



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: September 18, 2008 REPORT NO. 08-133

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of September 24, 2008

SUBJECT: Informational Report from the San Diego Police Department
Regarding the Release of the RAND Report: Strategies for
Improving Officer Recruitment in the San Diego Police
Department

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

In July 2006, the Mayor and the San Diego City Council recommended the San Diego Police Department hire a recruiting consultant to develop a competitive, state of the art recruiting program. The recommendation was in response to the Police Department's declining workforce. In FY 2005, the Police Department was approximately 200 officers below its budgeted strength. In addition, tenured officers were leaving the Department for other law enforcement agencies.

On October 14, 2006, a Request for Proposal was developed and released to the public seeking a qualified professional or company to develop a comprehensive recruiting plan. Of six proposals submitted, the RAND Corporation was selected. The selection was based on RAND's extensive experience in collecting, analyzing and formulating data into clear, concise recommendations and their past studies on recruiting issues for the United States Military.

RAND began their analysis of the Police Department's recruiting efforts in July of 2007. Their initial study indicated that six key factors influence the number of Police Department recruits: (1) job seekers' propensity to join the Department; (2) local labor-market conditions; (3) the opinions of community members and those who influence the Department; (4) recruiting resources, such as the number of recruiters and the advertising budget; (5) efficiency of the department's recruiting process; and (6) recruiter and resource management.

RAND's analysis concentrated specifically on items 4, 5 and 6 as they felt the Department had more control in these areas. With directed effort in these areas the Department could substantially increase and improve their applicant pool.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on RAND's analysis of the Police Department's recruiting practices, they identified three categories; each with specific recommendations to strengthen the Department's recruiting efforts.

1. Target recruiting practices to appeal to a broader range of applicants.
2. Improve efficiency in the screening process.
3. Strengthen the recruiting workforce and the practices they follow.

This report will address the recommendations provided by RAND in each identified category.

Target Recruiting Practices to Appeal to a Broader Range of Applicants

Recommendation: Produce Marketing Materials that highlight the benefits of law enforcement careers and the San Diego Police Department in particular.

The surveys of written test-takers conducted by RAND indicates that applicants are strongly motivated by a desire to serve the community, the anticipation of the pride they will derive from being a police officer, and an interest in securing stable employment with a good salary. RAND recommended changing our current material from more of an informative packet depicting salaries, job functions and job eligibility to more of a marketing tool that highlights the prestigious nature of the position. In essence, provide more material displaying the professionalism of the Department and highlight the job security, salary and benefits. The material should also contain the name, address and phone number of a recruiter, making it easier to obtain additional information.

Recommendation: Modernize the SDPD Recruiting Web Site

The condition of the recruiting web site during RAND's analysis was at best amateurish. According to RAND the site did not reflect the professionalism of the Department and was not comparable to other competing law enforcement agencies. The Recruiting Unit did not control the web site, during RAND's study. As RAND stated in their research, Police Department Background and Recruiting Staff need control or ownership over the content of website allowing continual information on test dates, but more importantly, develop the website to change casual visitors into applicants and test takers. The website should emphasize the attractiveness of working for the Department, underscoring the diversity of opportunities and detailing pay and benefits.

Recommendation: Focus Recruiting Efforts Close to San Diego and Carefully Selected Sites Nationally

The Recruiting Unit has conducted several out-of-state recruiting and testing efforts with some success. The Unit targeted Colleges and Universities with large Criminal Justice Programs located in areas where very few law enforcement positions were available to the graduates. RAND recommended staying within the County and City to recruit future applicants and only continue the out-of-state testing in areas where graduates of the Criminal Justice Programs could not be absorbed into the local law enforcement market.

Recommendation: Use the Department's Labor Pool as a Pool of Candidates

RAND suggested the Department develop a formalized process using a portion of its civilian workforce as a recruiting source. Those interested in police officer positions who are not yet eligible due to age requirements, or they need to resolve credit or financial solvency issues or have minor past drug use should be actively recruited into "feeder" positions, such as traffic management or records. However, RAND realized that many of the positions within the Police Department require the applicant pass the same background process required by a potential recruit. This may limit the practicality of using this recommendation.

Recommendation: Offer Cash Incentives for Officers Referring New Applicants and Recruits

Currently the Department offers discretionary days off as an incentive for officers to recruit new police officers. RAND is recommending the City consider cash incentives in lieu of discretionary days off. As a starting point for discussion, RAND suggested an initial offering of \$50 to a sworn or civilian employee who refers someone who passes the written exam, a \$1,000 bonus for the first referred applicant who joins the Department, \$3,000 for the second and \$2,000 for each successfully referred applicant thereafter. Also recommended was using signing bonuses to attract lateral hires. At least one Agency in the County of San Diego is using a signing bonus to attract highly qualified lateral hires.

Improve Efficiency in the Screening Process

Recommendation: Provide an Online Sample Test

The written test is one of the first major hurdles an applicant must complete in the hiring process. City Personnel's Testing Division controls the test. No sample test exists that introduces a candidate to the test subject matter. RAND also believes that the unfamiliarity of the test may lead to depressed scores or may dissuade potential candidates from taking the written test. A video of the Physical Agility Test is included in the Department's web site. When RAND conducted its analysis, the video function on the web site periodically malfunctioned. RAND recommended the Department repair the malfunction so applicants can review the requirements and alleviate their concerns.

Recommendation: Allow Other Standardized Tests to Substitute for the Department's Written Test

RAND suggests the City consider accepting other tests, such as the College Entrance SAT or the ASVAB, the entrance test for Military candidates as a substitute for our current written examination. The ASVAB test is used by the military to place personnel in selected career

tracks. By accepting a substitute test, applicants are encouraged to appear for the Physical Agilities Test (PAT) and complete the background questionnaire. Since San Diego is home to a large military presence, the acceptance of ASVAB scores will draw military applicants to the Department.

Recommendation: Conduct a Pilot Study to Find an Optimal Pass Point for the Written Test

Approximately 40 to 45% of applicants fail to pass the written test. RAND is recommending the City lower the pass point to include more candidates in the background process as they believe the current pass point is set too high. Within the last year, only one recruit has failed the Academy due to academics. RAND suggested the City lower the pass point by 5% on a previous test. Those candidates falling in between the new and old scores would be sent to the next step in the background process. If they pass the background process, the candidate would be eligible to enter the Academy. Backgrounds and Recruiting personnel would monitor the progress of the applicant in the Academy. If the applicant or applicants pass the Academy, they suggest the pass point is set too high and should be adjusted.

Recommendation: Analyze the Written Test for Problematic Questions

No quantitative study was conducted by RAND to determine the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the written test. The City does use a formal system to identify knowledge, skills, and abilities that police officers need and then develops test questions that measure abilities in those dimensions. RAND is recommending additional analyses of test questions using applicant test-score data to identify problematic questions. An example of one analysis presented by RAND was the differential item functioning (DIF) analysis. According to RAND, a DIF analysis can be used to flag test items that might have racial, ethnic, or other cultural bias.

Recommendation: Petition the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to Create a Written Examination Process that Meets San Diego's Police Testing Methods

RAND is recommending that the Department, along with other agencies in the County, petition POST to create a written examination process that meets our current guidelines. POST does have a written examination that can be used by the Department. However, the timeline for correcting the test and providing the test scores to the City does not meet our expectations.

Strengthen its Recruiting Workforce and Practices

The following are a list of recommendations by RAND to strengthen the Department's Recruitment practices:

- Establish a Stable Recruiting Budget
- Turn Written-Test Sessions into Marketing Events
- Contact Applicants who Drop out of the Background Process
- Establish a Formal Incentive System for Recruiters
- Develop a Succession Plan for Subsequent Recruiting Teams

RAND recognized the improvements made by the Department regarding both the Recruiting team and Background Investigations. The recommendation from RAND to establish a consistent recruiting budget places an emphasis on the importance of keeping the current recruiting momentum moving forward and stabilizing its placement in future years. The City conducts a written test for police applicants three times each month. All those that pass the written test during that month qualify for the monthly physical agilities test. RAND suggested that we turn each written test into a marketing event, bringing selected Units and personnel to introduce candidates to various portions of the Department.

Occasionally, applicants undergoing a background investigation do not complete or submit their paperwork. An Investigator will call the applicant stressing the need to submit the background package in a timely manner. If the package is not submitted, the applicant is waived from the process. In a similar fashion, a candidate may successfully pass the written test but never show up for the physical agilities test. In this instance the City sends the candidate a letter, notifying the candidate that their written test is good for one year if they choose to attend an agilities test. In both instances, no personal contact occurs between the applicant/candidate and a recruiter. RAND recommends that a recruiter be notified of all waivers and failures to appear so that personal contact can be made with the candidate. Their belief is that a call or visit from a recruiter may convert a few of these applicants to recruits.

Last, but certainly not least, RAND recommended the Department develop a succession plan for subsequent recruiting teams. RAND recognized that employees in the Department move to new assignments on a regular basis. To maintain the quality of the recruiting program, RAND suggested the Department develop selection criteria for recruiters, formalize a training plan for new members of the team and set clear evaluation standards.

CONCLUSION

The Police Department is currently reviewing the document submitted by the RAND Corporation. Many of the recommendations made by RAND were already in place prior to the study and others, have been set in motion based on RAND's recommendations. Beginning in October 2007, the Recruiting Unit revised its marketing materials to be more in line with RAND's recommendations. The brochures highlight the benefits of serving the community and provide information on salary and benefits.

The Department developed a very positive relationship with the City Office that maintained and operated the web site. We now have control of the site and recently, May 2008, introduced a new and improved web site. The new layout represents the professional image of the San Diego Police Department and is user friendly. During a recent survey of applicants at a written test, approximately 70 to 80% used the web site to obtain test dates and learn more about the Department.

We are working with City Testing to determine the proper pass point for the written test. In addition, City Testing is conducting a question-by-question analysis to determine the fairness of a question. The test is designed to identify those with the academic capability to attend the Police Academy. We are sensitive to the points raised by RAND with regard to the academics at

the Academy, but we believe the test standard must remain high to insure the success of the candidate. The Academy maintains a college curriculum as recruits earn college credits upon graduation. We are working with City Testing to develop an on-line sample written test. Once complete, the sample test will be included on our web site.

The San Diego Police Department will continue to evaluate the recommendations made by RAND and will implement those that will improve the hiring process. It is our goal to recruit and hire a workforce that meets the demands of the community we serve.

Respectfully submitted,



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