

The background of the entire page is a photograph of large, mature trees with thick trunks and dense green foliage. The image is framed by several large, overlapping black circular shapes that create a tunnel-like effect, looking through the trees. A horizontal teal band is positioned across the middle of the page, containing the main title and subtitle.

Lake Forest School District

Recruiting and Hiring Process Assessment

Final Report

Monday, December 16, 2024

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Executive Summary

Objective

Baker Tilly was contracted by Lake Forest School District (the District) to conduct an assessment of its recruiting and hiring practices. This assessment included a detailed analysis of the process steps involved in recruitment and hiring, as well as an analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the key Human Resources (HR) employees in these processes. The objective was to identify areas for improvement and provide actionable recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the District's hiring procedures, assess the District's fulfillment of legal requirements and best practices, and provide recommendations for language to be included in the District's collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Approach

Phase 1: Project Management and Kick-off

Baker Tilly, in conjunction with the District, performed project initiation and kick-off activities. Tasks in this phase included:

- Conducted a project kick-off meeting.
- Issued an initial data request.
- Finalized the project schedule and expected deliverables.

Note that on-going project management was performed in this phase.

Phase 2: Interviews and Data Gathering

Baker Tilly met with the key HR employees responsible for recruiting and hiring District employees. Additionally, internal controls were evaluated, while considering best practices. Tasks in this phase included:

- Interviewed key personnel within the HR department.
- Analyzed current policies, procedures, guidelines and related data requests for new hires and current employees.
- Evaluated hiring process steps, roles, responsibilities, and sequence of steps.

Phase 3: Reporting

Baker Tilly prepared a draft report, discussed the report with the project liaisons, and finalized the report accordingly. Tasks performed include:

- Prepared a draft report summarizing the assessment conclusions.
- Detailed findings and actionable recommendations on existing recruiting and hiring processes.
- Discussed and finalized the report delivered to the District.

Recruiting and Hiring Overview

Recruiting and hiring are critical processes for any organization aiming to build a strong, effective, and diligent workforce. Successful recruitment involves identifying the needs of the organization, creating detailed job descriptions, and using various channels to attract a diverse pool of candidates. Effective hiring requires a thorough selection process, including screening resumes, conducting interviews, checking background, and assessing candidates' skills and cultural fit. Additionally, it's essential to ensure a positive candidate experience throughout the process to maintain the organization's reputation and attract top talent.

The District has revamped its recruiting and hiring procedures in the last couple of years to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. The updated "Recruiting and Selection Process" document includes additional steps and follow-up measures, ensuring coverage of many aspects of the recruiting and hiring process. This document outlines controls and specifies key documents required to complete the hiring process. While the current controls in place are a positive development and aimed to increase consistency across the District, identify steps and tasks to be completed, and create a more structured recruiting and hiring processes, we have identified areas for improvement in the observation section of

the report. These enhancements aim to further strengthen the District's recruitment practices and ensure a seamless and thorough hiring experience.

Collective Bargaining Agreement

The assessment of the District's CBA revealed no concerns that would necessitate recommendations.

As found in District 67 and District 115 Recruiting and Selection procedures, Posting Duration Requirements are:

District 67: Lake Forest Education Association (LFEA): Posted for a minimum of five (5) work days prior to it being filled with the exception of vacancies posted within ten (10) working days before the start of school. Service Employees International Union (SEIU): Posted for seven (7) calendar days.

District 115: LFEA: Posted for five (5) business days. Where circumstances clearly require prompt action and/or where the Association President or a designee shall also agree, this posting period may be further shortened. Lake Forest High School Support Staff Association (LFHS SSA): Posted for five (5) business days.

The District should continue complying with the position vacancy posting requirements listed in all CBAs to avoid grievances and maintain strong working relationships with LFEA, SEIU and LFHS SSA.

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to the HR staff of Lake Forest School District and their legal representatives at Franczek P.C. for their support and cooperation throughout the assessment. Their insights and responsiveness in providing necessary information were crucial in enabling us to conduct a thorough and effective assessment. Specifically:

- Phil Georgia, Assistant Superintendent of HR
- Dana Hollister, HR Generalist
- Mariah Ventrella, HR Generalist
- Tiffany Barton, Administrative Assistant to HR
- Jennifer A. Smith, Partner at Franczek P.C.
- John Swinney, Associate at Franczek P.C.

Observations

Baker Tilly has identified areas for improvement in the District's recruiting and hiring processes and procedures. Based on these observations, we provided recommendations for the District to consider, aimed at enhancing current processes and procedures. Implementing these suggestions could lead to more efficient and effective recruitment and hiring practices.

Title	Observation	Recommendations
<p>HR Policies and Procedures</p>	<p>While assessing the District's HR policies and procedures, we noted that there is an absence of dates and revision histories which can lead to several issues. Without dates, it becomes challenging to determine when the procedures were last reviewed or updated, which can result in outdated practices that may not align with current best practices or legal requirements. In addition, it may be unclear to employees whether they have the most current version of the document, and they may be working off old versions. This lack of documentation can also hinder accountability, as there is no clear record of who made changes or why they were made. Without a revision history, it is difficult to track the evolution of the procedures, making it harder to identify and rectify any recurring issues or inefficiencies.</p>	<p>To enhance HR policies and procedures, it is crucial to establish a regular review schedule and create a comprehensive revision history log. Implementing a review schedule, such as conducting annual reviews, ensures that procedures remain current and aligned with the latest best practices and legal requirements. This proactive approach helps in identifying and addressing any gaps or inefficiencies in a timely manner, and assessing documents in a comprehensive manner provides a bigger picture perspective.</p> <p>Maintaining a detailed revision history log is essential for tracking changes over time. This log should include the date of each update, a summary of the changes made, and the name of the person responsible for the revisions. By documenting this information, you create a transparent and accountable system that allows for easy reference and continuous improvement. Together, these practices will foster a more consistent, fair, and compliant recruiting process, ultimately contributing to better hiring outcomes.</p>
<p>Applicant Screening Process: Digital Footprint</p>	<p>FAMA is the third party currently used to perform web scraping and check social media for candidates, however, their contract is expiring in 2025. The District intends to contract a new third party service provider. The district was misinformed that FAMA needed to match three pieces of information rather than that three pieces of information need to be provided. Currently applicants are required only to provide the District their name and email. Date of Birth is requested but not required.</p> <p>Regardless of FAMA results, HR now conducts Google searches on all candidates for additional due diligence. This is not always formally documented but is a practice HR states will continue.</p>	<p>We recommend that the District ensures that the new Digital Footprint third party service provider has a proven track record of accuracy and timeliness. Additionally, the Google due diligence check HR is now doing should be formalized into its hiring procedures and should be mandatory.</p> <p>Recommendations(considerations) for improving current controls within the District's 'Recruiting and Selection Process' includes the following identified in bold font:</p> <p>“Information on a candidate’s application should match public records that are accurate. As a result, it is appropriate to review publicly available information to confirm information provided and support appropriate employment decisions. While the Human Resources department partners with a third party to review a candidate’s digital footprint, it is expected that hiring managers perform a cursory review of internet and social media to cross check information provided by the applicant on their application materials or shared during interviews.</p> <p>Publicly available information obtained through internet searches and social media checks may only be used to verify the accuracy of an employee’s work history and their answers to the legal statements and</p>

Title	Observation	Recommendations
		<p>disclosure statements on the application (see below). In the following examples, the hiring process should be halted until an interactive dialogue can be held with the employee and the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A candidate indicates that they have never been convicted of a criminal offense, but publicly available court records reveal that they were convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a child or any criminal offense. • A candidate indicates that they have never been terminated, but board reports from their prior district show that the employee was released for inappropriate conduct • A candidate indicates that they are physically able to do the job without accommodation but they can only climb steps one at a time and will be required to take students out for recess. <p>Replacing "arrest" with "convicted of a criminal offense" will match what is required to be disclosed on the employment application.</p> <p>As part of the consent for background checks, the District should consider whether to ask applicants to provide their Date of Birth (DOB) in order to increase likelihood of obtaining accurate information throughout the process including on the Digital Footprint. DOB has not previously been required out of caution for obtaining candidate's age-related information but there may be ways to minimize risk such as having applicants provide their information directly to a third-party vendor instead of the District itself. In addition, the District should consider asking applicants to provide all email addresses if they have more than one.</p>
<p>Fingerprinting</p>	<p>Fingerprinting is completed through BioMetric and results are monitored closely by the HR Generalist or Administrative Assistant of HR. Fingerprinting results come back within 24-48 hours and HR staff update status in the "Onboarding tracking & fingerprints/drug test" spreadsheet as information is received. When a fingerprint is labeled as a "hit" or red flag, it is routed to the Assistant Superintendent of HR for further review and determination of the candidate's hiring status. HR employees check the tracking sheet daily, often numerous times a day, and the Assistant Superintendent of HR will make notes such as "held for further review by attorney" or "reviewed and no enumerated offenses". Following up on negative fingerprint timely is imperative and a timeline should be formally documented at the District's discretion.</p>	<p>We recommend that the District formally implements a procedure for following up on negative fingerprinting results. Procedures should include establishing a prompt timeline for necessary follow-up and clearly documenting all relevant details. We recommend that applicants who live outside Illinois are required to be fingerprinted in their current state and have the result provided to the District prior to hire.</p> <p>Additionally, we recommend limiting access to fingerprinting results to the HR Department. Centralizing this practice in HR can lead to increased privacy protection, secure data, consistency, and legal compliance. Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA) mandates strict handling and protection and should be considered in order to comply with laws and regulations. This may require reviewing and updating contracts with certain vendors.</p> <p>Fingerprinting procedures are not consistently followed by all</p>

Title	Observation	Recommendations
	<p>The 'Onboarding Tracking & Fingerprints/Drug Tests' spreadsheet maintained on Google Docs should have access limited to HR employees. It includes various background check information with linked documentation. The information checked includes State and FBI background checks, drug tests (if applicable), sex offender check, and child murderer check. Contractors have limited access to records pertaining to employees who work for them and HR personnel have access to all fingerprint results.</p> <p>Hiring practices are not consistently followed by all departments at the District.</p>	<p>departments. All departments should follow established procedures and ensure their practices remain consistent District-wide.</p> <p>Recommendations to update "Guide to Background Checks on the Onboarding Sheet. "Confirm the process for completing background checks and that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is initiated and submitted by the hiring administrator to Human Resources who manages the process • That fingerprinting is for federal (FBI) and state background info • Talk about the timing of when background checking is requested and occurs. <p>The document says, "Before someone gets hired, they will need to go through the onboarding process." Recommend updating this to "Fingerprinting is a required part of the background processed and must be completed and cleared by HR before an applicant is extended an official offer of employment."</p> <p>Recommend changing "Years known" to "List dates known".</p>
Reference Checks	<p>Reference checks should be completed with the candidate's current or most recent supervisor and verification of employment confirmed with an official area of that employer, typically HR. Gaps in work history or short dates of employment are red flags and should be explored by obtaining additional detail.</p>	<p>The Recommendation to Hire form should require the hiring administrator to verify that gaps in a candidate's work history have been discussed. References should be asked their name, job title, name of the employer, how they know the candidate/what their relationship is/was, such as supervisor or coworker. In addition, general dates the reference has known or worked with the candidate should be obtained. Information gathered from the reference should be compared with the information provided by the candidate to ensure consistency. Any discrepancies in information provided by the candidate and reference should be reviewed by the Assistant Superintendent of HR who will make a determination on next steps.</p>
Recommendation for Hire	<p>While noted as rare, there are instances when employees begin work before all required documentation is submitted and the final approval is granted by Human Resources.</p>	<p>We recommend that the District implements a control to ensure that candidates who accept an employment offer are not permitted to begin work until all necessary documentation is retained and final approval has been documented and dated by the Assistant Superintendent of HR.</p> <p>The new employee's application materials should be retained with onboarding documents within their personnel files. Recruitment materials should be maintained in accordance with the District's retention schedule. Section 5 of the Recommendation of Hire form in Frontline includes a sign-off after all files are retained.</p>

Title	Observation	Recommendations
Employment Applications	Employment applications are comprehensive and designed to gather information on candidate's qualifications and work history and interest in the position for which they are applying. Information in a few areas can be expanded or edited to increase clarity of information obtained.	<p>Recommended changes to the applications: Additional Information section, current language: "List any additional information which will help in determining your professional qualifications for a position." Recommended: "List any additional information relevant to the assessment of your qualifications and suitability for a position with LFSD."</p> <p>Disclosures section: Recommendation to break combined questions into separate questions with "yes" and "no" answers for each. "If yes, please provide additional detail"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever failed to be rehired? • Have you ever been asked to resign from a position? • Have you ever resigned from a position to avoid termination? • Have you ever been terminated from employment? <p>Applicant's Acknowledgement and Agreement, confirmation section: Finally, I agree that this application and all other pre-employment documents become the property of Lake Forest School Districts 67 & 115. Applicant's Name (agreed online) – Recommend adding date/time stamp</p>
Terms	When assessing procedural documents and guides used within the HR Department, there were certain terms identified that should be updated to align with best practices. Specifically, the use of terms "new hire" and "employee" prior to employment does not conform to best practices.	Best practice is to use the term "applicant", "candidate" or "finalist" rather than "new hire" or "employee" until the person has officially started work with the District. The first three terms confirm the person is in the recruiting and hiring process while the last two terms imply the person is an employee.

