

City Auditor's Highlights

Audit of Select Management Issues Impacting the City's Ability to Effectively Hire and Sustain Its Workforce
Report No. 23-02



This audit was conducted pursuant to 22-43, CD1, which was adopted by the Honolulu City Council on July 6, 2022. In adopting this resolution, the Honolulu City Council expressed concern about the 2,000+ vacancies that existed in the city and the need to fill them. Additionally, many of these vacancies have remained vacant for long periods of time, and the council received complaints from city residents about slow service from government agencies as a consequence of staff reductions and unfilled vacancies. Prior to the resolution's adoption, Honolulu was one of a select group of cities to participate in the 2021 Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. The fellow assigned to Honolulu reviewed the city's long standing challenges in staffing its workforce, and the resulting report offered recommendations for improving the city's hiring and selection processes. In our assessment, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) has made progress in key areas identified by the report. However, we also identified other areas for improvement.



Unreliable data hindered our analysis

The Department struggles with maintaining comprehensive, good quality data about personnel and vacancies. Prior to conducting analysis, auditing standards required that we test the reliability of the data. We tested data on a sample of 24 forms used by DHR to collect and report on employee status, including vacancies. We found that the DHR data was unreliable because it was often inconsistent, incomplete, or incorrect. This prevented us from performing a comprehensive analysis of the city's estimated 2,458 vacancies.

DHR and city agencies did not meet four hiring and selection performance benchmarks, but improvements were made

Following the Bloomberg Harvard report, the mayor established four new performance benchmarks for the city's hiring and selection processes. For example, based on the report findings, the mayor established a benchmark for DHR and requesting agencies to fill a vacancy within 90 days; DHR reported that the average days to fill vacancies was 139 days. While this fell short of the benchmark, it was a 23 percent improvement over the 181-day average it previously took the city to fill a vacancy. DHR and city agencies did not meet three other benchmarks, but also made improvements. Furthermore, DHR continues to re-engineer the selection and hiring processes.

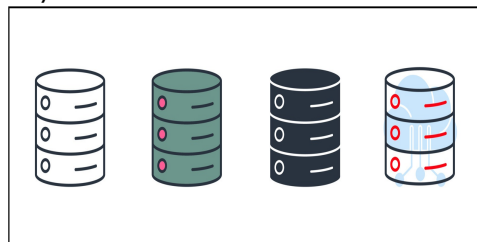


Other issues impacting DHR's ability to efficiently manage the city's workforce:

Bargaining Unit Agreements involving the civil service impact the city's ability to set salaries to attract qualified candidates.



The Department uses four separate, unlinked databases in its duties, making it cumbersome to hire and maintain the city's workforce.



DHR lacks a formal process for the abolishment of positions, which may skew actual vacancy counts.



We made 10 recommendations to improve DHR's ability to effectively hire and sustain its workforce. The department expressed general agreement with the report's findings and recommendations.



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