

Department of Human Resources

2021 Budget Statement

OPENING

Good afternoon, Chairman Dowell, and esteemed members of the City Council, and thank you for the opportunity to present the proposed Department of Human Resources (“DHR”) budget for 2021.

DHR provides human resources services to job applicants and City employees, as well as works with City departments, boards, and commissions to attract and retain quality personnel. In addition to managing a fair and equitable hiring process, we are responsible for all human resources functions within the City, such as: human resources records management and retention, classification and compensation, training, testing, and writing and enforcing City policies, including the City’s Equal Employment Opportunity, Reasonable Accommodation, and Violence in the Workplace policies. It is our mission to administer cost-effective HR services, foster a professional, inclusive, and thriving workforce, and provide equal employment opportunities for all the residents of Chicago.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This year, as it was for all departments, was significantly shaped by the pandemic. In conjunction with the Workforce Committee, DHR quickly developed new policies and adjusted operations to meet new and changing needs. We issued the City’s first ever telework policy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy provided criteria for department heads to consider when evaluating what positions were able to telework. Additionally, we issued a Sick Leave Policy Addendum that provided for paid benefit time to employees who either contracted COVID-19 or were required to quarantine due to exposure to someone who had COVID-19.

Our Training and Development team helped City employees stay informed about Coronavirus resources by partnering with CDPH and DAIS to create and post a *Guide to Social Distancing and Other COVID-19 Best Practices* on Chicago eLearning.

Due to COVID-19 and the shelter in place order, our Testing Division quickly developed a new remote testing process for mission-critical positions, including OEMC’s Police Communications Operators. This new testing process was designed to enhance candidate safety and maximize test validity. As a result, we were able to hire 80 call operators for OEMC.

We also began converting more of our tests from paper-based testing to computer-based testing in order to continue hiring during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative has also provided some modest savings related to printing testing materials.

DHR partnered with LinkedIn on their Recruiting For Good: COVID-19 Response Follow-up. This program, which is provided Pro Bono by LinkedIn, focused on recruiting candidates for positions related to the City’s COVID-19 response. The positions included a Chief Medical Director, a Director of Disease Investigations, and a Chief Racial Equity Officer/Deputy Commissioner for CDPH. We also participated in an on-line recruiting event with the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (“HACE”) in August that had 740 participants. In October, we also participated in their University Leadership Network event to give a presentation on internship opportunities and our application process. We are scheduled to have a follow-up event with HACE on November 5th.

In addition, our EEO Division began a project in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice to explore the creation of Employee Resource Groups ("ERGs"), allowing employees who share a common interest or diversity characteristic to discuss common concerns. Diversity characteristics that may form the basis for an ERG include categories such as: gender, sexual orientation, veteran status, race or ethnicity, and allies of such groups could also participate. As an initial step, DHR completed a draft of an Employee Resource Group policy, setting forth basic parameters.

GOALS

We are currently working with the Office of Inspector General on making revisions to the City's Hiring Plans. The planned revisions will provide for a promotional process for current City employees, provide for more flexibility for internships and job training programs, and expand our ability to interview and make contingent offers to candidates at career fairs and other recruiting events.

We have contracted with a vendor to conduct a job analysis and identify a test for the next Firefighter/EMT entry exam which we anticipate will take place in the third quarter of 2021. We are searching for an exam that can be administered both through traditional written means and electronically. We are also planning to transition the FF/EMT exam to a model that is similar to what we are doing for the Police Officer entry exam where we test fewer candidates at a time but test more frequently. We would administer an exam in the third quarter of 2021 and then up to two additional exams in 2022. We will also be bringing on a vendor to do a minority recruitment campaign for these exams using the Department of Procurement Services target market process.

Our Disability Officer will be working with stakeholders in the Department of Finance and the Mayor's Office on developing clear and consistent procedures to enable employees who were injured on duty to return to work in a temporary limited duty capacity or with reasonable accommodations whenever possible.

The Training and Development Division will continue with the development of online training programs, including a training program on the City's Drug and Alcohol policy. We are also working on creating a new program for New Employee Orientation, which will include information on Citywide procedures and department-specific resources.

Finally, our Information Services Division is working with the Department of Assets, Information, and Services on creating an electronic signature process that we can incorporate into our hiring processes. This will help to both reduce paperwork and time to fill by eliminating the need to sign paper forms and helping to manage the signature process.

IN CLOSING

Thank you, Chairman Dowell and City Council, for your support of DHR. It has been an honor to work with you in our joint quest to improve human resources services to the City, and I look forward to our work ahead.

I also want to both acknowledge and thank my staff who have all risen to the challenges that were presented this year. We all worked very closely together to keep our operations moving so that we were able to continue supporting our departments during the pandemic. It is a privilege to work with them all.