, the department may convene a panel of subject matter experts from inside or outside the department to review and rate the applications.

The department may ask the raters to use only the information on the application and resume or a written or oral examination. Sometimes a supplemental form is required as part of the initial application process. The supplemental form may ask each applicant to provide more detailed information about his/her education, training and experience, or it may ask an applicant to respond to a hypothetical work situation. In a few instances, OHR may conduct a written or oral examination to provide additional information for the raters.

In some cases, a department will ask the subject matter experts to rate each application using an adjectival rating such as outstanding, well qualified, or qualified, based on an assessment of the applicant's skills. In other cases, a department might ask the rating panel to assign point values to each application based on factual information found in the application. The point values are later converted to adjectival ratings.

5. Certification of the Eligible List

The Personnel Regulations require OHR to "certify the names of all individuals found qualified for the vacancy for placement on the eligible list" and to group the names "in a manner which will accurately reflect the individual relative standings."

After the raters complete their review of the applications, the department forwards the applications and rating sheets to OHR. If the subject matter experts have already ranked the applications according to whether they are outstanding, well qualified or qualified; the OHR specialist uses these rankings to prepare the eligible list. If the subject matter experts provided point value rankings, the OHR specialist prepares a score rating sheet for all of the applicants and looks for natural breaks or groupings to establish the rankings.

Next, the OHR specialist prepares a list of all of the eligible candidates by rating category. This list is signed by the specialist and an OHR manager to certify that the rating process was conducted in a fair manner. OHR forwards to the department the eligible list with all of the candidates' names and only the applications of those candidates in the highest rated category. The department may select any candidate from the highest rated category.

6. The Interview and Selection Process

The hiring department manages the interview and selection process, which comprises the sixth step of the hiring process. The subparts of this phase include identifying the candidates to interview, assembling an interview panel, conducting the interview and checking references. In March 2001, OHR distributed guidelines for the selection process.³ The guidelines are purposefully designed to give a hiring department the flexibility to follow a process that makes sense for the position being hired. In sum, OHR recommends that a department:

- Assemble an interview panel composed of an odd number of subject matter experts who are knowledgeable about the job and the skills required and who represent a diverse cross section in terms of gender, race and ethnicity.
- Develop a list of interview questions that relate to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavioral traits in the class specification, the position description, and the advertisement, and design an interview scoring matrix that assigns point values to each question. The point values may be weighted to reflect the relative importance of the required job skills.
- Determine the top candidate or candidates based on the interview scores and check job-related references for these candidates. Focus the reference check on job-related factors such as technical or managerial skills, quality and quantity of work, degree of employment, and salary history.
- Select the candidates to be recommended for hiring and contact OHR with the recommendation. In most cases, only OHR can extend a formal job offer.
- Ensure that the interview panel members complete a rating form for each applicant and avoid putting remarks on the form that are not job-related. Place all selection material in a file and maintain it for three years.

In some cases, a department may not need to conduct an interview process. For example, there are some situations in labor and trade positions where the department must hire the most senior person to be in compliance with collective bargaining agreements.

³ The memorandum from OHR is attached at the end of the report.

When the department has decided on a candidate, the selection manager contacts the OHR specialist to inform him/her of the decision.

7. The Conditional Offer of Employment, the Medical History Review or Physical Examination, the Educational Verification and the Final Offer of Employment

This phase of the hiring process covers the conditional offer of employment, the medical review or physical examination, education verification, background checks and the final offer of employment. It begins after the department has notified OHR of its selection decision.

Types of Reviews and Verifications. OHR extends a conditional offer of employment to the employee selected by a department. A conditional employment offer depends on the successful completion of a process to verify a candidate's educational background, plus a medical history review or physical examination and a background investigation, if necessary.

The OHR analyst verifies the educational background listed on the employment application. The Occupational Medical Services Section in OHR manages the medical history review or physical examination process, working with the OHR specialist or directly with the hiring department. Background investigation checks, which are required for public safety positions, are managed by the appropriate public safety department.

Typically, the more extensive and complex reviews take a longer time to complete and may add to the length of the hiring process. Some departments estimate that the medical review in conjunction with a background check and other verifications can add six to eight weeks to the hiring process. Where it is difficult to verify educational credentials quickly, as in instances where educational institutions may be outside the United States, a candidate is hired with the condition that the education will be verified prior to granting the employee merit status.

Shared Roles. In 1998, as part of an effort to simplify the hiring process, OHR delegated select tasks in this portion of the hiring process to all departments and agencies. Specifically, OHR delegated the authority to:

- Negotiate and determine salaries for new employees equal to or less than the midpoint of the salary range; and
- Extend conditional offers of employment for permanent and term positions and all offers of employment for temporary positions.

In addition, OHR delegated limited authority to some departments to manage medical reviews and physical examinations. OHR has delegated this authority to the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) for its bus operator positions

and for some positions in Fleet Management. It has delegated this authority to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) for its Correctional Officer positions and to the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS) for its entry-level firefighter positions.⁴

III. HIRING PROCESS VARIATIONS

A. Open Continuous Recruitments

An open continuous recruitment posts a job advertisement and leaves the position open to continually recruit and establish a pool of qualified candidates. Currently, Section 5-3 requires the CAO to set a reasonable deadline for the receipt of applications for announced vacancies and allows the CAO to provide for open continuous examinations for entry-level positions.⁵

In practice, OHR conducts an open continuous recruitment for the following classes: administrative aide, legislative intern, library assistant I, library desk clerk, liquor store clerk, public administration intern, public services intern, accountant/auditor, assistant county attorney I, librarian I, library associate, recreation specialist I, community health nurse, counseling specialist, financial assistance worker, health room technician I, psychiatrist, social worker, therapist, correctional officer I, resident supervisor I, bus operator, mechanic, truck driver substitute/warehouse worker.

OHR continually advertises these positions, reviews applications to see if they meet the minimum qualifications, and establishes an eligibility list based on this review. Typically, OHR will keep the applications until a department calls to say it is ready to hire or OHR will review and forward an eligible list periodically as their workload permits.

The open, continuous recruitment period saves time in the hiring process because it eliminates the step that requires the department to convene a group of subject matter experts to rank the applications. In contrast, the open continuous recruitment establishes an ongoing pool of qualified applicants and allows a department to begin the hiring process at the selection and interview phase.

⁴ See Chapter IV, Shared Roles, beginning on page 15, for a description of shared responsibilities between OHR and the Department of Police and OHR and the Department of Health and Human Services that extend beyond this phase of the process.

⁵ The MFP Committee has conducted a section by section review of proposed Regulation 12-00 and has approved in concept a proposal for the OHR Director to designate positions at any level for "open continuous" and "open until filled" recruitment. The full Council will consider this issue in July 2001. See page 3.

B. Temporary Positions

The process for hiring temporary employees is the same as the process for hiring permanent employees except that OHR has delegated to the departments the authority to make all employment offers. OHR advertises the positions in the employment bulletin, reviews the applications for minimum qualifications, sends the qualified applicants to the department for ranking, and certifies an eligible list. The department interviews and selects the employees to hire and makes a conditional and final offer of employment. Examples of temporary positions hired by departments include bus operators, health room technicians, and public service workers.

OHR has delegated the entire process for hiring library pages to the Department of Public Libraries. OHR has also delegated authority for the entire process of hiring temporary, seasonal employees to the Department of Recreation, which hires roughly 11,000 temporary, seasonal employees each summer. The Department of Recreation advertises its positions in its own bulletin, receives and reviews applications, conducts interviews, makes selection decisions, makes conditional offers, conducts medical reviews and background checks, and makes final employment offers for these positions.

IV. SHARED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HIRING PROCESS

For the most part, the roles and responsibilities in the hiring process are shared between the hiring departments and OHR as outlined in Chapter II. The two exceptions are the Montgomery County Police Department and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD). The hiring responsibilities in MCPD are shared between MCPD and OHR based on the nature of the position to be filled. OHR has delegated to MCPD the responsibility for the recruitment and hiring of all uniformed personnel and other positions that are unique to the police department. Examples of these positions are: police service aides, police officer candidates, forensic chemists, abandoned vehicle technicians and evidence technicians. OHR has retained responsibility for positions that are not unique, such as administrative specialists, program specialists or client service workers.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The DHHS has its own human resources section because of a departmental reorganization, which assimilated former state-county human resource employees from the Department of Social Services. In 1998, OHR trained the appropriate DHHS employees in interview and selection practices and then delegated to DHHS the authority to make all job offers for permanent and temporary employees. Under this arrangement, OHR conducts the recruitment and certifies the eligible list; DHHS conduct interviews, makes selection decisions, and extends conditional and final employment offers.

V. ELAPSED TIME IN THE HIRING PROCESS

OHR provided OLO with two separate analyses that examine the elapsed time for a portion of the hiring process.⁶ Both analyses begin with the date the position closes and end with the date a department notifies OHR that it has made a selection. (Using the steps outlined in Chapter II, the analyses include steps 3 through 6; they do *not* include the planning phase (step 1), the posting period (step 2) or the employment offer, medical review and verification (step 7).

The first analysis examines the elapsed time for 406 recruitments conducted in FY 2000: 362 recruitments had a closing date or were open until filled; 44 were open continuous recruitments.

The second analysis examines the elapsed time for 383 recruitments: 313 of these were conducted before April 15, 2000; 70 were conducted between April 15 and December 1, 2000. April 15, 2000 is the date that the ALEXUS contract became operational. The group of pre-April 15 recruitments did not include any recruitments processed online; the post April 15 group includes some recruitments that were processed online and others that were not.

These analyses provide some useful insights about the elapsed time in the hiring process. Specifically, they show:

- In FY 2000, the elapsed time for all recruitments averaged 83 days;
- In FY 2000, on average, 75% of the time was spent on departmental tasks and 25% was spent on OHR tasks;
- In FY 2000, the elapsed time for an open continuous recruitment averaged 44 days; and,
- The elapsed time for the 70 recruitments conducted after OHR contracted with ALEXUS averaged 56 days compared to 91 days for the 313 recruitments in the pre-ALEXUS period.

VI. THE HIRING PROCESS FOR A NEW POSITION APPROVED DURING THE BUDGET PROCESS

The hiring process for a new position approved during the budget exists within an operating framework created by the budgeting process, the County Classification and Compensation Plan, and the Position Control System. The beginning of this chapter introduces these three components; the latter part describes the steps in the process to create a new position.

⁶ Graphs showing the results of this analysis are attached at the end of the report.

A. The County Budgeting Process and the Budget Document

The budget document for the County presents a comprehensive picture of proposed operations and expenditures for the County Government and other agencies beginning July 1. The budget document contains information about the County's fiscal policy, the public services programs, county agency summaries, County Government recommended budgets, workforce compensation issues, and several budget summary schedules. Many of the budget estimates depend on assumptions about the number, type and salary of positions found in the recommended personnel complement, which is a companion document to the recommended budget.

The Montgomery County Charter establishes a Council/Executive form of government. Under this structure, the Executive develops and recommends budget proposals and the Council authorizes expenditures and sets tax rates. The Charter requires the Executive to submit a proposed Operating Budget by March 15. It also requires the County Council to approve and make annual appropriations by June 1 and to set property tax levies to finance the budgets by June 30.

Under Section 6.0 of Administrative Procedure 4-2, each year after the budget is approved, OMB must forward to OHR by June 15 a list of all new positions included in the approved budget. Section 6.1 of AP 4-2 also provides that the hiring department must prepare a position description (PD) for each new position and a Position Profile Form (PPF) for all approved new positions, position transfers and abolishments. Under Section 6.1, the department must submit these PPFs and PDs to OMB by June 15 of each year.

Each July, the County publishes an approved operating budget and an approved personnel complement for the coming fiscal year. The approved personnel complement contains an organization chart and the approved personnel complement for each department of the Montgomery County Government. This document also includes three summary schedules that contain position and workyear information by department for a three-year fiscal period. The personnel complement reports whether a position is full-time or part-time and provides the position title, the job class code, the grade, the number of positions, the workyears, and the salary and wage dollar amounts.

B. The County's Classification and Compensation Plan

The County's Classification and Compensation Plan consists of an official list of occupational classes, the arrangement of occupational classes into occupational series and groups, an assigned grade for each class, and the approved salary schedules. The County maintains a classification and compensation plan so that a comprehensive system exists to assign comparable pay grades for work of substantially equal value performed under similar conditions. The Office of Human Resources publishes the Plan annually.

Administration. County law and regulations direct the CAO to develop, maintain, and administer the County's classification plan within guidelines established by law. The CAO delegates this authority to the Director of OHR. Section 5.5 of AP4-2 authorizes the OHR Director to:

develop, maintain and administer the County Government's classification plan, including the creation and abolishment of (occupational) classes, assigning occupational classes to pay grades, and assigning individual positions to (occupational) classes. Classification decisions of the Director are final unless a timely request for administrative review is filed in accordance with Section 12.

Creating a new occupational class. The Office of Human Resources, the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB) and the requesting County department participate in the process to create a new occupational class in the County's classification plan. According to AP 4-2:

an occupational class consists of one or more positions that are similar in the types of work, the difficulty and complexity of their duties, the level of responsibility, and the knowledge, skills and abilities required.

Either OHR or an operating department may identify the need for a new occupational class. An operating department may request the creation of a new occupational class as the result of a reorganization. When a need is identified, AP 4-2 directs OHR to work with the appropriate department to develop a new class specification. According to AP 4-2:

a class specification is the written description of an occupational class that contains the class title, a definition of the class describing the nature and scope of assigned duties and responsibilities and supervisory relationships, illustrative examples of duties normally assigned, minimum qualification requirements and the medical protocol.

The Director of OHR reviews the new class specification jointly developed by OHR and the requesting department. If the Director of OHR approves the new class specification, he/she must submit it to the MSPB for a 21-day review and comment period. The MSPB may submit comments to the Director of OHR who may respond to the comments if appropriate. The Director of OHR makes the final decision to authorize the new class creation.

Assigning a new position to an occupational class. OHR assigns individual positions to an occupational class when a department creates a new position or when an individual requests a reclassification study. OHR uses information from a position

description prepared by the hiring department and information from the existing class specifications to make a classification decision for an individual position. AP 4-2 states:

Individual positions are assigned, by reference to class specifications, to occupational classes solely on the basis of assigned duties and responsibilities and minimum qualifications required. Employees should be assigned duties and responsibilities which are appropriate to their authorized position classifications and should not be intentionally assigned higher level duties or responsibilities for the purpose of circumventing the competitive promotional process.

The Position Description Form. OHR uses a position description form completed by the requesting department to collect information needed to classify a position. A position description is a written list of duties and responsibilities assigned to a position and related information about the position. OHR has developed an online position description form that can be transferred to departmental staff who need to fill one out. However, when the position description is submitted to OHR a department must still submit a hard copy of the position description with the appropriate signatures, transmittal memo and organizational chart for the unit where the position is located.

Historically, OHR required a department to complete a position description every time a department created or reclassified a position or if a position was significantly affected by a reorganization plan. In August 1998, the OHR Director modified its departmental practice to reduce the number of required position descriptions. Currently, a department must still complete a position description for most generic occupational classes used throughout the County; however, OHR no longer requires position descriptions to create a temporary position. Additionally, OHR does not require position descriptions for a select group of permanent, new positions that are peculiar to one or a few departments.

In lieu of the position description form, the department must prepare a brief description of duties and responsibilities, how the new position would be used, and in what organizational unit the position would be located. The department should attach this description with a copy of the appropriate class specification to the memorandum to OMB requesting the creation of the position. Attaching the class specification to the memorandum is meant to demonstrate that a department has read the class specification and has found the description of work in the class specification comparable to the duties planned for the new position.

C. The Position Control System.

The Position Control System is an inventory of all authorized positions in the County Government maintained by OHR. The position database links to the fiscal database and enables OHR to track payroll costs for each position by fiscal year.

OHR uses a Position Profile Form (PPF) to establish a new position in the position database and to capture the data for any changes such as a position reclassification, a position abolishment or a transfer. The PPF is a processing document used to implement personnel changes. In 1996, OHR prepared a procedure manual for PPF users. According to the PPF Users Procedures Manual, the purpose of the PPF is to capture all data pertaining to each position authorized in the Montgomery County personnel complement.

Departments must maintain a PPF for each position authorized in their departmental personnel complement. After a PPF is created, the form functions as a turnaround document to make any changes to an existing position.

The PPF has four sections:

- Section A contains information about the position's creation status and type.
- Section B contains information established by the department such as the organizational status, the reporting relationships, and work schedule.
- Section C identifies the authorized job class, the position title, the authorized grade, the bargaining unit, the type of medical exam required, and the salary schedule.
- Section D contains data that provides the basis for budgeting and accounting for expenditures against the position such as the authorized workyears, the authorized fill date, the funding source, the fund number, and the index code.

D. The Steps in the Hiring Process for a New Position

The process to hire an employee to fill a new position consists of two sub-processes: the hiring process and a process to create a new position, which integrates the position into the classification plan and the position control system. OHR, OMB, and the hiring department jointly participate in the process to create a new position, which consists of the following steps. (See Chapter II for a description of the steps in the hiring process.)

1. Prepare a position request

The process to create a new position varies depending on whether or not the new position was approved during the budget process. If the position was approved during the budget cycle, the operating department fills out a Position Profile Form (PPF) for each position and a position description (PD) form, if necessary, and forwards these forms to OMB for review.

If a department is requesting a position not approved in the budget, it must prepare a cover memorandum that requests the creation of the new position and attach a Position Profile Form (PPF) and a position description (PD) form, if necessary. In the cover memorandum, the department must describe the problem that exists, explain why the position is needed, and describe any alternatives it has considered and rejected.

2. OMB Review and Approval

If a position is created during the budget process, the OMB analyst ensures that the department's request matches what is understood to be the approved action and that the request is consistent with the approved budget and the approved Personnel Complement.

If a position is created outside the budget process, the OMB analyst will review the department's request and explore with the department whether there are alternatives to the creation of a new position and why creating a new position is the best alternative. The analyst also checks whether the department has the current appropriation to fund the position. The analyst then makes a recommendation to the OMB Director.

The hiring department completes the OMB portion of the PPF and the OMB analyst reviews the PPF for accuracy. Specifically, the analyst verifies the action code, agency code, position title, workyears, index code, and funding source and checks that the form is signed by the requesting department. If the analyst finds the request to be in order, he/she attaches a note that describes the requests and states that the request is consistent with the approved budget.

As a regular practice, OMB maintains a PPF log to track when OMB receives and distributes PPF forms. After OMB approves a PPF, it is logged out and forwarded to OHR.

3. Classifying a New Position

The County requires that every position be classified according to a set of approved occupational groups and classes in the Classification and Compensation Plan. County regulations charge OHR with administering the classification plan. When OHR receives a memorandum from OMB stating that OMB has approved a departmental request for a new position, an OHR analyst ensures that the attached position description form matches the established occupational title/grade as defined in the Classification Plan. The analyst attaches to the PD/PPF a brief summary supporting his/her classification recommendation and transmits the package to an OHR Team Leader, who formally assigns the position to the appropriate class. If the analyst finds that the title/grade requested by the department is not supported by the position description, OHR and the initiating department will discuss the issue to see how it can be resolved.

OHR completes its section of the PPF, assigns a position number, and enters the position into the database. A copy of the completed PPF is forwarded to the department and the appropriate OHR employment specialist so that the recruitment process can begin. The HRMS system also generates a PPF (turnaround document) which is forwarded to the department. OHR files the PPF and the PD in the position creation history file.

VII FINDINGS

1. *The hiring process for a new position approved during the budget exists within an operating framework created by the budgeting process, the County Classification and Compensation Plan, and the Position Control System.*

The decision to hire an employee for a new position reflects the culmination of three separate but interrelated processes: the budget process, the classification process, and the position control system.

The Budget Process. The approved County budget presents a comprehensive picture of the proposed operations and expenditures for the County Government and other agencies beginning July 1. The budget contains information about the County's programs and the required personnel complement to operate these programs. The annual budget process begins March 15 when the County Executive submits a recommended operating budget and personnel complement to the County Council. The County Charter requires the Council to adopt a budget and make annual appropriations by June 1 and to set tax rates to finance the budget by June 30.

Administrative Procedure 4-2 requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to forward a list of all new positions approved in the budget to the Office of Human Resources (OHR) by June 15. It also requires each hiring department to forward Position Profile Forms for each new position to OMB by the same date.

The Classification Plan. The County's Classification and Compensation Plan consists of an official list of occupational classes, the arrangement of occupational classes into occupational series and groups, an assigned grade for each class, and approved salary schedules. The County maintains a classification plan so that a comprehensive system exists to assign comparable pay grades for work of substantially equal value. OHR administers the County's classification system and publishes the plan annually.

As part of its administrative responsibilities, every time a new position is created, OHR reviews the position description and existing class specifications and assigns the new position to an occupational class. This, in turn, determines the grade and salary for the new position. In many cases, new positions closely mirror existing positions and are classified easily. In other cases, new positions may reflect a new approach or new departmental reorganization. These positions may take more time to classify or, in some cases, may require the establishment of a new occupational class.

The Position Control System. The Position Control System is an inventory of all authorized positions in the County Government maintained by OHR. The position database links to the fiscal database and enables OHR to track payroll costs for each position by fiscal year. OHR uses a Position Profile Form to establish a new position in the position database and to capture the data for any changes to the position. After a new position has been assigned to the appropriate class, OHR assigns a position number and enters the position into the database.

2. *The process to hire an employee for a new position consists of two subparts: a process to create and classify the position and a process to recruit, select and hire an employee. The steps within each process are sequential and the process to create and classify a position must be completed before the position is advertised.*

Creating and Classifying a Position. The hiring department, OMB and OHR all participate in the process to create and classify a position. This process has three steps. The department initiates the process by forwarding a Position Profile Form (PPF), for each position, and a Position Description (PD), if necessary, to OMB.

If the department is requesting a position that was not approved during the normal budget review process, the department must also forward a cover memorandum that explains why the position is needed and describes any alternatives that have been considered and rejected. The OMB analyst reviews the PPF to make sure it is consistent with the decisions made during the budget process and then forwards the package to OHR.

An OHR specialist analyzes the position description and prepares a recommended classification for review by an OHR manager. The manager reviews this recommendation and formally assigns the position to the appropriate class. After the class is assigned, the OHR specialist completes the OHR section of the PPF, assigns a position number, enters the position in the database and notifies the appropriate OHR specialist to begin the recruitment process. The HRMS system generates a PPF, which OHR forwards to the department.

The Hiring Process. The process to hire an employee for an established (vacant) position has seven steps and involves the participation of the hiring department and the Office of Human Resources. The process begins when the hiring department contacts OHR about a vacancy or when the department receives a PPF from OHR indicating that the classification process is complete. At that point, the OHR specialist and the department staff prepare a recruitment plan. The plan, which may be an informal or formal document, addresses the knowledge, skills and abilities the job requires, the length of the recruitment period, possible subject panel experts to rate applications and a scoring matrix and potential interview questions.

OHR has the lead responsibility for the next two steps in the process – the posting period and the initial review to make sure all applications meet the minimum qualifications for the position. After OHR has completed the minimum qualification review, the department manages the process of convening a panel of subject matter experts to rank the applications. The department returns the results of this review to the OHR specialist who prepares and certifies an eligible list.

The OHR specialist forwards the eligible list with the names of all the applicants and the applications for those applicants in the highest rated category to the department. The department manages the interview and selection process and notifies OHR of its

nominee. OHR makes an offer of employment, conditioned on the verification of the applicant's educational background and a medical history review or a physical examination. When these are successfully completed, OHR makes a final offer of employment.

3. *The responsibilities in the hiring process are usually shared by OHR and the hiring department as shown in the chart. However, there are some exceptions to these roles, which are highlighted below.*

STEP	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Develop a plan.	SHARED
2	Posting period – Advertisement and recruitment	OHR
3.	Minimum Qualification Review	OHR
4	Subject Matter Expert Review	Department
5	Eligible List Certification	OHR
6	Interview and Selection	Department
7	Conditional Offer, Medical History Review or Physical Examination, Education Verification, Background Check and Final Offer	OHR/OMS

- OHR and the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) share hiring responsibilities for the Police Department. The MCPD is responsible for hiring all positions that are unique to the Police Department, including police officer candidates, evidence technicians, or abandoned vehicle specialists. OHR is responsible for hiring all other positions that are common to County Government.
- OHR and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) share hiring responsibilities. The DHHS is responsible for making employment offers and conducting reference checks and investigations for all temporary and permanent employees. OHR is responsible for advertising, recruitment, minimum qualification reviews, and certifying the eligibility list.
- The Department of Recreation is responsible for the entire hiring process for its temporary, seasonal employees.
- The Department of Public Libraries is responsible for the entire hiring process for library pages.

- All departments have the authority to make conditional and final employment offers for temporary employees and to negotiate salary offers up to the midpoint of the salary range.
 - OHR has delegated limited authority to some departments to conduct medical reviews for some positions. DPWT has this authority for bus operator positions and some positions in Fleet Management. DOCR has this authority for its correctional officers, and DFRS has this authority for its entry-level firefighters.
4. ***OLO estimates that it takes approximately three to four months (13 to 17 weeks) to hire an employee to fill an existing vacant position in the County Government. This estimate covers the period that begins when the position is advertised and ends when the employee reports to work.***

An OHR analysis of 362 recruitments conducted in FY 2000 found it took almost 12 weeks (83 days) to complete steps 3 through 6 of the hiring process.

A second OHR analysis of 383 recruitments conducted before and after April 15, 2000 found it took 13 weeks to complete steps 3 through 6 before the ALEXUS system was under contract compared to eight weeks after the ALEXUS system was in place.

OLO suggests adding five weeks to these totals to estimate the elapsed time for all seven steps of the hiring process, i.e., from recruitment through reporting to duty. OLO's five week estimate assumes two weeks for the advertising period, two weeks for an employee to give notice to a current employer, and one week for a medical history review or physical examination, and educational verification.

If five weeks are added to the 12 weeks reported in OHR's analysis of the FY 2000 recruitments, the elapsed time totals 17 weeks. If five weeks are added to the eight weeks reported for the 70 recruitments conducted after the ALEXUS system was in place, the elapsed time totals 13 weeks.

5. ***In practice, the elapsed time for each phase of the hiring process may vary widely depending on the nature of the position, the type of recruitment and the type of medical review that is required.***
- Step 2, the posting period, must last for a minimum of two weeks under the Personnel Regulations. This is the only step in the process that has a written standard. In practice, some positions that are difficult to recruit for may require a prolonged posting period.
 - The time for OHR to complete Step 3, the minimum qualification review, depends on the workload of the OHR specialist, how many other positions may have closed at the same time, and whether the review can be completed

online. As of April 2000, most reviews for professional and managerial positions are completed online and reviews for blue collar and entry level positions are done manually.

- The time to complete Step 4, the subject matter expert review, will vary according to the type of recruitment, the nature of the position, the membership of the expert panel, and the number of applications received. An open, continuous recruitment for an entry-level position typically eliminates this step of the process because OHR reviews the applications for minimum qualifications and then creates an eligible list. In contrast, the subject matter panel for a high level, interdepartmental position may be made up of managers from several departments. Each panel member must fit the task of reviewing the applications into other daily responsibilities.
- The time for OHR to complete Step 5, the eligible list certification, varies depending on whether the subject matter expert panel has already ranked the applications as a result of its review or whether the specialist must total the points from the ranking and group the applications accordingly.
- The time to complete Step 7, the medical history review, the educational verification, and a background investigation, if necessary, varies depending on the nature of the position. A medical history review may take one week or less whereas the medical examinations and background checks required for a public safety position may take six weeks to two months.



OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Marta Brito Perez
Director

MEMORANDUM

March 9, 2001

TO: Department and Agency Heads

FROM: Marta Brito Perez, Director
Office of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Selection Interview Process

The selection interview process for a new staff member in your department/agency is one of the most important responsibilities of your selection managers. Our objective has always been that the best-qualified person for any given position should be hired regardless of race, ethnicity or gender. We have an obligation to assure that all people seeking employment, a promotion or a transfer opportunity with Montgomery County have an equal opportunity, and that individuals competing for positions are treated fairly.

Attached for your use are guidelines for the selection process. These guidelines are consistent with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recommendations as well as established personnel practices. While achieving the goal of equal opportunity, we will also ensure that there is consistency in how we conduct selection interviews throughout the County.

The guidelines will be distributed with the eligible list to each hiring manager. If you have any questions, please contact Philip Peters, Manager, Staffing and Organizational Development Team. Phil can be reached at X75060.

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INTERVIEW/SELECTION PROCESS

A. IDENTIFYING CANDIDATES FOR INTERVIEW

- Develop selection criteria that relate to the skills and behaviors outlined in the class specification, position description and announcement.
- From this review, determine Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) needed for the position.
- Review the application of EVERY candidate in the highest rating category of the eligible list based on the KSAs.
- Select candidates for interview based on their possession of these KSAs.
- Document this process.

B. ASSEMBLING INTERVIEW PANEL AND DEVELOPING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RATING CRITERIA

Composition of Interview Panel

- Must be Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), i.e. knowledgeable of job and KSAs.
- Should consist of an odd number of panel members.
- Should be diverse (gender, race, ethnicity). To ensure diversity, individuals from other departments/agencies as well as from outside the County may be included in panel.

Developing Interview Questions and Rating Criteria

- Select interview questions that relate to the KSAs and behavioral traits outlined in the class specification, position description and announcement.
- Design an objective interview-scoring matrix based on the questions and criteria developed for rating applicants. Point values should be assigned to each question.
- The point values may be weighted, depending on the criticality of the KSAs or behavioral trait the question is designed to measure. This matrix will be your rated interview form and will be used during the interview for each candidate. A sample interview-scoring matrix sheet is attached.

C. CONDUCTING THE SELECTION INTERVIEWS

- Make sure that all members of the interview panel are aware of the requirements of the job and the KSAs and behavioral traits needed by the successful applicant.

- Make sure that all members of the interview panel understand the decision making process.
- Maintain fairness and equity by reminding panel members that the selection interview process is confidential; information is given to appropriate staff on a need to know basis.

The Interview

- Greet applicant in waiting area.
- Provide them with a copy of the job announcement and interview questions for review. This allows them some time to prepare answers to questions and saves time during the interview.
- Introduce the panel.
- Describe the selection interview process including how much time you have set aside for the interview.
- *Ask all applicants the same set of questions.*
- Have each member of the panel ask at least one question.
- During the interview process, *only job related information should be considered.* Special care must be taken to ensure that all applicants are treated equally. Any reference to race, gender, ethnicity, medical or disability status, national origin, marital status, age, pregnancy, number or ages of children, plans to have children, lifestyle, religion or other non-job-related criteria must be avoided. Should you need specific guidance in this area, please contact the Office of Human Resources (OHR).
- End the interview, thanking the applicant for his/her interest and describing the next step including duration of interviews, and when a decision will be made.

Interview Panel Responsibilities

- **Interview panel members must complete a rating form on each applicant and avoid putting remarks on the form that do not refer to job related concerns. Forms will become a permanent record and placed in the selection process folder for review and filing.**
- Once all candidates have been interviewed, panel members should review the rating forms. The interview panel should determine the top candidate(s), based on the scores received in the interview.
- **All selection material, including how candidates were selected for interview (see #1), rating forms and interview notes should be placed in a file and maintained for periodic audits by the Office of Human Resources.** This is required in case questions should surface concerning the selection of a candidate. Federal Law requires that all records be kept for three years.

D. REFERENCE CHECKS AND CANDIDATE NOTIFICATION

- Check job-related references for the top candidates only. If there is only one clear choice, just check the job-related references for that candidate. Appropriate areas of inquiry in a reference check include *job related* factors such

as technical or managerial skills, quality and quantity of work, degree of supervision required, dates of employment, and salary history. Subject areas not related to the work performed by the applicant include the applicant's social activities, religious and political beliefs, marital status, children, residence, medical status or disability.

- Select the candidate(s) to be recommended for hiring and contact OHR with a recommendation. Remember, only OHR can make a formal job offer unless otherwise delegated.
- After the selectee(s) have accepted the offer, written notification of non-selection must be mailed to the applicants. A sample notification letter has been attached for your consideration.

SELECTION INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

(Job Title)

CANDIDATE: _____

<u>CRITERIA</u>	<u>Point Values</u>			
	<u>Below Average (0)</u>	<u>Average (1)</u>	<u>Above Average (2)</u>	<u>Superior (3)</u>
#1	_____	_____	_____	_____
#2	_____	_____	_____	_____
#3	_____	_____	_____	_____
#4	_____	_____	_____	_____
#5	_____	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL SCORE _____

Date

Signatures of Interviewers:

FF

SELECTION INTERVIEW NOTES

DATE

Ms. Kim Lester
10 Montgomery Court
Silver Spring, MD 20906

Dear Ms. Lester:

This is to inform you of the status of the selection process for the position of (Job Title) with the (Department Name).

After careful consideration of all of the candidates, a selection has been made and an offer has been extended and accepted. This selection was indeed a difficult one given the caliber of the candidates considered. Please accept our sincere appreciation for your patience and cooperation throughout this process and for your interest in this position.

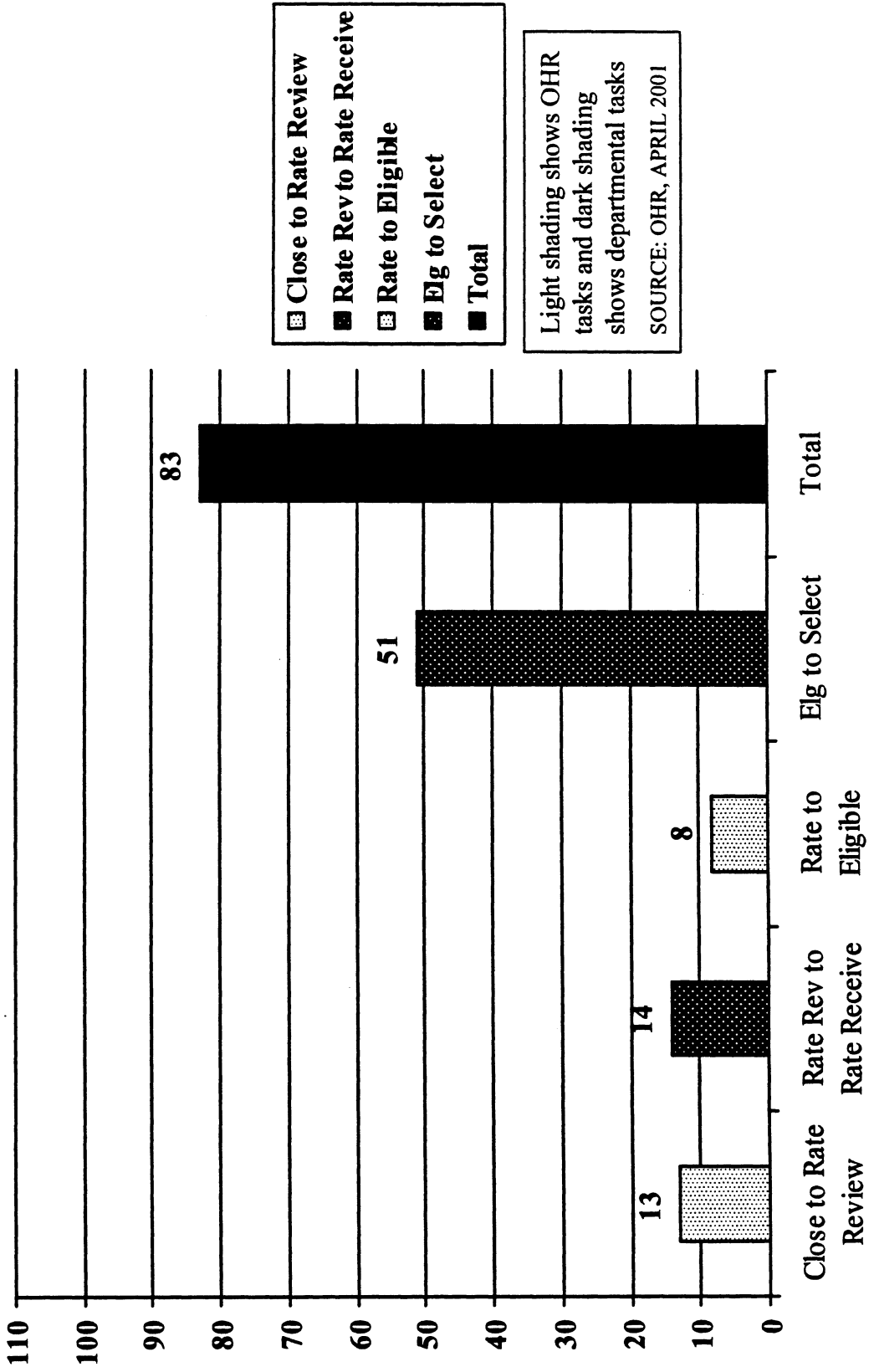
Sincerely,

Mary Smith
(Job Title)

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FY 2000 Recruitments

362 Recruitments with closing dates and open until filled

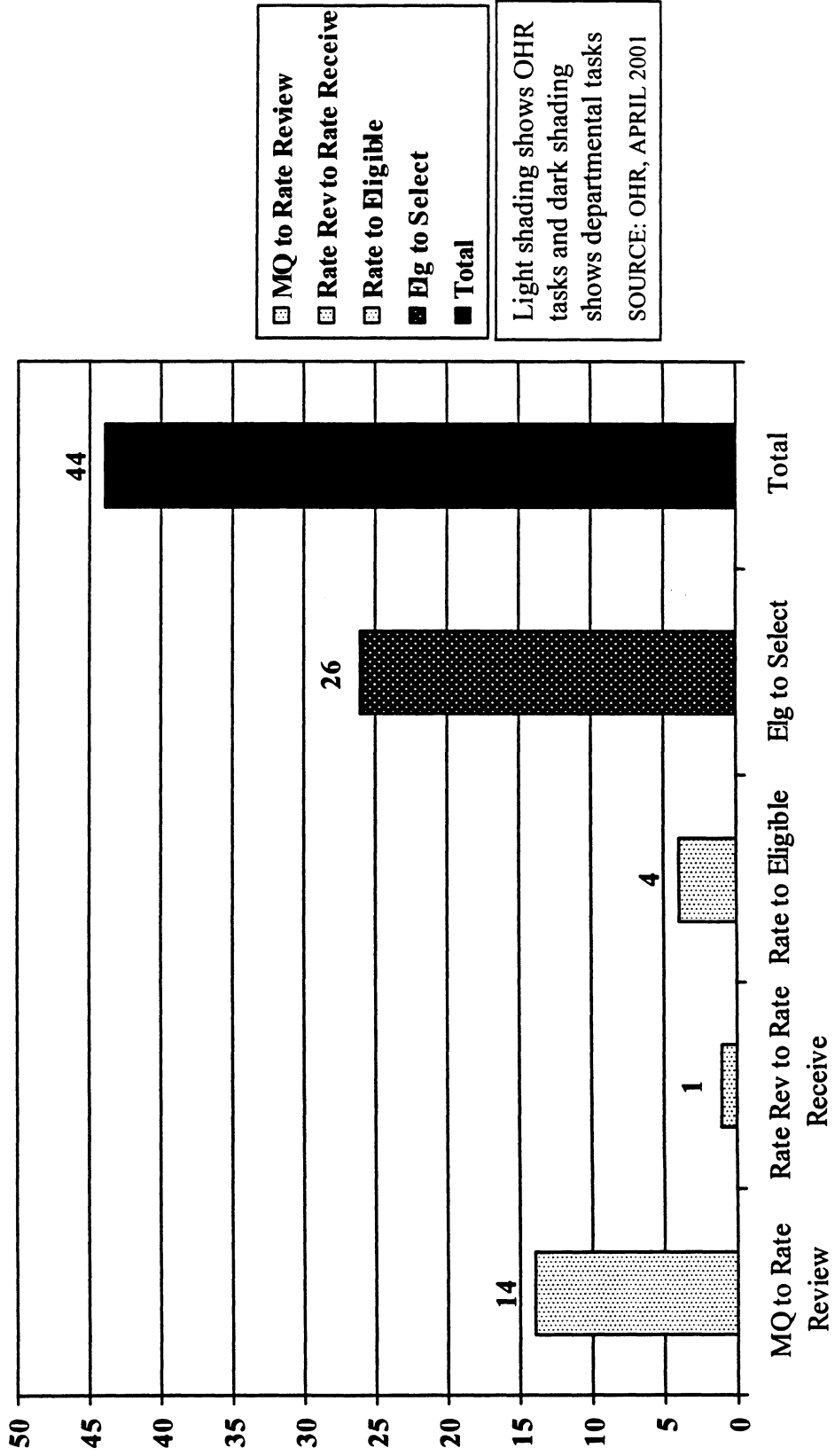


□ Close to Rate Review
 ■ Rate Rev to Rate Receive
 □ Rate to Eligible
 ■ Elg to Select
 ■ Total

Light shading shows OHR tasks and dark shading shows departmental tasks
 SOURCE: OHR, APRIL 2001

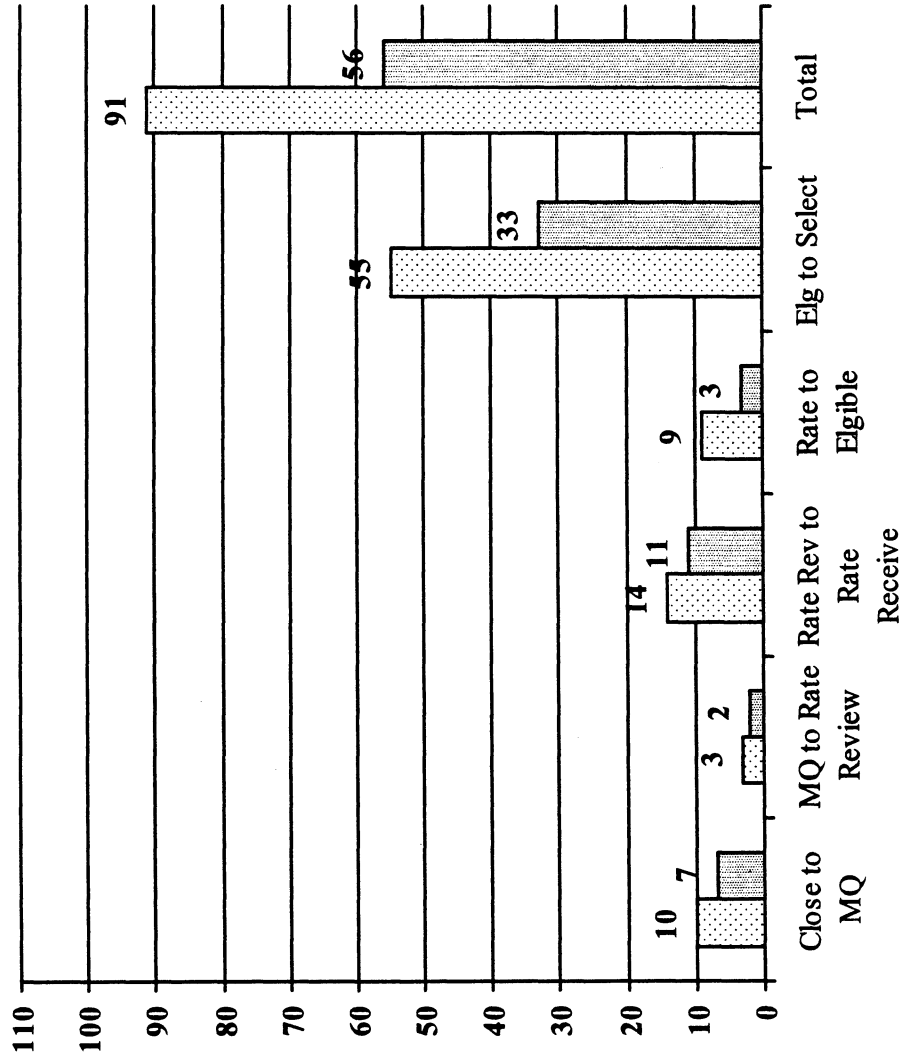
FY 2000 Open Continuous Recruitments

44 Recruitments -



Comparison of recruitments before and after April 15, 2000

313 recruitments before April 15, 2000 and 70 recruitments after April 15, 2000
 *As of December 1, 2000



- ▨ Pre 4-15 (Pre-Alexus)
- ▩ Post 4-15 (Post Alexus)

Definition of Terms

Close to MQ: From Closing Date to OHR Reviewing Minimum Qualifications.

MQ to Rate Review: The Number of Days Between OHR Reviewed for MQ's to Sending Applications to the Content Experts for Review.

Rate Review to Rate Receive: The Number of Days the Content Experts Reviewed Applications and Returned them to OHR.

Rate to Eligible: The Number of Days for OHR to Create an Eligible List.

Elg to Select: The Number of Days for the Department to Make a Final Selection.

SOURCE: OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES, APRIL 2001