ANCHORAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

USING A HIRING RUBRIC TO IMPROVE HIRING EFFICIENCY AND INCREASE STAFF DIVERSITY
A pilot project between the Municipality of Anchorage Human Resources Department and Anchorage Public Library

BACKGROUND

In Winter 2019/20, the Library and Human Relations department launched a pilot project to use a rubric ranking system to select new applicants for open job positions. The pilot project has been a great success and has been met with rave reviews from Library staff. As a result, the Library's ten hires under this new system have been outstanding candidates and have had high performance in their roles to date. The new system has also helped increase racial diversity on staff – four of the last ten hires were people of color, which closely reflects the demographics of Anchorage, and is an improvement on the Library's current rate of 16% of staff identifying as people of color.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

The rubric ranking system for hiring is a simple, straight-forward process that is more efficient for both HR and Library staff, helps reduce bias in decision-making, and provides a more diverse pool of applicants for the Library to choose from.

How the rubric ranking system works:
- When a job opening is created, the Library hiring manager, with input from their hiring team, creates a decision rubric listing the top qualifications for a position and assigning point values to the different levels of experience within those qualifications. The focus areas used for evaluation are typically based on the supplemental questions and work history listed in the application
- The HR department sends the packets for ALL applicants to the hiring manager, only omitting ones that do not meet the requirements in the supplemental questions
- The Library hiring team individually reviews each applicant and assigns points based on the rubric; the hiring team then averages the scores of all applicants and selects the applicants to interview – typically the top 5-7 applicants or all applicants that rank above a certain point level
- Applicants are assigned points for each question in interviews and the hiring committee then reviews the total points of the final candidates and makes their selection.

HOW THE NEW PROCESS DIFFERS FROM THE PAST

Under the previous system, the Library hiring team was required to interview ALL applicants that were sent from HR. To save time, the HR team used their own screening criteria and sent batches of applicants to the hiring team. The Library hiring team would be required to make a decision after seeing only a portion of the applicants, or add extra time to the process by requesting a new batch.

Some shortfalls with the previous system:
- If the Library hiring team requested all applications, they would have to spend time interviewing 30+ candidates
- Some positions have well over 30 applicants, making it impossible to review all candidates
- Strong internal candidates were often left out of the hiring process because they were not included in the batch sent to the Library

- Strong candidates who had skillsets and experiences applicable to the Library, but not directly in a library environment often did not make it through the HR screening, which led to more uniformity in hiring and hampered the Library's ability to have a staff with diverse backgrounds and skills
- The HR hiring manager would be required to determine candidate qualifications based on their limited knowledge of the department and job specifications; the inefficient process took their focus and time away from other important HR work

RESULTS

The Library is extremely satisfied with the new process for some of the following reasons:
- The new process saves a lot of time and energy for both HR and Library staff
- The process allows the Library to consider applicants with skills and qualifications that are highly applicable, but might not look like a fit to an outsider; for instance, HR might screen out a candidate with a background in retail, but the Library might see retail experience as something that could help improve the its work in customer service and merchandise displays
- The process allows us to see more candidates with backgrounds outside of libraries, which makes the candidate pool more diverse in terms of skillsets and cultural identities, because people with library experience tend to come from similar educational and cultural backgrounds
- By having access to a broader range of applicants, the Library is able to discover hidden gems who bring new perspectives and skills to the Library team whom we might not have found otherwise
- The process ensures that all internal candidates are reviewed and that all applicants have an opportunity to make it in front of the hiring team