

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

## **Alameda County Staffing Vacancy Rate Causes Concern**

### **Finding 24-14:**

The grand jury found that as of March 1, 2024, it was reported that 26% of Alameda County jobs are funded and unfilled. County Human Resource Services department has not been able to determine the accurate vacancy rate for the county due to departments intentionally leaving positions unfilled and reallocating the funds to other purposes.

### **Response to Finding 24-14:**

HRS agrees with this finding to the extent that County agencies/departments, as of March 1, 2024, had a vacancy factor of approximately 26%. However, vacancy rates are reviewed as part of the County's budget development process as this provides County agencies/departments operational flexibility to fill vacancies.

### **Finding 24-16:**

It usually takes between three to eight months for agencies in Alameda County fill an open position, and sometimes even a year or more.

### **Response to Finding 24-16:**

HRS agrees with this general finding of the length of time it may take an agency/department in filling an open position. The length of time a position remains open depends on varying factors, including funding availability/source, the type of examination, the components that make up the exam, the applicant pool, the availability of subject matter experts to participate in the needed exam component(s), exam appeals, as well as finally hiring interviews and job offers, including required background clearance processes.

However, on January 25, 2023, the County embarked on a major effort to address the significant recruitment challenges facing the County and formed the Recruitment Task Force ("Task Force") to spearhead the Recruitment Enhancement Project. The Task Force initially identified eight (8) high-priority initiatives, later expanded to 12, that involve nearly 40 enhancements/changes with the goal of implementing a variety of new programs, processes, enhancements, and changes in current policies, procedures, and practices to address the recruitment challenges facing the County and speed up the recruitment and selection process. As of August 1, 2024, the County fully implemented nine (9) of 12-Recruitment Enhancement Initiatives, with two (2) other Initiatives close to completion. The completion of Initiative #6 (Improve Recruitment Planning and Shorten the Application Process) has resulted in improved recruitment/selection planning, a renewed emphasis on adhering to identified timelines, and has shortened the application process by reducing the number of supplemental questions. Staff also implemented Initiative #11 (Make Changes in the County Charter and the Administrative Code) which resulted in shortening the recruitment posting period from 25- to 14-days, enabling the County to speed up the recruitment process and be more competitive with other public employers for talent.

Additionally, significant progress has been made on Initiative #1 (Re-Engineer the Recruitment/Selection Process), the focus of which is to streamline the business processes of the recruitment/selection process and to implement a wide array of technological improvements to speed up said process. These include 1) a streamlined recruitment planning meeting checklist and established recruitment timeline, 2) a shortened recruitment requisition form, 3) automated ad posting, 4) revised/streamlined certification email to eligible candidates, 5) automated certification response, 6) automated departmental interview/hiring process, 7) increased agency/department data access, 8) automated minimum qualifications screening, and 9) a final assessment and recommended us of online video recruitment tools.

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

Collectively, these efforts will make a significant impact on improving the County's recruitment/selection process. Additional Recruitment Re-Engineering solutions that are on target for completion include 1) an automated functionality to facilitate best qualified screening, 2) automated approach for combining test processes, 3) a review of the agency/departamental decentralized recruitment/selection process for additional efficiencies, and 4) development and automation of a collaborative long-term recruitment planning process.

## **Finding 24-17:**

Alameda County Human Resource Services department does not have sufficient staff to meet current recruitment processing needs in a timely manner.

## **Response to Finding 24-17:**

HRS agrees with this finding.

## **Finding 24-18:**

There is a 10-day notification requirement prior to interviewing applicants.

## **Response to Finding 24.18:**

HRS disagrees with this finding. The County Administrative Code, Chapter 2.38 (Human Resource Services and Civil Service Commission), Section 2.38.100 (Examinations) requires the County to provide a ten (10) days' notice to applicants of the date of an examination, not the interview. Regarding the interview, once an eligibility list is certified to the hiring agency/department, the agency/department can issue an interview notice to the candidates without a required waiting period. And, once the hiring agency/department issues the interview notice, the candidates have three (3) days to respond.

## **Finding 24-19:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department is only allowed to provide departments with the names of the candidates with the top 5 scores for a position. Departments are only allowed to interview from this top 5 list.

## **Response to Finding 24-19:**

HRS agrees with this finding. The County Charter "Section 37: Appointments to positions in the classified civil service shall be either regular or temporary. Whenever a position in the competitive classified civil service is to be filled by a regular appointment, the appointing authority shall notify the Commission of that fact, and the Commission shall certify the names and addresses of the candidates having the **five highest scores** [emphasis added] on the eligible list for the class or grade to which such position belongs, and the appointing authority shall appoint to such position one of the persons certified to him." Further, CSC Rule 1616 (Number of Names): "...upon receipt of a request to fill a position by certification from an employment list, the Commission shall certify from the appropriate list the names of eligibles having the five highest scores on such list who have indicated that they are available for appointment..."

Nevertheless, on August 8, 2023, the County issued to all the County's employee organizations an offer to meet and confer on a proposal related to the Recruitment Enhancement Project Initiative # 11 (Make identified Changes to the County Charter, Administrative Code), specifically, the County proposed to move from the Rule of 5 to the Rule of 8. After several meetings with the County's employee organizations, the County was not successful in implementing the Rule of 8. As a result, the County tabled the discussion. The County will again approach our employee organizations and endeavor to reach agreement on an alternative to the Rule of 5 that allows the County greater hiring flexibility.

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

## **Finding 24-20:**

Some individual departments' long interview time frames are one of the biggest delays in the hiring process.

## **Response to Finding 24-20:**

HRS takes a neutral position with this finding. HRS believes some agencies/departments may have long interview time frames based on internal operational needs that may contribute to the delays in the hiring process, but HRS does not know said particulars for any one agency or department.

## **Finding 24-21:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department has taken the first steps to modernize the employment website to maximize recruitment efforts and collect useful data, but much more needs to be done.

## **Response to Finding 24-21:**

HRS agrees with this finding. As part of Initiative #5 (Enhance Recruitment Marketing in Alameda County), HRS contracted with the County's Information Technology Department ("ITD") and in collaboration with countywide Departmental Human Resources Officers, developed a new County logo, tagline, and fresh and modern jobs landing page. The collaboration with ITD has expanded to modernize the HRS website and to include all its program areas.

Another action HRS has taken is to establish Benchmark Timeframes for completing the entire recruitment and selection process, including departmental interviews. Reports from the JobAps recruitment software system will be run to assess whether agencies/departments and HRS are meeting the Benchmark Timeframes. The report will initially be run on a bi-monthly basis and then on a quarterly basis beginning in calendar year 2025.

## **Finding 24-22:**

Applicants' most common reasons for turning down job offers are insufficient salary, lack of remote work opportunities, and crime near county offices.

## **Response to Finding 24-22:**

HRS disagrees with this finding because, as determined, it conveys an overall narrative that is not factual or supported by data. Given that the County does not collect data of the reason(s) why candidates decline job offers, HRS cannot make a determination relative to this finding.

## **Finding 22-23:**

Overall county salaries have not kept pace with Alameda County's goal of remaining at least in the median salary range of surrounding counties.

## **Response to Finding 22-23:**

HRS partially disagrees with this finding. In accordance with the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act ("MMBA"), the County is required to meet and confer in good faith regarding **wages** [emphasis added], hours, and other terms and conditions of employment with representatives of recognized employee organizations (i.e., unions). In this context, employee wages are determined based on surveys of either the County's Bay Area comparator counties or other survey methodologies as outlined in an existing Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") or driven by negotiations on a successor MOU or meet and confer.

Moreover, if the County is experiencing a recruitment or retention issue with a specific classification, the County conducts salary reviews with the intent of ensuring a competitive salary. And, as part of MOU negotiations, the

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

County also considers special salary adjustments, in addition to general wage increases, for classifications that fall below the median of the County's Bay Area comparator agencies (or MOU-driven agencies).

## **Finding 24-25:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department fails to collect sufficient data on many aspects of human resource management.

## **Response to Finding 24-25:**

HRS partially disagrees with this finding. HRS collects data on many aspects of human resource management, including in areas of classification, compensation, recruitment and selection. However, HRS agrees that refined the data tracking will allow agencies/departments to better identify opportunities for improvement. Therefore, as noted in Response to Finding #24-16 related to the County's Recruitment Enhancement Project, one of the 12-initiatives (Re-Engineer the Recruitment/Selection Process) undertaken by the Recruitment Task Force includes the creation of the Human Resources Digital Innovations Team, the purpose of which is to ensure steady and ongoing technological improvements in human resource systems. Through this vehicle, HRS will begin the process of collecting data that will be instructive on the County's recruitment, retention, classification, and other aspects of human resources.

## **Recommendation 24-12:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department should conduct an analysis to determine a more accurate vacancy rate for the County.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-12:**

HRS cannot implement this recommendation. Vacancy rates are reviewed as part of the budget development process and salary savings budget adjustments are made based on upon historical data. This practice affords agencies/departments much-needed operational flexibility to fill vacancies.

## **Recommendation 24-15:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department should require departments/agencies to schedule their subject matter experts when the recruitment timeline is scheduled.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-15:**

HRS implemented this recommendation. The Recruitment Enhancement Project Initiative #1 (Re-Engineer the Recruitment/Selection Process) included six (6) Re-Engineering Solutions in Month One, one of which involved finalizing in JobAps (the County's cloud-based recruiting system) the Recruitment Planning Meeting Checklist ("Checklist"). The purpose of the Checklist is to enhance communication and coordination between HRS and Departmental Human Resource Offices when meeting to prepare the Recruitment/Selection Plan for an upcoming recruitment. The Checklist Section III. (Screening and Examination Processes) and Section VI. (Primary Contact(s) and Subject Matter Experts for this Recruitment, Examination, and Selection Process) requires the County agencies/departments to identify and schedule the subject matter experts in order to complete the Checklist and prior to the open of the exam. This endeavor was completed on March 1, 2024.

HRS also developed a plan to address the challenges securing Subject-Matter-Experts, including requesting that the Agency/Department Head use a more direct approach regarding the role of SMEs, ensuring that SMEs receive recognition and appreciation for their valuable time and expertise, and reviewing the current policy on providing lunch/refreshments to those serving as raters in an oral panel or performance exam.

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

## **Recommendation 24-17:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department should reduce the ten-day notification requirement prior to interviewing applicants.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-17:**

HRS will not implement this recommendation because it is not warranted. As noted in Finding #24-18, the County Administrative Code, Chapter 2.38 (Human Resource Services and Civil Service Commission), Section 2.38.100 (Examinations) requires the County to provide a ten (10) days' notice to applicants of the date of an examination, not the interview. With regard to the interview, once an eligibility list is certified to the hiring agency/department, the agency/department can issue an interview notice to the candidates without a required waiting period. This recruitment/selection timeline is included in the Recruitment and Selection Plan of each job announcement. And, once the hiring agency/department issues the interview notice, the candidates have three (3) days to respond.

## **Recommendation 24-19:**

The Alameda County Human Resource Services department should perform a comprehensive analysis of all data needed for recruitment, hiring and retention purposes, and ensure its implementation.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-19:**

HRS will partially implement this recommendation by Spring 2025. HRS will draft an Implementation Action Plan on this Recommendation #24-19 and work closely with County Departmental Human Resource Officers as well as key ITD staff and JobAps representatives to ensure HRS identifies relevant human resource management data. Once HRS and said key stakeholders identify needed data, HRS will implement the data tracking processes and will target completion of this recommendation by Spring 2025.

In addition, as noted in Response to Finding #24-21, the County has established Benchmark Timeframes for completing the entire recruitment and selection process, including departmental interviews. HRS and countywide Departmental Human Resources Officers will also run reports from the JobAps recruitment software system to assess whether the Benchmark Timeframes are being met. The reports will initially be run on a bi-monthly basis and then on a quarterly basis beginning in calendar year 2025.

## **Great Expectations for the Alameda County Probation Department**

### **Finding 24-26:**

The Alameda County Probation Department has a high incidence of inoperable vehicles.

### **Response to Finding 24-26:**

The Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD) agrees with the finding.

### **Finding 24-27:**

There is an ongoing problem with vehicles being broken into and parts being stolen from probation parking lots.

### **Response to Finding 24-27:**

ACPD agrees with the finding.

### **Finding 24-28:**

There is no current Alameda County Probation Department mandatory management specific training offered to new supervisors.

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

## **Response to Finding 24-28:**

ACPD disagrees with the finding. Upon promotion to the supervisor level, individuals participate in several comprehensive training courses during their probationary period to support and equip them in their new roles. The training includes:

**Supervisor CORE Program (80 hours):** The Supervisor CORE program covers a wide range of topics essential for supervisory roles, including:

- Leadership in Practice
- Emotional intelligence
- Personality and Leadership
- Managing People in Our Corner of the Organization
- Trauma and Stress Responses
- Ethical Environments and Reducing Surprises
- Liability
- Progressive Discipline and Peace Officers Bill of Rights (POBR)
- Keeping Our People Accountable – Performance Evaluations
- Critical Incident Response

**County-Mandated Trainings:** In addition to the CORE program, supervisors are required to attend the following county-mandated trainings:

- Harassment Prevention for California Managers
- Labor Relations 101
- Managing Within Disability Laws and Leaves
- Performance Management: Discipline and Documentation

Additionally, the Leadership Institute for Directors and Supervisors (LIDS) is an Alameda County-specific training program developed in March 2024. LIDS was fully implemented in July 2024 as a mandatory six-month training program for all Supervisors and Directors. This program builds on topics covered in the Supervisor CORE program and expands upon them to include additional critical areas specific to managing employees in the Alameda County Probation Department.

## **Finding 24-29:**

The Alameda County Probation Department case management software does not provide any notifications regarding cases approaching their required review deadlines.

## **Response to Finding 24-29:**

ACPD agrees with the finding.

## **Recommendation 24-21:**

The Alameda County Probation Department must meet with the Alameda County General Services Agency (GSA), to determine a root cause for the large number of inoperable vehicles.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-21:**

The recommendation has been implemented. In July 2024, Probation met with GSA to discuss the response to the Grand Jury report and identified the root cause of the issues with the Hybrid vehicles (Ford Fusions): battery drainage due to underutilization. These vehicles, with very low mileage, often sit unused for consecutive weeks,

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

leading to battery drain. Probation has agreed to work with staff to encourage more frequent use of these specific vehicles. GSA will continue to service these vehicles and provide full battery charges or replacements as needed. While the overall vehicle pool is generally in good condition, several vehicles are aging. GSA recommended the following:

- Ford Fusions should be started at least once per week.
- A notification from the GPS (Battery Low Voltage Notification Alert) will be sent directly to Probation staff to alert when vehicle batteries are low on voltage and may not start. This alert should address the service need.
- Vehicles that are 12 years old, have over 120,000 miles, or are in poor condition can be replaced based on utilization and need.

## **Recommendation 24-22:**

The Alameda County Probation Department should evaluate the security of their vehicle storage lots to avoid theft and vandalism.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-22:**

The recommendation has been implemented. The primary location of vehicle theft and vandalism was the Probation office at 400 Broadway, Oakland, CA. Following the Grand Jury's investigation, the Probation Department has permanently closed this office. The vehicles previously located at 400 Broadway have been relocated to a secure lot at the Juvenile Justice Center (JJC). Additionally, the JJC has contracted security to patrol the parking lots 24/7.

**Recommendation 24-23:** The Alameda County Probation Department should reinstate the “New Supervisor Training Academy” and it should be mandatory for new supervisors.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-23:**

The recommendation has been implemented. In addition to several mandatory training programs already in place, the department recently implemented the Leadership Institute for Directors and Supervisors (LIDS) to address any gaps in knowledge. LIDS is a mandatory 6-month training program designed to further develop leadership skills for new leaders. The LIDS program covers all the essential training from the Supervisor CORE training and provides additional valuable content to enhance supervisory effectiveness.

Below is a list of mandatory training that new managers must complete within their first year of hiring.

**Supervisor CORE Program (80 hours):** The Supervisor CORE program covers a wide range of topics essential for supervisory roles, including:

- Leadership in Practice
- Emotional intelligence
- Personality and Leadership
- Managing People in Our Corner of the Organization
- Trauma and Stress Responses
- Ethical Environments and Reducing Surprises
- Liability
- Progressive Discipline and Peace Officers Bill of Rights (POBR)
- Keeping Our People Accountable – Performance Evaluations
- Critical Incident Response

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

**County-Mandated Trainings:** In addition to the CORE program, supervisors are required to attend the following county-mandated trainings:

- Harassment Prevention for California Managers
- Labor Relations 101
- Managing Within Disability Laws and Leaves
- Performance Management: Discipline and Documentation

**Leadership Institute for Directors and Supervisors (LIDS):** Recently, the department has implemented the Leadership Institute for Directors and Supervisors. This is a 6-month program designed to further develop leadership skills. The LIDS program encompasses the topics originally covered in the New Supervisor Training Academy and expands upon them to include additional critical areas to enhance supervisory effectiveness. The LIDS program includes training in the following topics:

- Overview of Policy
- Understanding MOUs
- Foundational Leadership for Probation Supervisors
- Direct and Vicarious Supervisor Liability
- Public Safety Officers Procedural Bill of Rights (POBR)
- Conflict Management
- The Supervisor's Guide to Corrective Action and Progressive Discipline
- Writing Performance Evaluations
- Team Building
- Staff Motivation

In addition to the mandatory programs listed above, the department also offers the **Professional Development Academy (PDA)** as a component of LIDS. PDA is a pathway to enhanced leadership abilities and a transformative culture within the ACPD. Tailored for supervisors and directors, this academy offers a diverse curriculum covering essential topics like leadership, motivation, professional development, and strategic approaches to success. By participating, directors and supervisors will not only maximize their potential and confidently embrace challenges but also contribute to fostering a highly skilled and productive workforce. The PDA empowers leaders with the tools and knowledge to inspire and lead effectively, creating a positive and dynamic work environment.

These training programs ensure that supervisors are well-prepared to handle their responsibilities effectively, fostering a competent and professional supervisory team within the ACPD.

## **Recommendation 24-24:**

A tickler should be added to the Alameda County Probation Department case management system notifying supervisors when a case is approaching a required review deadline.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-24:**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable for three primary reasons as noted below:

- The current Case Management Standards Policy #400 (CMS-400), as written, specifies a case review process to be conducted by the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) and delivered to the Unit Supervisor through the case management system for review. However, the case management system was developed and implemented prior to the adoption of CMS-400, and as a result, it does not support the case review process as described in the policy. Furthermore, after implementing the policy, the department



# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

determined that the outlined case review process is flawed and unachievable. Consequently, the policy will be revised to ensure routine case reviews by Unit Supervisors.

- Probation supervision expiration dates often change due to factors such as violations of probation terms, legal proceedings, compliance issues, and amendments to sentencing. These factors affect the actual expiration and review dates of supervision cases. The dynamic nature of probation means that ensuring compliance with any legal or administrative changes in expiration and review dates cannot be accurately captured in a static process. Consequently, meaningful review and oversight cannot be achieved under such conditions.
- The recommendation is too specific and prescriptive. However, to achieve standard and systemic case reviews, as of July 2024 the Policy & Standards Compliance Unit has established a dedicated team focused on case reviews and quality assurance. This team's primary responsibility is to randomly review case files of all DPOs to ensure compliance with departmental policies and procedures. Moreover, as part of the case review process, the unit directly contacts clients to assess the quality of supervision practices and provides direct feedback to the Unit Supervisor and Executive Leadership. Ultimately, the assigned DPO is provided with feedback on their performance with abiding by policy related to the supervision standards. The primary goal is to ensure that cases are reviewed routinely as part of a systematic process and that clients receive the necessary services and support, they need to succeed under supervision.

## **Ambulance Service Delayed by Long Turn-Around Times at Emergency Rooms**

### **Finding 24-30:**

Off-load times are under the control of the hospitals, not the ambulance companies.

### **Response to Finding 24-30:**

The Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMS Agency) partially disagrees with this finding. EMS Agency recognizes that reducing the length of Ambulance Patient Offload Times (APOT) is the responsibility of both hospitals and ambulance providers and requires their cooperation and coordination. To this point, ambulance providers can make a big difference by forming relationships with hospitals and co-designing streamlined processes. The EMS Agency has for many years worked with its 911 ambulance providers and the County's hospital network to try to accomplish this cooperative relationship and will continue those efforts as seen in the recommendations below.

### **Finding 24-31:**

Data provided, and statistics published by the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services agency contained numerous inconsistencies or inaccuracies.

### **Response to Finding 24-31:**

The EMS Agency partially disagrees with this finding. EMS Agency staff initially provided incorrect APOT data because of a training issue. Upon discovering the issue, the EMS Agency quickly rectified it, providing the Grand Jury with the correct, validated data. EMS data requires both analytic and operational knowledge to understand and interpret. Due to the technical complexity of the data and the lack of context necessary to fully appreciate and understand its nuances, some of the report's characterizations of the data were overstated.

# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

## **Recommendation 24-25:**

The data collection and analyses processes of the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services agency should be audited to ensure accuracy.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-25:**

This recommendation has been implemented. There are multiple efforts underway to ensure the veracity of the data. This includes augmented training in the EMS Agency and data modernization efforts to minimize the multitudes of vendors involved with data feeds thereby reducing the opportunity for error. Any time data validation and reconciliation reveals an issue, the EMS Agency immediately undertakes efforts to mitigate that issue. In addition, the EMS Agency is working with AC Health Information Systems and the Alameda County Information Technology Department to reduce the reliance on third-party vendors for data storage and analytics in order to improve data collection and control. Additionally, in collaboration with the throughput consultant referenced in the response to Recommendation 24-26, the EMS Agency will work to refine data elements and benchmarks that are specifically associated with ambulance offload time tracking and improvement.

## **Recommendation 24-26:**

The Alameda County Emergency Medical Services agency should work with a throughput consultant in conjunction with hospitals to ensure the reduction of off-load times.

## **Response to Recommendation 24-26:**

This recommendation has been implemented. The EMS Agency recently entered into a contract with Healthcare Strategists, Inc. to provide turnover of care and facility patient flow (throughput) consultant services. This contract, which began on August 1, 2024, is the result of a competitive procurement issued in January 2024. Healthcare Strategists will assist in objectively assessing the current processes that are in place, to determine the specific challenges that exist, and to identify solutions to optimize patient movement between the facilities and ambulance transport providers – a result that will benefit individual patients and the healthcare system as a whole.