

Date: April 16, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager



From: Joe Ambrosini, Director of Human Resources



For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Implementation of Proposed Charter Amendment Preferences**

The City of Long Beach (City) is confronting a significant organizational hurdle with its outdated recruitment and hiring procedures, adversely affecting its workforce and community. Despite increased funding and persistent efforts to enhance efficiency, progress in expediting the recruitment timeline remains limited. In response, a proposed charter amendment aims to modernize these processes, aligning them more closely with industry standards observed by most other agencies. The proposed charter amendment will be presented at the May 7, 2024, City Council meeting as well as three additional meetings held over the summer before a final decision is made whether to place it on the November ballot. A pivotal aspect of this initiative involves the integration of new preferences to attract top talent swiftly and efficiently. Prioritizing Long Beach residents, local graduates, current City employees, and individuals with relevant internship or apprenticeship experience, these preferences will be deployed primarily using the banding process, ensuring an equitable and effective recruitment framework. This strategic approach will maintain or even enhance the effectiveness of banding in most cases, cultivating a robust and diverse workforce better equipped to meet the evolving needs of the community. There have been some questions on how preferences would be applied in the proposed model, and this memo helps address those questions.

Background

The recruitment process is a pivotal stage for any organization, ensuring the acquisition of qualified individuals to fill vacant positions. It serves as the cornerstone for building a skilled and diverse workforce, essential for the effective functioning and growth of the organization. In Long Beach, a divided hiring system governs approximately 60 percent of its workforce through classified positions, regulated by the Civil Service Rules and Regulations. Classified positions within the City are defined by specific criteria regarding qualifications, duties, and responsibilities, often requiring applicants to undergo a competitive examination process to determine eligibility for employment. The remaining workforce is considered to be unclassified and not governed by Civil Service Rules and Regulations. As the City endeavors to refine its recruitment process to align with industry standards and community needs, it becomes imperative to examine the current procedures. This assessment unveils the following breakdown of the current classified recruitment process:

1. **Completion of Screening Application:** Job applicants fill out the screening application (i.e., job application) for their desired position.

2. **Screening by City Staff:** City staff screen the applicant to determine if they meet the minimum qualifications for the position.
3. **Invitation to Employment Exam Process:** If the applicant meets the minimum qualifications, they are invited to participate in the classified employment exam process.
4. **Placement on Eligibility List:** After successfully passing the classified employment exam process, the applicant is placed on an eligibility list.
5. **Utilization of Veteran's Points:** At this stage, qualifying veterans may receive preference points. Under the current system, veterans' points are only beneficial when banded lists are utilized, moving the candidate upward in the established bands. If banding is not used and a veteran qualifies for preference points, there is no impact.
6. **Potential Eligibility for New Hiring Preferences:** Under the proposed amendment, candidates may become eligible to receive the newly proposed hiring preferences, such as preference for Long Beach residents, local graduates, current City employees, or those with relevant internship or apprenticeship experience. These hiring preferences will be in addition to the existing veterans point preference.
7. **Application of Preferences:** It is important to note that current preferences are not applied until after an applicant has completed the screening and successfully passed the employment exam process.
8. **Ineligibility Due to Lack of Qualifications:** An applicant who does not meet the minimum qualifications for the job they are applying for, or an applicant who does not pass the exam process, cannot become eligible for the job due to hiring preferences.

Banding

Banding is a widely used method in civil service recruitment processes across the nation to establish cutoff scores. A banded eligible list in the civil service employment testing process means candidates who have taken the exam are grouped into "bands" based on their scores. Each band represents a range of scores, and candidates within the same band are considered equal in terms of qualifications. This system allows for a degree of flexibility in hiring. Instead of strictly adhering to a rank order based solely on test scores, hiring managers may have the option to choose from candidates within a particular band. Banded eligible lists provide a balance between merit-based selection and flexibility in hiring, which allows the organization to make hiring decisions based on the needs of the position and qualifications of the candidate. However, it is important to note that banding may or may not be utilized in certain situations, such as:

1. When the applicant pool is limited, an unranked or non-banded list may be appropriate as all candidates are considered equal.

2. For professions requiring specific licenses or certifications, such as nursing or engineering, candidates have already undergone rigorous testing, rendering banding unnecessary.
3. In roles like public safety, where additional training is provided post-hiring, banding may be omitted as the selection process is pass or fail.
4. Positions requiring specific skills or qualifications, such as technology roles, where banding may not be necessary to determine eligibility.

Under the proposed amendment, the City intends to utilize banding for most classified recruitments in order to award the preferences that are proposed in the Charter and only deviate in circumstances such as the ones described above.

Prior Concerns Regarding Banding and Proposed Improvements

In the past, concerns have emerged regarding the utilization of banding within the Civil Service framework, particularly its application when alternative routes could be more appropriate. This has led to questions about the fairness and efficiency of the selection process, as banding and testing processes may not always align with the specific needs of each recruitment endeavor. However, through a proposed charter amendment, the City aims to rejuvenate the banding process by introducing localized hiring preferences, encompassing Long Beach residents, local graduates, and current City employees, alongside individuals with pertinent internship or apprenticeship experience. By reimagining the examination and banding procedures in light of the new preference categories, the City can embark on a transformative journey aimed at addressing concerns while propelling its recruitment process into the modern era. This revamp signifies a departure from utilizing only traditional practices and marks a shift towards a more dynamic and responsive system. By embracing innovation, the City opens doors to a plethora of possibilities, allowing for the integration of cutting-edge assessment techniques that accurately gauge the diverse talents and capabilities of potential candidates.

Unfortunately, the current system overlooks both internal non-career employees who demonstrate excellence but may struggle with standardized tests and recent graduates from local institutions, lacking experience in civil service-type exams. Under the existing framework, individuals in these categories often become lost in the shuffle of a large list. If they do not perform well on tests, they can end up at lower bands, making it less likely for departments to reach them. This results in a loss of valuable talent and hampers the recruitment process. The proposed banding process addresses these issues by providing a more tailored approach to recruitment. By incorporating localized hiring preferences and refining criteria, the proposed process ensures that qualified candidates, regardless of testing performance, receive proper consideration. This modernization effort is not just about adopting new methods; it is about fundamentally changing the way recruitment is approached. It is about recognizing that traditional methods may not fully capture the breadth of skills and experiences that candidates bring to the table. Instead, it is an opportunity to explore novel approaches that better align with the evolving needs of both the City and its workforce.

Proposed Preferences

The proposed amendment revitalizes our classified recruitment process by introducing localized preferences, showcasing our dedication to community engagement and empowering local talent. This enhancement not only bolsters the existing banding system but also ensures its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. By integrating localized preferences with banding, our aim is to create a more inclusive and representative hiring process that addresses our community's diverse needs. This approach emphasizes our commitment to equity and impartiality in candidate selection, while also providing opportunities for residents to thrive within their own city. It signifies a significant advancement toward building a workforce that authentically reflects and serves our community.

In line with this initiative, successful candidates meeting specified criteria for localized preferences will earn five additional points, in addition to other credits. These criteria may include factors such as residency in Long Beach, graduation from local educational institutions, or completion of relevant internship programs. Furthermore, candidates who meet two or more criteria could earn a maximum of ten additional points, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of their qualifications and ties to the community. The proposed localized hiring preferences encompass the following:

- **Residency:** At the time of the application, the candidate resides within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City.
- **Higher Education:** Where the job description requires or considers a degree, the candidate graduated or otherwise received a degree from an institution of higher education, including those institutions within the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California systems or independent or private colleges and universities, with on-site campuses located within a ten-mile radius of the jurisdictional boundaries of the City.
- **Internal candidate:** at the time of application, the candidate is employed in a non-career capacity with the City and has completed at least 1,500 hours of service with the City within the two years preceding the date of the job announcement; and/or
- **Internship or Apprenticeship:** the candidate participated in an internship or apprenticeship program(s) relevant to the position for which the candidate is seeking employment and has completed at least 1,000 hours of internship or apprenticeship within the two years preceding the date of the job announcement.

The proposed localized hiring preferences, akin to the existing veteran's preference, will be accessible to qualifying candidates in most Civil Service examinations, barring promotional examinations unless prohibited by law or funding sources. Qualified veterans will receive an added benefit by combining these preference points with their existing veteran points. The City will enhance the use of banding to amplify the impact of these preferences and envisions the practice of banding to be used in most classified recruitments. Additionally, if the applicant is a qualified veteran or disabled veteran, these new points from localized preferences will supplement existing veteran or disabled veteran preference points. This strengthens veterans'

preference points rather than removing them. These preferences can potentially elevate a candidate's classification band, thereby improving their chances of securing employment with the City.

Examples of Application of New Preferences

1. A Long Beach resident who recently graduated from CSULB is applying to become an Assistant Administrative Analyst. They are determined to meet the minimum qualifications for the position and pass the employment exam process. At this point, they are placed on the eligibility list and five preference points are awarded for being a Long Beach resident, and five additional preference points are awarded for graduating from a Long Beach educational institution for a total of ten localized preference points.
2. A veteran and Long Beach resident graduates from CSUDH and applies to become an Administrative Analyst. The applicant passes the screening for minimum qualifications and successfully passes the employment exam and is initially placed on the eligibility list. The candidate receives ten preference points for being a veteran, five points for being a Long Beach resident, and five points for graduating from an eligible educational institution for a total of 20 preference points.
3. A recent CSULB graduate and veteran applying to become an Assistant Administrative Analyst is screened and determined to meet the minimum qualifications of the job classification but does not pass the employment exam process. In this case, preference points are not applied because the applicant was not successful in the exam process.

This innovative strategy reaffirms our commitment to supporting local talent while ensuring transparency and fairness throughout the recruitment process. By providing incentives for candidates with strong community connections, we strengthen our workforce and foster a deeper sense of belonging among residents. This includes non-career employees who may not excel in standardized tests but have proven themselves as valuable contributors through their dedication and exemplary performance. Despite any limitations in testing, their commitment to excellence and their status as local residents makes them prime candidates for consideration. Non-career employees would now be given the recognition they deserve, further enriching our recruitment process and reflecting our dedication to inclusivity.

The proposed amendment invigorates our classified recruitment process by introducing localized preferences, reflecting our dedication to fostering community engagement and empowering local talent. This update not only enhances the existing banding system but also ensures its continued relevance and effectiveness. It represents an evolution rather than mere preservation of banding. By seamlessly integrating localized hiring preferences into the existing framework, we enrich it, revitalizing our hiring process with a renewed purpose and community-driven focus. This forward-thinking approach guarantees that our classified workforce not only maintains integrity but also mirrors the diverse vibrancy of our City.

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