

# Humboldt County Hiring: Status, Process, and the Future

Released June 21, 2024

## SUMMARY

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury investigated the hiring practices of Humboldt County government, finding that understaffing is one of the largest problems facing our county. Understaffing happens when an agency is unable to fill all of the positions for which they are funded, and it affects how well or poorly our county government serves the public. Understaffing is systemic, appearing throughout all departments of county government. Our investigation led us to examine many aspects of county hiring procedures. It also led us to acquire data from counties of a similar size, asking “how does Humboldt County staffing compare to other counties?” The Grand Jury wanted to know if Humboldt County is better, worse, or the same in terms of:

- Positions filled vs those that are empty
- Employee retention
- Procedures to improve retention
- Average time to hire from application to job offer
- Hard to fill occupations
- Incentive programs to attract candidates
- Hiring procedures documentation

We chose to do a statistical comparison to help answer the above questions, to get a snapshot of how Humboldt County compares to similar counties in northern California. This comparison gave us some information to help identify hiring issues within our county.

We investigated the current hiring processes for the three largest Humboldt County employee groups: The Sheriff’s Office, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Public Works. These three entities employ approximately seventy percent of county employees and account for a majority of the county’s general fund budget.

Our investigation was two-pronged:

- We examined the current hiring processes for these county departments, examining what is and is not working.
- We explored ways to streamline the hiring process either through Human Resources or within the departments themselves and discovered that different departments have different licensing and other requirements.

During our investigation, we consistently heard two complaints:

- There is not enough money in the budget.
- The hiring process takes too long to get qualified candidates.

Frequently a candidate is hired away by an entity that does not make them wait two to six months to get hired. Certainly, compensation is a significant factor, but that is beyond our purview at this point. We wanted to find out what factors are at play in the actual hiring process and how the Humboldt County Human Resources department interfaces with the agencies listed above. Are there actions that could be taken, or are we stuck with the status quo?

## **BACKGROUND**

In looking over past Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury reports a consistent theme has been the lack of staffing. Currently, the many departments of Humboldt County government have approximately 500 budgeted but unfilled positions, which is twenty-one percent of the roughly 2,400 allocated positions. We heard from many sources that the amount of time to hire staff is adversely affecting the county's ability to attract and retain candidates. We also heard anecdotally that candidates were being hired elsewhere because of the long lead time from job application to final offer. The length of time to hire an individual and the ability to retain that individual is critical to obtaining solid qualified candidates. Hiring to replace the departees is a costly and time-consuming process which affects the County's budget.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury's investigation of Humboldt County hiring processes included interviews with employees in Human Resources, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Sheriff's Office. We received comparison data from six other counties, including documentation of their hiring procedures and current hiring metrics. We asked for data on the number of unfilled positions, employee retention rates, incentives used to improve recruitment and retention, job classifications that are difficult to fill, and the average time it takes to hire new employees.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Multi-County Comparison**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury (HCCGJ) compared the hiring practices of Humboldt County to six other similar California counties. We asked these counties the same questions based on three broad categories: vacancies, retention, and hiring. The questions are in Appendix A, and the results are in Appendix B.

## **Vacancies**

The vacancy rate of unfilled positions ranged from a low of six percent in Nevada County to a high of 26% in Mendocino County. Humboldt County was second highest with a 21% vacancy rate; the other four counties had rates between 11% and 15%.

## **Retention**

Successfully retaining employees from year to year means spending less time and effort to hire and train replacements. The annual retention rate is a measure of that success; specifically, it calculates how many of the employees that started the year are still with an organization at the end of the year. If two of ten employees quit during the year, the retention rate would be 80%. For the most recent fiscal year, most of the counties, including Humboldt County, reported retention rates in the 80% range; Yuba County and Napa County stood out at 98% and 92% respectively. The HCCGJ requested and promptly received retention data from all counties for the last three years, but it took Humboldt County Human Resources almost four months to provide this data.

We asked what procedures were currently used to improve county retention rates. Retention programs were department-specific rather than county-wide. Four of the seven counties (see Appendix B, line 6) have a variety of retention inducements, including longevity bonuses, flexible hours, tuition reimbursement, and management-training programs. Humboldt County offers two: longevity bonuses and limited tuition reimbursement.

## **Hiring**

Hiring was the most difficult area in which to compare county differences because certain job classifications are considered hard to fill. Some positions, such as those in law enforcement, social work, and engineering, require extensive background checks and testing as well as special licenses or certifications.

Most counties reported a sixty-to-seventy day hiring time for those positions not cited above. Humboldt County takes about sixty days from the closing of a job advertisement to providing a list of eligible candidates to the hiring department authority. For comparison, Sutter County reported thirty days to produce the eligibility list, while Mendocino County reported forty-five days.

A number of hiring incentives aside from hiring bonuses were reported by three of the seven counties, most often for the hard-to-fill job classifications (see Appendix B, line 9). Humboldt County offers signing bonuses solely.

Humboldt County is the only county out of the seven respondents that does not have a policy and procedures manual for the hiring process. Humboldt County has informal guidelines and a collection of documents and PowerPoint slides. Other counties have a comprehensive manual and/or they use a civil service manual as a guideline for hiring procedures.

The questionnaire revealed the following about our county:

- Humboldt County has the second highest vacancy rate.
- Humboldt County uses fewer hiring and retention incentives.
- Humboldt County has no formal hiring policies and procedure manual.
- Humboldt County was significantly slower to respond to our inquiries for retention data.

## **Department of Health and Human Services**

Many of the positions in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) such as Social Workers are Merit System Services (MSS) positions, meaning that the hiring process must follow strict guidelines set by the state.<sup>1</sup> Currently the hiring process for MSS positions is almost completely controlled by the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR), a state agency. Recent procedural changes by CalHR have resulted in extended hiring times. The lengthy hiring process was noted in one of last year's Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury reports, with a recommendation that the process be streamlined.<sup>2</sup> Lengthy hiring times have undesirable consequences: applicants get frustrated, and they may seek employment elsewhere.

In their response to the 2022-2023 HCCGJ report, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors explained that CalHR was the reason for the long hiring process, and that they were going to pursue becoming an Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) county.<sup>3</sup> ALMS counties, rather than CalHR, control the MSS recruitment process. In August 2023, Humboldt County Human Resources (HR) requested and received permission from the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to initiate conversion to ALMS. Humboldt County HR is currently working with CalHR on the conversion process; however, CalHR is not moving quickly, and is imposing brand new requirements for conversion. Filling MSS positions will continue to be very slow until Humboldt County HR gets control of hiring.

The hiring process could be substantially faster if Humboldt County had control. Humboldt County HR estimates that the hiring process would take about twenty-nine days as opposed to the average of eighty-three days taken by CalHR. See Appendix D for this timeline and a link to other ALMS information.

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<sup>1</sup> Merit System Services: <https://www.calhr.ca.gov/pmd>

<sup>2</sup> Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury 2022-2023 report:

<https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/117302/Humboldt-County-Child-Welfare-Services-and-the-Courts-Late-Reports-Dysfunctional-Systems-and-Traumatized-Children> , Findings 7-8, Recommendations 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> Approved Local Merit Systems: <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/122789/Humboldt-County-Child-Welfare-Services-and-the-Courts---Board-of-Supervisors-Response> , Pages 4-5, 10-12.

## **Sheriff's Office**

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) is one of the three largest departments in the county. The HCSO employs sworn law enforcement officers and non-sworn civilian employees. The hiring process takes longer for sworn officers due to lengthy background checks. The HCSO is not at full staff due to a variety of reasons:

- Better signing bonus structures lure away qualified personnel to other counties and cities.
- Total compensation such as health insurance and longevity bonuses are not competitive.
- The overall length of the hiring process can be up to six months.
- There are insufficient budgetary allocations for positions.

Similar to other departments, HCSO job announcements are posted by Human Resources (HR). HR screens the applications for minimum qualifications and provides an eligibility list to HCSO. What sets HCSO apart are the next steps: a written examination, an oral interview, physical testing, and a lengthy background check. The HCSO has shortened the hiring process by conducting written and oral exams on the same or next day; previously they waited to get the results for the written examination before scheduling the oral interview. Combining these two steps has reduced a two-to-four-week process to a one-to-two-week process.

Applicants for sworn positions go through additional steps. Deputies for example are required to undergo a second physical examination, a psychological evaluation, and a "lie detector" test. Due to a lack of resources within the county, a candidate may have to travel for this screening or wait until there are enough applicants for the designated test proctor to come into the area. Each one of these screenings can take weeks or months to complete.

After all these screenings, if the applicant is already employed elsewhere as a law enforcement officer, the length of the background check can be reduced. If they are not already law enforcement officers, then they must attend a six-month training academy, and receive a Basic Certificate from the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. Once in service the applicant is a trainee, subject to supervision by a field training officer, for at least sixteen weeks.

Including field training and basic academy training it can take up to sixteen months to get a Deputy on the street, with the cost being in excess of \$100,000. That time and money can end up being lost in two situations. First, if the applicant fails any of the screenings or fails to pass their academy training, they are eliminated from contention. Second, if an applicant successfully becomes a Deputy, they may then be lured to join another law enforcement agency, causing the HCSO to start over.

## **Public Works**

The hiring times in the Department of Public Works (PW) are shorter than most other departments. This is the result of work done by PW before sending a recruitment requisition to Humboldt County Human Resources. Critical hiring benchmarks are provided along with the requisition. PW identifies who will serve as subject matter experts for interviews and who will administer any necessary examinations. This advance work can shorten the hiring process to forty-five days instead of the typical sixty days.

One way to counter the lure of higher compensation by the California Department of Transportation and others is to offer more variety in job duties at Public Works. The variety of job duties along with cross-training in Public Works improves skill levels and can possibly provide opportunities for advancement, which in turn could improve the rate of retention.

Reportedly, changes in the marijuana industry have resulted in more applicants for Public Works, especially for road crew positions. Heavy equipment operators are currently being trained in-house, saving approximately \$4,000 per trainee compared to what it costs to have the operators travel to Redding for training. Another compensation strategy for better hiring and retention is to start someone at a higher step than entry level, as long as their qualifications warrant it.

Two positions in Public Works require more time to hire. Road maintenance workers are required to complete a physical examination. Facilities maintenance staff that work in correctional facilities are also required to pass a criminal background check.

## **Human Resources Role in the Hiring Process**

Understaffing has been a concern for many departments in recent Grand Jury investigations. Ironically, the Humboldt County Human Resources (HR) department itself is not fully staffed. As of April 2024, two of the eighteen positions were vacant. In the past, Humboldt County HR had an Assistant Director, which would be a 19th position in the department, but that job is currently unfunded. Three positions are funded by a COVID-19 era federal grant that will expire in the summer of 2024.<sup>4</sup> If the county does not allocate funds to continue paying for these grant positions, the staffing level in Humboldt County HR will drop to fifteen.

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<sup>4</sup> American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA)

Human resource and employment organizations analyze averages and suggest optimal sizes for HR departments. We learned from Humboldt County HR that the Society for Human Resource Management recommends that, on average, there be one HR staff for every 100 employees in the organization that they serve, while Bloomberg recommends 1.5 HR staff per 100 employees served. Size matters: large organizations can be effective with a smaller ratio. For an organization with over 500 employees, Indeed.com suggests a ratio of just slightly more than one HR staff per 100 employees.<sup>5</sup> Using this measure, Humboldt County's 2,400 employees would warrant an HR department of twenty-five staff. Humboldt County HR's current staffing level of eighteen falls below this target and will come up even shorter if they lose the three positions funded by the federal grant.

Humboldt County HR understandably plays a key role in hiring for the county. The departments that do their own hiring of staff play a bigger role, and good coordination with Humboldt County HR helps to reduce the amount of time for the hiring process. Humboldt County HR provides hiring departments with a document detailing the multiple steps that a department needs to follow to do a recruitment, but Humboldt County HR does not have a comprehensive policies and procedures manual for its own staff or other departments to follow. During interviews the HCCGJ learned that certain hiring departments are able to complete the hiring steps relatively quickly, but there does not appear to be any documentation of the best practices of the faster departments that could be shared with all hiring departments.

Evaluation of the performance of Humboldt County HR is not straightforward. Other counties had data systems that allowed them to readily respond to the HCCGJ request for employee retention and other hiring-related statistics. Humboldt County HR struggled to calculate some of these measures. Through interviews, the HCCGJ learned that Humboldt County HR does not routinely produce evaluation metrics on county-wide hiring results. They also do not have metrics to evaluate internal HR performance such as timeliness in completing individual hiring steps. The HCCGJ learned that formal performance evaluations are not conducted annually for some staff in Humboldt County HR.

## **Obstacles to Hiring**

The largest factor in successful recruitment is simply how long it takes for the hiring process to play out. The longer the process takes, the more likely it is that applicants will drop out to seek employment elsewhere, especially if they are currently unemployed. Humboldt County's sixty-day performance is not the worst of the counties examined but it is close, and it certainly could be improved.

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed.com data: The normal ratio for large for large organizations is 1.03 HR staff per 100 employees served. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/hr-to-employee-ratio>

Humboldt County HR told us that the hiring timeline can be shortened from sixty days to as little as thirty to forty-five days with adequate planning from Humboldt County HR and the involved department. If all the steps in the hiring process, such as qualifications reviews, examinations, and interviews, could be scheduled in advance of the job announcement, time would be saved. To expedite the process, the hiring agency could identify all the needed experts before they request a recruitment and include the exam and/or oral interview schedule on the job announcement.

Adequate compensation is a factor in attracting applicants and can be an even bigger factor in retaining employees. Total compensation, however, plays a critical role. Beyond salary, if the cost to the employee for benefits such as health insurance is relatively high compared to other agencies, an employee may seek employment elsewhere. The recent increase in minimum wage for fast food workers may affect the hiring and retention of county workers at the lower end of the pay scale. When salary and benefits considerations cause an employee to leave their job, or when a chosen applicant declines the job offer, the lengthy hiring process has to start again.

Humboldt County HR commissioned a compensation study by an external consultant in 2020. Humboldt's compensation was compared with twelve other California counties. The report concluded that base salaries in Humboldt were on average almost seven percent below the market median. When salaries and benefits are combined, Humboldt County's total compensation was almost nineteen percent below the comparable market.<sup>6</sup>

Humboldt County HR used data from the study in the last round of labor negotiations. The actual salary data from the 2020 study is now too old to use, but Humboldt County HR in some cases still uses the study's strategies for determining compensation for specific classifications. This is primarily done to adjust the alignment of compensation for multi-level positions, such as Librarian I and Librarian II.

Social Workers and Eligibility Specialists are two of the positions that have been historically hard to fill, in part due to low compensation (Appendix C). According to Humboldt County HR, recent substantial wage increases for these two positions were based upon a recommendation from a different consultant, Municipal Resource Group.

Insights on retention may be gleaned from exit interviews. There is no policy that requires individual county departments to do exit interviews. Historically these interviews have been done only sporadically. Humboldt County HR started sending exit questionnaires to all separating staff in January 2023. Approximately twenty-five percent of the departees participated voluntarily, resulting in seventy-nine complete responses so far. Statistically significant conclusions can't be made yet, but the commonly cited departure reasons may point to ways to improve retention. Humboldt County HR has produced an Exit Questionnaire Summary report with observations on responses received so far.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Koff & Associates, *Total Compensation Study Final Report, County of Humboldt*, January 6, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Exit Questionnaire: <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/128487/2023-2024-Exit-Questionnaire-Data-Summary>



Notable observations from this report include:

- 59% of the questionnaire respondents said they were not compensated adequately.
- 38% said compensation was a key reason for leaving.
- 19% were not happy with their benefits package. Some elaborated that there were issues finding a medical provider, and/or that the employee cost of medical benefits was too high.
- 36% said they did not receive regular performance evaluations.

One comment from this report is particularly telling:

“While it may not be a driving factor in the decision to separate from employment, improving the county’s benefits package by reducing the cost of premiums, copays, and offering coverage more widely accepted may reduce turnover in some areas.”

Compensation and performance evaluation were not the only topics in the report. The Exit Questionnaire report covered responses in other areas, such as work environment, workload, supervision, work-life balance, and training. Some responses point to issues that may possibly affect retention. However, more data and research would be necessary to determine if those were isolated events, or if there are systematic issues.

## **Conclusion**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury learned during this investigation that understaffing is an issue in most departments. It has been cited in many past HCCGJ reports as well.

Approximately 500 of the 2400 allocated positions for the county are currently vacant. As discovered in our seven-county comparison, Humboldt County’s twenty-one percent vacancy rate was the second highest.

Humboldt County Human Resources (HR) is itself understaffed. An organization the size of the County of Humboldt should have a larger human resources department. Optimally, it would have close to twenty-five staff. Humboldt County HR obviously plays a key role in the hiring process, and they are stretched thin.

Humboldt County HR is missing some tools that could perhaps be developed with more staff. Unlike many other counties reviewed by the HCCGJ, Humboldt County HR does not have a comprehensive policies and procedures manual. Humboldt County HR does not have any standard metrics to either measure county-wide hiring success or to measure internal performance of the hiring steps handled by HR. Like other Humboldt County departments, annual performance evaluations are not done for everyone in Humboldt County HR itself. One new effort by Humboldt County HR has the potential to improve retention: exit questionnaires are now being sent to all departing employees to find out why they left.

The length of the hiring process is a big factor in recruitment success. The longer the process, the more likely an applicant will give up and seek employment elsewhere. Shortening the process is not easy in law enforcement, where positions require numerous tests and background checks. As detailed above, the Sheriff's Office has cut the process by a few weeks by consolidating some steps, but little additional consolidation is expected. The hiring of Merit System Staffing positions, such as Social Workers, will continue to be very slow until Humboldt County HR wrests control of the process away from CalHR. For other positions, hiring times could be shortened if the practices of departments like Public Works could be replicated in other departments. When hiring departments proactively arrange for all the necessary resources prior to posting the job announcement, hiring times can be cut from sixty days to as little as thirty-to-forty-five days.

One path to doing less hiring is to keep staff from leaving. Humboldt's retention rates are on a par with other counties reviewed by the HCCGJ, but any improvement would be helpful. Low compensation was often cited by departing employees in the exit questionnaire. A four-year-old study showed that Humboldt County paid below market rate compared to other counties, especially when benefits are factored in. These disparities were addressed with salary adjustments, but without further data we cannot know if all disparities were eliminated. Humboldt County's current budget situation makes it difficult to address compensation shortfalls, even though the frequent hiring cycle alternative is costly. Staffing shortages affect productivity, and the cycle to hire-train-quit-hire occurs all too often.

## **FINDINGS**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury finds that:

**F1:** Humboldt County Human Resources is now sending exit questionnaires to all departing County employees. Analysis of these responses may allow Humboldt County Human Resources to determine strategies to improve recruitment and retention.

**F2:** The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office has longer hiring times than other county positions due to necessary written and oral testing, and required background checks. However, overlapping testing and interviews have allowed them to shorten the hiring process by weeks. This shortened hiring time increases the likelihood of successful recruitment.

**F3:** Many departments continue to be short-staffed, including Humboldt County Human Resources itself. Productivity decreases when staffing is inadequate, and the workload for individual staff increases, affecting employee retention. **(R1, R2, R3)**

**F4:** The average length of time from announcement to hire is on a par with other counties, but the process still takes months. This long time reduces the qualified pool of applicants and potentially forces the hiring department to start over. **(R4)**

**F5:** Hiring times are longer for departments that do not work efficiently or proactively with Humboldt County Human Resources during the hiring steps to provide subject matter experts and oral examiners. Longer hiring times make it more likely that applicants will give up, endangering the success of finding and hiring qualified employees. **(R4)**

**F6:** The California Department of Human Resources controls the hiring of Merit System Staffing positions. Until Humboldt County Human Resources has control, the lengthy hiring process will continue to delay filling positions and may cause applicants to withdraw, making the recruitment less successful. **(R6)**

**F7:** As of a 2020 survey, county pay levels are low relative to similar counties. This hinders both recruitment and retention across many departments. **(R7)**

**F8:** As of a 2020 survey, the cost of medical benefits to employees is high relative to similar counties. This high cost hinders both recruitment and retention across many departments. **(R7)**

**F9:** Humboldt County Human Resources has fewer strategies to improve recruitment and retention compared to some other counties. Having fewer strategies could hinder both recruitment and retention. **(R5)**

**F10:** Unlike many other counties, Humboldt County Human Resources does not have a single comprehensive policies and procedures manual for hiring. This lack of direction could lead to misunderstanding and ignorance of hiring procedures. **(R8)**

**F11:** Humboldt County Human Resources does not have or use a standard set of metrics for the completion of hiring steps, hiring timeframe, recruitment success, or retention. Without these metrics, it is hard to evaluate hiring performance for county employment. **(R9)**

**F12:** Performance evaluations of Human Resources staff are not always conducted annually. This results in performance and accountability being difficult to assess. **(R10)**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

**R1:** Current Humboldt County Human Resources vacancies be filled by no later than June 30, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #10. **(F3)**

**R2:** The Humboldt County Human Resources Assistant Director position be funded and filled by no later than June 30, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #10. **(F3)**

**R3:** The three positions in Humboldt County Human Resources that were funded by expired federal grants be funded and filled by no later than June 30, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #10. **(F3)**

**R4:** Humboldt County Human Resources develop a ‘best practices’ guide and training program for all hiring departments to use to speed up the hiring steps, to be completed by no later than June 30, 2025. **(F4, F5)**

**R5:** Humboldt County Human Resources implement additional hiring and retention strategies by no later than July 1, 2025. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #10. **(F9)**

**R6:** Humboldt County Human Resources continue the conversion process of becoming an Approved Local Merit System county, to be completed by no later than March 31, 2025. **(F6)**

**R7:** The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adjust compensation levels to be competitive with other counties, to be done when the county budget situation improves. For funding recommendations see the wording below Recommendation #10. **(F7, F8)**

**R8:** Humboldt County Human Resources develop a single comprehensive internal hiring policies and procedures manual, to be completed by no later than March 31, 2025. **(F10)**

**R9:** Humboldt County Human Resources develop metrics to measure the completion of hiring steps, hiring timeframe, recruitment success, and retention, to be completed by no later than March 31, 2025. **(F11)**

**R10:** Humboldt County Human Resources conduct performance evaluations annually for all Human Resources staff, to be completed by no later than June 30, 2025. **(F12)**

**Funding Recommendation:** The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors fund the expenses listed in **R1, R2, R3, R5, and R7** with existing appropriations in the **current** fiscal year. If current appropriations are not sufficient, the Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors, at its next earliest opportunity, pursue additional funding from an appropriate agency, including state or federal agencies.

## RESPONSES

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, each entity or individual named below must respond to the enumerated Findings and Recommendations within specific statutory guidelines.

Responses to Findings shall be either:

- The respondent agrees with the finding; or
- The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

Responses to Recommendations shall be one of the following:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action; or
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation; or
- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency where applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report; or
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

### REQUIRED RESPONSE – WITHIN 90 DAYS

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors  
(All findings, all recommendations)

### REQUIRED RESPONSE – WITHIN 60 DAYS

The Humboldt County Sheriff  
(F2)

## **Invited Responses**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury also invites the following entities or individuals to respond.

The Department of Humboldt County Human Resources  
**(F1, F3, F4, F5, F6, F9, F10, F11, F12) and (R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7, R8)**

The Department of Health and Human Services  
**(F6) and (R3)**

### **Responses are to be sent to:**

The Honorable Judge Kelly L. Neel  
Humboldt County Superior Court  
825 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Eureka, CA 95501

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury  
825 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Eureka, CA 95501

*Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.*

1 **APPENDIX A**

2  
3  
4 **Hiring questions sent to counties \***

5  
6 **Vacancies**

- 7  
8 1. How many full-time positions are currently allocated in your county?  
9 2. Of those positions, how many are vacant?  
10 3. Of the vacant positions how many are frozen?

11  
12 **Retention**

- 13  
14 4. What is your retention rate for the most recently completed fiscal year?  
15 5. What is your retention rate for the most recent three fiscal years available?  
16 6. What procedures do you have in place to improve your retention rates?

17  
18 **Hiring**

- 19  
20 7. What is your average time to hire from receipt of application to final hire?  
21 8. Are there specific occupation which are consistently difficult to fill, e.g. constant  
22 openings and/or a shortage of qualified applicants? If so, what are they?  
23 9. What hiring incentive program(s), if any do you have?  
24 10. Do you maintain a hiring process policy and procedures manual? If so, may we have a  
25 copy of it?

26  
27 \* Questionnaires were sent to ten counties:

28 El Dorado, Kings, Humboldt, Madera, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Shasta, Sutter, and Yuba.

29  
30 Responses were received from all except:

31 Kings, Madera, and Shasta.

## APPENDIX B

### Questionnaire Responses

Question	Humboldt	Mendocino	El Dorado	Nevada	Napa	Sutter	Yuba
1 # Employees	2442	1516	2012	874	1623	1097	964
2 # Vacant	518	403	245	56	181	165	122
% Vacant	21%	27%	12%	6%	11%	15%	12%
3 # Frozen	0	154	0	0	0	no records	11
Retention year							
4 2022-23	84%	81%	84%	87%	92%	79%	99%
5 2021-22	91%	82%	83%		89%	70%	98%
2020-21	87%	85%	86%		89%	75%	
2019-20		83%	89%		92%	71%	
6 Retention improvement?	longevity pay, limited tuition reimbursement	none	competitive salary, mgmt. training, training and development for staff	tuition reimbursement, longevity pay, volunteer opportunities	flexible schedules, telework, retention bonuses	flexible schedules, longevity pay, student loan repayment, Sutter wellness program	none
7 Time to hire (days)	60 <sup>1</sup>	45 <sup>2</sup>	60	60	92	30 <sup>3</sup>	50
8 Hard to fill	see app. C	see app. C	see app. C	see app. C	see app. C	see app. C	see app. C
9 Hiring incentives	signing bonus	none	Hiring incentives for hard to fill positions, relocation expense reimbursement	signing bonus for hard to fill jobs, student loan repayment, referral bonus	Hiring incentives & loan forgiveness for hard to fill positions, employee referral bonus	signing bonus for hard to fill jobs	no detail provided
10 Policies and procedures manual?	No	no, uses co. civil service	no, uses co. civil service	yes	yes	yes	yes

Numbers and percentages in this table are rounded

Average time to hire notes

<sup>1</sup> Humboldt: From close of recruitment period to creating an eligible applicant list.

<sup>2</sup> Mendocino: From close of recruitment period to final onboarding.

<sup>3</sup> Sutter: From close of recruitment period to creating an eligible applicant list. Close of recruitment period to final onboarding is 106 days for Sutter



## APPENDIX C

### Hard to fill positions, by county

#### Humboldt County

Social Worker  
Eligibility Specialist  
Correctional Officer  
Juvenile Corrections Officer  
Public Safety Dispatcher

Deputy Sheriff  
Engineer  
Roads Maintenance Worker III  
Attorney  
Human Resources Technician

#### Mendocino County

Animal Protection Officer  
Attorney  
Auditor-Appraiser  
Bookmobile Driver  
Community Health Services Specialist  
Cook  
Corrections Deputy  
Deputy Sheriff Coroner  
Eligibility Worker  
Environmental Health Director

Environmental Health Specialist  
Mental Health Clinician  
Mental Health Rehab Specialist  
Nurses- Including Director of PHN  
Public Safety Dispatcher  
Real property Appraiser  
Road Crew Worker III / IV (due to special licenses)  
Social Worker  
Substance Abuse Counselor

*Mendocino Department Heads difficult to fill (currently vacant)*

Air Pollution Control Officer  
Agriculture Commissioner /Weight Sealer  
Assistant Agriculture Commissioner/ Weight Sealer  
Human Resources Director  
Public Health Director

#### El Dorado County

Public Health Nurse  
Mental Health Clinician  
Correctional Officer

Deputy Sheriff  
Extra Help Snow Removal Worker

**Nevada County**

Correctional Officer  
Deputy Sheriff

Sheriff’s Dispatcher  
Engineer

**Napa County**

Deputy Sheriff  
Correctional Officer  
Probation Officer  
Juvenile Hall Counselor

Mental Health Counselor  
– Licensed Positions  
Planner  
Engineer

**Sutter County**

*Hard to get qualified Applicants AND open for longer periods*

Director of Psych Nursing (1 app in 6 mos.)  
Psych Emergency Sup (2 apps in 3 mos.)  
Psychiatrist (1 app in 9 mos.)  
Nutritionist (1 app in 8 mos.)  
Welfare Investigator (4 apps in 8 mos.)

Mental Health Therapist I/II/III  
Social Worker II/III/IV  
Nurse  
Supervising Staff Dispatcher  
Any Type of Mechanic

*Few Qualified Applications*

Public Health Emergency Response Coordinator (6 apps in 6 weeks)  
Rehabilitation Clinician (1 app in 7 weeks)  
Intervention Counselors SUDS (substance use disorder), registered or certified

*High Turnover*

Public Assistance Specialist  
Correctional Office

Deputy Sheriff

*Hard to get qualified apps open for long periods, high turnover*

Accountant  
District Attorney

Public Safety Dispatcher  
Correctional Sergeant

**Yuba County**

Nursing classifications  
Social Worker  
Correctional Officer  
Juvenile Corrections Officer

Public Safety Dispatcher  
Deputy Sheriff  
Engineer

## APPENDIX D

### Target Response Timeframes

#### CalHR vs. the County of Humboldt's Human Resources (HR) Department

Selection Process Activity	Who	CalHR Target Timeframe	County HR Target Timeframe
Notifying CalHR or County HR of need to recruit, identifying examination type and SMEs	DHHS or NCRDCSS	7 business days <i>before</i> the requisition submitted	Date the requisition is submitted
Contacting SMEs to schedule examination review	CalHR or County HR	5 business days after SMEs identified*	Not Applicable (N/A)
Examination Development	CalHR or County HR	10 business days after identification of exam type	Developed while recruitment is advertising
Examination Finalization	CalHR or County HR	3 business days after meeting with SMEs	Finalized before recruitment advertising period closes
Drafting job bulletin and sending to DHHS or NCRDCSS for review	CalHR or County HR	2 business days after exam has been finalized*	Typically within 10 business days of requisition request
DHHS or NCRDCSS review and approval of job bulletin	DHHS or NCRDCSS	2 business days	Typically within 2 business days
Posting job bulletin	CalHR or County HR	2 business days after receiving county approval of job bulletin*	Typically within 2 business days
Completion of MQ review	CalHR or County HR	5 business days after job closing date	Typically within 5 business days after job closing date
Administration of selection examination	CalHR or County HR, DHHS or NCRDCSS	Up to 4 weeks after job closing	Typically within 5 business days after MQ review completion; may depend on panel availability
Administration of bilingual examination	CalHR or County HR	Up to 4 weeks after administration of exam	N/A
Scoring of examination	CalHR or County HR	5 business days after administration or receipt of examination materials	Typically within 5 business days after administration or receipt of examination materials
Referral of eligible list	CalHR or County HR	2 business days after completion of scoring	Same day as scoring of examination
<b>Total Number of Business Days</b>		<b>83 business days</b>	<b>29 business days</b>

Abbreviations in this table:

- SME: Subject Matter Expert
- MQ: Minimum Qualifications
- DHHS: Department of Health and Human Services
- NCRDCSS: North Coast Regional Department of Child Support Services

This timeline is from the ALMS conversion proposal presented to the Board of Supervisors at their August 23, 2023 meeting. A report and other details of the conversion can be found at:

<https://humboldt.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6321392&GUID=3EE86037-35C0-45F5-9F50-BC4DF07D871A&Options=&Search=>