



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

October 14, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: David White, Deputy City Manager

Subject: Staff Shortages: City Services Constrained by Staff Retention Challenges and Delayed Hiring Audit Status Report

INTRODUCTION

On July 11, 2023, the City Auditor submitted a *Staff Shortages: City Services Constrained by Staff Retention Challenges and Delayed Hiring* audit report¹ to the City Council with recommendations that the City establish retention goals, conduct an analysis of staff needed for city services and consider staff capacity around new legislation. It was also recommended that the City take steps to address employee satisfaction and improve the recruiting and hiring process. Further, the audit recommended that the City expand the telework policy to align with best practices and regularly collect data on employee satisfaction and on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

The purpose of this information item is to update City Council on the status of implementation of the audit report's recommendations. This is the third status report regarding this audit.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The audit included 25 recommendations. As of the writing of this report, one (1) of those recommendations have not been started, four (4) have been started, five (5) have been partially implemented and fifteen (15) have been implemented. Despite changes in staffing and leadership, the City has maintained progress on implementation and demonstrated commitment to addressing audit findings. However, due to the City's ongoing deficits and fiscal constraints, continued progress on implementing some of the recommendations will be hampered.

Human Resources continues to prioritize training, recruitment, and retention as part of the City's Employer of Choice initiative. Efforts include expanded outreach strategies, strengthened candidate pipelines, and a focus on employee development and career

¹ [Staff Shortages: City Services Constrained by Staff Retention Challenges and Delayed Hiring](https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Staff%20Shortages%20--%20City%20Services%20Constrained%20by%20Staff%20Retention%20Challenges%20and%20Delayed%20Hiring_0.pdf) (https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Staff%20Shortages%20--%20City%20Services%20Constrained%20by%20Staff%20Retention%20Challenges%20and%20Delayed%20Hiring_0.pdf)

advancement. Dashboards are leveraged to track vacancies, hiring timelines, and training completion data, providing visibility into workforce trends and allowing departments to target resources where they are most needed. These tools, paired with enhanced recruitment campaigns and consistent onboarding improvements, support the City's commitment to maintaining a skilled and engaged workforce despite fiscal and staffing challenges.

In addition, the City Manager's Office has expanded communication efforts through new platforms, regular engagement opportunities, and leadership convenings. These initiatives are being integrated into ongoing plans to strengthen transparency, employee engagement, and organizational culture.

Please see Attachment 1 for a detailed table of audit report recommendations, corrective action plans, and implementation progress. The next status report to Council is expected to be presented in Fall 2026.

BACKGROUND

The findings of the audit and implementing its recommendations have been valuable in strengthening the workforce and organization. While many of the recommendations require notable time and resources, progress continues to be made. However, as noted above, given the City's fiscal constraints, it may take more time to fully implement certain recommendations, and it may be the case that certain initiatives may be put on hold. With that being said, focus remains on enhancing employee satisfaction, retaining valuable staff members, and refining our hiring processes. A dedicated and motivated workforce is crucial to the successful functioning of the organization and the delivery of quality services to the Berkeley community.

The organization continues to focus on being an employer of choice, providing an environment that fosters growth, recognition, and professional development for employees. By creating a workplace that promotes job satisfaction and overall well-being, the organization can better prevent the challenges of the staffing crisis.

Staff will continue to keep the City Council informed of progress, sharing updates on the implementation of initiatives, and improvements made in staffing strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable environmental effects, climate impacts, or sustainability opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None at this time.

CONTACT PERSON

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Staffing Shortages: Audit Status Report

Attachments:

1. Audit Findings, Recommendations, and Status Updates

Audit Title: Staff Shortages: City Services Constrained by Staff Retention Challenges and Delayed Hiring				
Issue Date: June 22, 2023				
Finding	Recommendation	Department	Previous status update	Current status update
Staff shortages constrained city services.	1.1 Establish citywide retention goals and report to City Council on progress towards those goals biennially.	City Manager	Partly Implemented	<u>Partly Implemented:</u> Human Resources presents on the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing before City Council once per fiscal year, most recently on June 3, 2025. The City has not established specific targets yet for retention goals, given the City's hiring freeze and budget challenges.
Staff shortages constrained city services.	1.2 Conduct a staffing analysis based on critical needs to identify the number and type of full-time equivalent positions needed for successful city operations and services. The City may consider conducting this analysis one department at a time based on available resources.	City Manager	Started	<u>Partly Implemented:</u> Various departments and divisions have performed staffing analyses to inform operations. For example, in 2024, the Police Department completed a Workload Organizational Study, the Fire Department completed a Standards of Coverage Study and Community Risk Assessment, and the Neighborhood Services Division in the City Manager's Office completed an organizational analysis. Additional staffing analyses will be performed over time as resources allow.

<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.1</p>	<p>Review the highest priority city job descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect job duties.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources identified the highest priority job descriptions for revisions and continues to revise job classification specifications and salaries in order to meet the City's priority hiring needs on an ongoing basis. Recent examples include the modification of the Public Safety Dispatcher I and II specifications to create a career track for call takers.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.2</p>	<p>Consider staff capacity when introducing new legislation, and limit or prioritize new legislation during periods of short staffing.</p>	<p>Mayor and Council</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p><u>Started:</u> Staff communicate staff capacity to implement new legislation in Council reports. Additionally, the Agenda & Rules Policy Committee has been discussing "City Council Legislative Systems Redesign, Including Strengthening the Committee System to Provide More In-Depth Review and Vetting of Major Items," which City Council will review in the coming months.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.3</p>	<p>Report on the status of approved projects to City Council, including information about delays caused by staff vacancies.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> City departments provide updates to Council on the status of approved projects and the impacts of staff vacancies through information reports, presentations, off-agenda memos, and updates posted to the City's website.</p>

<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.4</p>	<p>Improve pathways for promotion in the City through a citywide succession plan, which may include cross-training for positions.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Partly Implemented:</u> Human Resources implemented NEOGOV Learn in January 2025, and the City launched its bi-annual mandatory training to all staff members via the online platform. In addition, NEOGOV Learn offers a course catalog of professional development and technical courses from which supervisors can customize individual learning plans. At this time, broader succession planning is not feasible due to budget and staff limitations.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.5</p>	<p>Direct departments to ensure that all employees receive an annual performance evaluation.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p><u>Started:</u> Human Resources is considering using Tyler / ERMA to track performance evaluations, as the Department would like to consolidate this work into one system, however, a timeline to implement this technology enhancement has not been determined.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.6</p>	<p>Implement a comprehensive training program that ensures staff at all levels receive the training they need to fulfill their job duties and develop their job skills as needed. Consider increasing the training budget and redesigning the training curriculum to best address the needs of a post-pandemic workforce, improving training for supervisors and managers, ensuring that experts conduct trainings, and allowing employees to request specific trainings.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources launched NEOGOV Learn as a training portal for all employees. As part of its NEOGOV launch, Human Resources piloted the City's Supervisor Learning Plan, a hybrid learning experience that combines self-paced online learning and engaging classroom discussions. Designed with a competency-based approach, the program focuses on the essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed for effective front-line leadership in the City of Berkeley.</p>

<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.7</p>	<p>Ensure that all city employees complete mandatory trainings in accordance with the state law. Report data on mandated trainings to Council annually.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> City Council receives weekly updates from Human Resources, which have included updates regarding the launch of NEOGOV Learn in January 2025, and the percentage of bi-annual mandatory trainings completed by city staff.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.8</p>	<p>Update City Council on the recruitment status of hard-to-fill positions during the biennial budget process, as well as steps taken to fill these positions.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> The reporting of hard-to-fill positions has been rolled into the annual public hearing mandated under AB 2561, in which Human Resources presents on the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing before City Council once per fiscal year, most recently on June 3, 2025.</p>
<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.9</p>	<p>Identify positions that are hard-to-recruit and retain and consider reassessing pay for those positions.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources has identified hard-to-recruit and retain positions based on vacancies and reporting data. As consideration for reassessing pay for those positions the Human Resources department is in the process of completing classification and compensation studies for hard-to-fill and other agreed-upon classifications, which were agreed to during labor negotiations.</p>

<p>Some current city employees reported dissatisfaction and many have contemplated leaving.</p>	<p>2.10</p>	<p>Assess employees' needs regarding communication from the City Manager's Office and design a communication strategy that addresses those needs.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> The City Manager's Office continues to incorporate new communication models. Over the past year, the City Manager has 1) conducted two online town halls with more scheduled for the future; 2) instituted the weekly wrap up, a summary of new and exciting work happening across all City departments; 3) conducted one annual managers meeting bringing together 80 of the top leadership team members in the City to discuss how to improve City services and employee engagement; 4) ensured that our open house rotation continues as planned. In alignment with the goals of the Employer of Choice initiative, these efforts are being integrated into annual plans to ensure continuation of effort.</p>
<p>Instability in Human Resources delayed hiring and impacted internal services.</p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>Assess the level of staff and resources needed to meet the City's recruitment and hiring needs. Prioritize filling these positions when vacancies in this area fall below a level that would jeopardize the City's ability to hire quickly.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> This recommendation has been fully implemented with the hiring of three additional employees: one Associate HR Analyst dedicated to recruitment; one Associate HR Analyst assigned to exams; and one Assistant HR Analyst supporting Benefits. HR's recruitment team additionally has standing meetings with departments during which they identify and prioritize hiring needs.</p>

<p>Instability in Human Resources delayed hiring and impacted internal services.</p>	<p>3.2</p>	<p>Assess the approval process for hiring new employees and identify opportunities to reduce inefficiencies.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> This recommendation has been fully implemented with the development of exam plans at the outset of every hiring process. Human Resources (HR) has also changed the order by which hiring approvals are processed in NeoGov, the City's hiring platform. HR has implemented additional steps to reduce inefficiencies including e-offers and e-reference checks through the NeoGov hiring system. HR has also obtained LiveScan certifications for some staff members and will be moving the fingerprinting process in-house as soon as they receive final approval.</p>
<p>Instability in Human Resources delayed hiring and impacted internal services.</p>	<p>3.3</p>	<p>Develop and execute a plan to modernize recruitment and hiring using social media and community engagement.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources has completed the engagement with marketing agency, Sensis, which resulted in the creation of a career website (https://www.berkeley.careers), increased social media presence across different platforms, creative advertisements, algorithm tools for candidate outreach, and direct marketing campaigns. Human Resources will maintain these tools with individual consultants and continue to employ digital recruiting strategies.</p>

<p>Instability in Human Resources delayed hiring and impacted internal services.</p>	<p>3.4</p>	<p>Communicate standard procedures and trainings for NEOGOV and the City’s hiring process to all department heads and hiring managers.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources hosted training sessions with each department’s hiring managers and distributed step-by-step instructions on the hiring process and how to utilize NEOGOV’s Online Hiring Center (OHC).</p>
<p>Instability in Human Resources delayed hiring and impacted internal services.</p>	<p>3.5</p>	<p>Improve the employee onboarding process so employees have the tools and information they need to do their jobs.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> The corrective action has been fully implemented with the automation of Onboarding through NEOGOV and the launch of the new, in-person “Welcome to Berkeley” orientation program.</p>
<p>Telework can benefit the City but the current policy is limited.</p>	<p>4.1</p>	<p>Identify ways of reducing unused space in city buildings to save on overhead costs. This initiative may require additional resources beyond city staff.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Started</p>	<p><u>Started:</u> This work is generally being done at the department level, as resources allow. However, in August 2025, the Public Works Department recently initiated Phase I of the Citywide Facilities Condition Assessment Project. This multiyear effort builds upon the Strategic Assessment Management Plan (SAMP) Roadmap adopted in April 2022, which identified facility condition assessments as a priority. While the assessment is not directly focused on City operations, the data collected will help inform future decisions regarding space utilization. Also, the Fire Department completed a Fire Facilities Master Plan which was presented to Council May 16, 2023 and is working to consolidate operations in its new Fire Headquarters facility, as resources allow.</p>

Telework can benefit the City but the current policy is limited.	4.2	Expand the citywide telework policy to include elements that align with best practices. This can include eligibility, employee accountability, equipment requests, telework training, and justifications for denying employee requests to telework.	City Manager	Started	<u>Partly Implemented:</u> The consulting firm Municipal Resource Group (MRG) prepared a Hybrid Workplace Best Practice Guide as a separate deliverable per the Employer of Choice roadmap contract. These materials were reviewed with the City Manager's Office, and the Human Resources Department subsequently developed an internal best practices guide for its operations.
The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.	5.1	Clean up personnel data in ERMA to ensure all employee data is accurate.	Human Resources	Partly Implemented	<u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources hired a consultant to standardize abbreviations and other information within ERMA, which ensures data integrity and accuracy.
The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.	5.2	Develop standardized procedures for entering and managing personnel data in ERMA.	Human Resources	Partly Implemented	<u>Partly Implemented:</u> Human Resources has begun creating Standardized Operating Procedures (SOPs) for many of its processes for entering and managing personnel data in ERMA, including engaging Tyler Technologies to examine existing processes for efficiency and workflow.
The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.	5.3	Produce reports that can be used to inform retention and hiring efforts, which may include data on vacancies, recruitments, turnover, or other useful data. Human Resources should also report to City Council on staff vacancies by department and how long those positions have been vacant.	Human Resources	Partly Implemented	<u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources has created dashboards in PowerBI which track vacancies, time to hire, and attrition rates on a monthly basis. On an annual basis, under AB 2561, Human Resources presents on the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing before City Council once per fiscal year.

<p>The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.</p>	<p>5.4</p>	<p>Consistently conduct exit surveys or interviews and share results with departments.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p><u>Started:</u> Human Resources is currently utilizing a survey tool for voluntary exit interviews, but will formulate a process by which exit interview results and trends are summarized and shared with departments.</p>
<p>The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.</p>	<p>5.5</p>	<p>Determine the appropriate city department or other body to regularly collect data on employee satisfaction. Data collection should include employees' perceptions about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workplace. The department should consider publishing the data and comparing it to previous years to help inform retention efforts.</p>	<p>Mayor and Council</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p><u>Not Started:</u> This work is currently not in process due to resource and staffing constraints.</p>
<p>The City lacked reliable data to address staff shortages.</p>	<p>5.6</p>	<p>Resume data collection and production of Year End Workforce Reports on demographic workforce trends at least annually. Consider expanding Human Resources' performance measure reported in the budget book to capture diversity at all levels of city employment.</p>	<p>City Manager</p>	<p>Partly Implemented</p>	<p><u>Implemented:</u> Human Resources has created dashboards in PowerBI which tracks demographics in applicant and hiring efforts. Reports are regularly shared with the Personnel Board.</p>