COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/8/2023

File #: 23-1012

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Human Resources

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:
Adopt the Resolution to Initiate a Conversion Process from an Interagency Merit System (IMS) to an Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) for Merit System Services (MSS)

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the resolution (Attachment #5) to initiate the conversion process for the County of Humboldt from an Interagency Merit System to an Approved Local Merit System for Merit System Services (MSS) positions;
2. Authorize the Director of Human Resources to finalize all documents required by the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) to advance the Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) County Conversion process;
3. Allocate a 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) Human Resources Analyst I/II (BU 130, Job Class #0684A/B) position in the Human Resources department; and
4. Approve the Board Chairperson to sign a letter of concern to the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) regarding Merit System Services (MSS) recruitment process changes that took effect January 1, 2023, and request the Clerk of the Board mail this letter once approved. (Attachment #4)

SOURCE OF FUNDING:
BU 508 - Child Welfare Services; Budget Unit 511 - Social Services; Budget Unit 206 - North Coast Regional Department of Child Support Services

DISCUSSION:
Two county departments have Merit System Services (MSS) positions, the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) - Social Services Branch and the North Coast Regional Department of Child Support Services (NCRDCSS). Historically, counties were able to elect whether they wanted to be an Interagency Merit System (IMS) or an Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) for MSS processes. The County of Humboldt has historically elected to be an IMS agency. As an IMS county, all MSS

recruitments are administered by the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR).

Effective January 1, 2023, CalHR modified their recruitment process for IMS counties to require one competitive examination per recruitment. Prior to this change, CalHR allowed counties the flexibility to waive examinations at the discretion of the hiring authority. Since this change, CalHR now requires the competitive examination to be one of four examination types recognized and administered by their agency: 1. a Qualified Appraisal Panel (QAP) with an MSS chairperson, 2. a written examination developed by CPS HR Consulting, 3. a Training & Experience (T&E) Exam developed by an MSS chairperson, or 4. an Education & Experience (E&E) Exam administered by an MSS chairperson. Prior to this change taking effect, examinations had not been identified nor developed by CalHR for each classification. This has led to a delay in recruitment bulletins being posted by CalHR, as well as examination types changing over the course of a recruitment. For example, CalHR only allows IMS counties to use an E&E examination if 10 or less candidates apply. This means that IMS counties must identify and develop one of the other three examination types in order for the recruitment bulletin to post. However, CalHR has changed examination types during the course of a recruitment without communication to the county or to applicants. This has included previously developed examinations not being used if 10 or less candidates apply. County-administered competitive examinations, such as oral examinations, are not recognized by CalHR as acceptable examination types. DHHS and NCRDCSS have received feedback from candidates sharing that they receive inconsistent or infrequent communication from CalHR about the status of their MSS recruitment applications.

Without advance notice, DHHS became aware that CalHR had revoked the option for Masters in Social Work (MSW) students to apply within six months prior of their graduation date in April 2023. This previous practice allowed MSW candidates to apply for Social Worker IV A-D recruitments and be provisionally placed on the eligible list. The loss of this option has impacted DHHS' ability to recruit Spring 2023 CalSWEC Title IV-E candidates from Cal Poly Humboldt and other participating universities into Social Worker IV A-D positions. On May 1, 2023, the Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury issued a report containing negative findings against the recruitment processes for DHHS Child Welfare Services (CWS) positions, several of which have been attributed to CalHR-initiated changes since January 1, 2023.

Since January 1, 2023, both DHHS and the NCRDCSS have reached out to CalHR's MSS Program Leadership to provide feedback about observed delays to recruitments as a result of January 1, 2023 changes. In response, CalHR has confirmed that these program changes shall remain in effect for MSS recruitments while the County of Humboldt remains an IMS county. CalHR confirmed that other counties have also reached out to them with concerns about the changes enacted since January 1, 2023.

Following discussions with CalHR, DHHS and NCRDCSS approached the county's Human Resources department to share this feedback and inquire about a potential conversion to an ALMS county. If the County of Humboldt elects to convert to an ALMS county, this would allow for all MSS recruitments to be administered by the county's Human Resources department in accordance with the county's Merit System Rules. Conversion to an ALMS County would increase the volume of recruitments that the county's Human Resources department administers. The county Human Resources department ran approximately 326 recruitments in 2021 and approximately 313 recruitments in 2022.These

recruitment functions are typically performed by Human Resources Analysts and include developing recruitment bulletins, screening applications for minimum qualifications, certifying examination results, and placing qualifying candidates on eligible lists. DHHS and the NCRDCSS ran a combined total of 95 recruitments in 2022, which was preceded by 80 recruitments in 2021. Between January 1st and June 30th of 2023, DHHS has requested 43 recruitments and NCRDCSS has requested 5 recruitments. These recruitments are in various stages in the recruitment process. DHHS recruitments make up approximately 90% of the county's MSS recruitments. As a result, DHHS and NCRDCSS are proposing to fund a 1.0 FTE Human Resources Analyst I/II to absorb this additional workload in the county's Human Resources department. This proposed position would be 90% funded by DHHS and 10% funded by the NCRDCSS, with no impact to the county General Fund. The anticipated benefits of converting to an ALMS County include:

- Streamline the recruitment process for all county recruitments, mirroring MSS recruitments to the current process for non-MSS recruitments.
- Streamline job specifications for all county positions, identifying comparable job specifications across MSS and non-MSS classifications that are comparable (I.e. Administrative Analyst I/II vs. Staff Services Analyst I/II).
- Increased communication to applicants throughout the recruitment & selection process.
- Reduced recruitment timeframes by using county examination types in lieu of MSS-administered examinations (i.e. written examination, oral examination).

If the Board of Supervisors adopts the resolution to initiate the conversion process to become an ALMS County, this process is estimated to take approximately four months:

1. The county would submit the signed Board resolution to CalHR MSS Program Leadership for review per CalHR's policy titled County Conversion Process From Interagency Merit System to Approved Local Merit System (Attachment #2).
2. CalHR would send the County a formal acknowledgment of receipt to initiate the ALMS County Conversion Process.
3. The county would have 60 days from the date of the formal acknowledgement to submit all documentation requested in the CalHR Material Request Form (MRF) Local Agency Personnel System Review (Attachment #2) to CalHR for review.
4. Upon receipt of all requested documentation, CalHR would have 60 days to review and provide their report of findings with a determination.

If the conversion request is initially denied by CalHR, the county will be provided with detailed reasoning for the denial and have the option to provide supplemental documentation or to re-apply at any time. If the conversion request is approved by CalHR, the county's Director of Human Resources would be authorized under the resolution (Attachment #5) to finalize all documents to complete the county's conversion to an ALMS County. Following conversion to an ALMS County, CalHR has advised that they would conduct an audit of county processes for MSS positions every four years.

As an additional measure, the county's Human Resources department, DHHS, and NCRDCSS are recommending that the Board Chairperson sign the Letter of Concern addressed to Eraina Ortega, the Director of CalHR (Attachment #4). This letter of concern requests that CalHR retract all recruitment

changes implemented on or since January 1, 2023, as these have had significant impacts to MSS recruitments for the County of Humboldt. DHHS currently has 43 vacancies for Social Worker positions in BU 508 and 8 vacancies for Social Worker positions in BU 511. NCRDCSS currently has 5 vacancies that the department is actively recruiting for. The CalHR recruitment changes implemented since January 1, 2023, have led to vacancies being open for longer periods of time. This has impacted both departments significantly, as the inability to fill recruitments timely and effectively has resulted in vacancies remaining unfilled for extended periods of time and an increased need for longer out of class assignments. Staff morale has also been negatively impacted due to the need for existing staff to cover additional duties to maintain community service levels.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenditures (1100, 130)	**FY23-24 Actual**	**FY24-25 Projected**	**FY25-26 Projected**
Additional Appropriation Requested	$122,035	$132,450	$143,659
Total Expenditures	**$122,035**	**$132,450**	**$143,659**
Funding Sources (1100, 130)	**FY23-24 Actual**	**FY24-25 Projected***	**FY24-25 Projected***
State/Federal Funds	$122,035	$132,450	$143,659
Total Funding Sources	**$122,035**	**$132,450**	**$143,659**

**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:
The addition of 1.0 FTE Human Resources Analyst is anticipated to cost $122,035 in fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 for salaries and benefits. As the additional position is needed to fulfill the hiring needs of DHHS and Child Support Services the position will be funded in part by both departments. DHHS has agreed to support 90% of the position to be split between Child Welfare Services and Social Services. The anticipated annual portion of the position for DHHS is $109,832. Expenses related to this position were not included in the FY 2023-24 budget, however there will be sufficient salary savings due to vacancies that can support this additional expense in fund 1160, budget unit 508 Child Welfare Services (CWS) and budget unit 511 Social Services. CWS is a realigned program and is supported primarily through realignment and federal funds. Social Services has three main allocations that support enrollment into benefited services such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh and CalWORKs which are funded through state, federal funds, and local realignment.

NCRDCSS has agreed to fund 10% of this position. The cost to NCRDCSS for Fiscal Year 23-24 would be $12,203. There are sufficient funds budgeted for this request. Child Support is funded with State and Federal funds. Following the initial allocation of this position, NCRDCSS may be eligible to seek funding for this portion of the allocation from the State Department of Child Support Services.

If this is approved and the position is funded, these costs will be included in future annual budget cycles.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Position Title	Position Control Number	Monthly Salary Range (1A-E Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Human Resources Analyst I/II	(130-0684A/B-04)	Step 1A-E	1.0	0.0

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:
If the County of Humboldt converts to an ALMS county, this is anticipated to increase the volume of recruitments administered by the Human Resources department by approximately 100 recruitments per year. Additionally, it is anticipated that Human Resources may have an increase in MSS position classification reviews in order to streamline job titles and duties across MSS and non -MSS classifications. DHHS and NCRDCSS are proposing to fund a 1.0 Human Resources Analyst I/II in Human Resources to address this increase in recruitments and classification reviews. Currently, DHHS and NCRDCSS have had an increased need for their staff to cover the duties of vacant positions as a result of recruitment delays and barriers. Converting to an ALMS county would allow DHHS and NCRDCSS to fill vacant positions more effectively, which would help alleviate this issue.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:
This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework priority of providing community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) Merit System Services (MSS) Program
California Department of Child Support Services

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:
Your Board could choose not to initiate the conversion process to become an ALMS County. This is not recommended, as DHHS and NCRDCSS are continuing to observe recruitment delays for MSS recruitments. Remaining an IMS County could hinder the ability of both departments to effectively recruit qualified candidates for their MSS positions. For DHHS, this could impact the Department's ability to comply with May 1, 2023 Grand Jury recommendations and continued recruitment delays may impact service levels to the community.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. CalHR MSS County Conversion Process from Interagency Merit System to Approved Local Merit System
2. CalHR Material Request Form (MRF) Local Agency Personnel System Review
3. Overview of CalHR Recruitment Timeframes
4. BOS Letter of Concern to Director of CalHR
5. Resolution

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:
Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A
File No.: N/A

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