



**GUIDELINES
FOR RECRUITING A
CITY
MANAGER**



TEXAS CITY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Guidelines for Recruiting a City Manager

2022

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Introduction

Recruiting and selecting a new city manager can be a very positive, enjoyable, and unifying experience for a city council. It provides an opportunity for the city council, as a group, to think together about objectives and priorities as a basis for determining what they are looking for in a new city manager. It provides an opportunity for the city council to look to the future in a way that is seldom experienced when considering agenda items at a typical council meeting.

Selecting a city manager is one of the most important decisions made by a city council. Please note that “city council” as used in these guidelines refers to the mayor and council and their roles as outlined in the city charter, administrative procedures policy, and general laws as applicable.

The importance is highlighted by the fact that:

- While the city council provides policy and political leadership for the city, the city manager is responsible for implementing policy and providing the administrative leadership necessary for continued progress and employee morale.
- To a great extent, as a resource to the city council, the city manager will make the difference between whether or not city council objectives and priorities are identified, defined, considered, and implemented.

Whenever the position of city manager becomes vacant, a heightened level of excitement, and even apprehension, can occur within the city organization, for both elected officials and employees, and in the community. The council may become anxious because of the uncertainty created by the departure of the city manager, and there may be differences of opinion as to how to proceed. There may also be confusion as to what process to follow, and a general concern among members of the council as to whether they will ever be able to agree on what they should be looking for in a new city manager.

On the other hand, potential candidates who are interested in the position may begin contacting some or all members of the council to express interest and advance their cause. Members of the community, because they are interested in good local government, or have a vested interest, may volunteer to help or propose, formally or informally, that certain factors be considered in the recruitment. Of course, the press will also have questions that can range from why a vacancy exists to what’s the proposed salary for the new city manager.

The hiring process for a city manager must be deliberate and not impulsive.

All this uncertainty, activity and interest can result in pressure to make premature commitments or take impulsive action -- neither of which are necessarily good for the community or conducive to the recruitment and selection of a top-notch city manager. Because

of all this natural interest in this important position, the city council must provide:

- Strong, consistent political leadership for conducting the recruitment,
- A well organized, coordinated, and transparent recruitment process,
- A timetable that assures a prompt, comprehensive recruitment, and guards against premature action, and
- A plan for administering the affairs of the city while the recruitment process is underway.

Without an organized approach and strong, consistent leadership from the city council, the recruitment of a city manager can become a negative experience with long-term consequences for the community including the following:

- damaging the image of the city,
- dividing the city council, the city employees, and the community,
- weakening the authority of the city council,
- eroding the responsibilities associated with the position of city manager, and
- harm the ability of the city to attract and retain good candidates for city manager and other administrative positions.

Also, all those who have a legitimate interest in the selection of a new city manager can have that interest accommodated by an orderly and thorough recruitment process. The assurance of such a process is the principal responsibility of the city council in this situation.

These guidelines discuss systematic and organized steps that should be followed when recruiting and selecting a new city manager. Please note that these guidelines emphasize strongly that impulsive actions should be avoided in the recruitment process, and systematic, planned actions should rule. (See Appendix A for a checklist and timetable for recruiting and selecting a city manager.)

Resources Available

When faced with the need to recruit a city manager, city councils will find a variety of resources available to assist them. For example:

Texas Municipal League--TML staff can offer advice on how to approach the recruitment process; TML has a section on its website (www.tml.org) where advertisements can be placed for position openings at no cost to member cities; they can suggest advertising sources and share executive search firms listings; they can help pass the word when a vacancy exists, including the placement of an advertisement on their website or their monthly magazine, *Texas Town and City*; and they can be a source of information on compensation and how other cities have handled situations that may arise during a recruitment.

Texas City Management Association--TCMA works closely with the Texas Municipal League and is responsible for the preparation of this publication. TCMA has a website (www.tcma.org) with recruiting guidelines, position openings listings and lists of experienced managers in transition; and their members and staff can be a source of assistance and suggestions when identifying potential candidates, conducting background checks, and arranging interviews.

Current and Former Municipal Officials--In addition to the leadership and staff of groups such as TML and TCMA, city officials in adjacent cities or retired municipal officials may be able to assist. For example, a neighboring city official may be able to play a helpful role in the review of applicants, and a retired municipal official may be available to coordinate the recruitment process or to provide interim management assistance.

Others Having an Interest in Municipal Government--Depending upon the situation, others such as college or university faculty members, municipal consultants, and community leaders may be able to provide leadership and assistance in some part or all of the recruitment process.

Other Professional Organizations--Groups such as the International City/County Management Association, American Society for Public Administration, and related local, regional, state, and national professional organizations can aid in advertising the vacant position, as well as providing insight into the strengths and weaknesses of applicants or potential applicants.

Executive Recruitment Firms--There are several firms that are available to assist in the recruitment of key management positions in cities. A list of these firms can be found on TCMA's website. Their role can include coordinating the overall recruitment process, or they may be retained to assist on specific aspects of the recruitment such as the identification of potential candidates, background checks, or the development and conduct of the selection process. (See Appendix B – Recruitment Firms – Tasks and Vetting Criteria.)

While resources are available to assist, the more important considerations for those making the hiring decision are:

- Know what you are looking for when recruiting to fill a vacant city manager position.
- Remember that recruiting a city manager is a two-way street, and the city has a responsibility to present the position attractively, show interest in the applicants, and be competitive.
- Be sure the recruiting process is well organized and coordinated from the outset.
- Don't lose control of the recruitment process or the hiring decision to others such as search firms, employee groups, community groups, other elected officials, etc.
- Involve people in the recruitment process who are knowledgeable of local government and how the council-manager form of government works.

These considerations must be constantly kept in mind as the recruitment proceeds. Their importance in relation to the steps involved in a recruitment are discussed in this report.

See Appendix C for more information on principal resource groups.

Chapter 1 - Steps Prior to the Recruitment

To ensure that the recruitment is off to a good start and interim management is in place, follow the steps in Table I. Do not hesitate to use outside resources in the recruitment process. See Appendix C for Principal Resources Groups

Table I -- City Council's First Steps When Vacancy Becomes Known and Prior to the Recruitment

1. Act promptly but deliberately to announce the vacancy and recruitment timetable.
2. Meet to plan for the recruitment process.
3. Appoint an interim city manager.
4. Obtain status report on current problems and important projects.
5. Defer key actions where possible for the new city manager.

City Council's First Steps

1. Act promptly but deliberately to announce the vacancy and recruitment timetable.

News travels fast, and days can seem like weeks if people are anxious about a situation. While the city council should resist acting impulsively in terms of appointing a new city manager, failure to put a plan of action into effect can cause a void that will lead to rumors within the community and pressure to act from various sources. This can be divisive for the council and can result in the kind of impulsive action that should be avoided. The recruitment of a new city manager is an opportunity for the city council and the community, and a specific plan and timetable should be developed by the city council and announced promptly to dispel questions and to emphasize the positive aspects of the situation. If there are circumstances such as an impending election that might cause the city council to delay the recruitment process, this can be considered when establishing the overall plan and timetable. What is important is that the council control the situation and make clear to all concerned the process they will follow in terms of ultimately recruiting and selecting a new city manager. If the established schedule should change for any reason, this should also be communicated to all concerned, particularly applicants for the vacant position.

Vacancy Announcement

If the vacancy is the result of a retirement or the city manager moving on to a new position, this is understandable and can simply be announced. In fact, it will be helpful during the recruitment because the city will be able to say that there has been great stability in the position, and the only reason it is open is because of the retirement or new job opportunity for the former city manager. The vacancy is an opportunity that doesn't come along very often.

If, on the other hand, the position is vacant because the former city manager was terminated or quit, neither the city nor the former city manager will benefit from a public quarrel. It is far better for all concerned, even though it may be emotionally difficult, to simply reach a mutual decision and timetable for leaving. From a recruiting standpoint, the image of

the city is enhanced, and there is less likelihood that the former city manager will tell potential candidates that it is a bad situation.

2. Meet to plan for the recruitment process.

As a prelude to beginning the process, it is important that the city council spend some time at the outset considering the parameters for the overall recruitment process – e.g., what is needed in a city manager, the required steps, the marketing and selection criteria, the participants in the process, whether to hire a recruitment firm, etc. Time must be spent upfront prior to advertising for the position, and certainly prior to screening applicants, to agree upon required competencies to do the job in your city. (Khaneman et al. 2021)

3. Appoint an interim city manager

Often, the first question facing a city council when a city manager vacancy occurs is what to do in order to assure that the affairs of the city are properly administered until a new city manager is on board. This is the first point at which the temptation to act impulsively must be resisted.

For example, possibly there is someone on the staff who has long-term administrative experience in the city, who the city council knows and has worked with, and who is interested in and able to do the job of city manager. Impulsively, it might seem that the appropriate next step might be to simply appoint this natural successor to the position without using the recruitment process and thereby avoiding the need for interim management. However, such a short-term expediency may not address major issues or long-term problems facing the city, and what has worked in the past may not be adequate for the future.

The recruitment process must be followed.

Even when there is no heir apparent, or at least anyone the city council feels comfortable appointing immediately after the vacancy occurs, it can be tempting to appoint someone just to fill the vacancy without a recruitment process. It is in this situation where, without strong leadership, someone may prevail by suggesting that a current staff member be appointed, or that the city approach another city manager who may be easily available or who impressed a council member at a meeting. This temptation, even if there is pressure to act, should be avoided.

If the city council acts impulsively, it risks weakening its leadership position within the city. By failing to first consider what it is looking for in a new city manager, even if a natural successor exists, the city council loses its ability to compare and measure a variety of applicants against its criteria and then subsequently direct and monitor the performance of the new city manager. Equally important, the chances are great that the city council will not be pleased with its choice on a long-term basis, simply because the person's work experience and personal characteristics, while impressive elsewhere, may not necessarily be the right combination needed for success in this new situation.

Because time will be needed to conduct a search, it is important to clarify who will be responsible for directing the organization while the new city manager is being recruited. The city council may wish to consult with the outgoing city manager regarding possible staff persons who could fill this role, or they may all agree that they have confidence in a specific staff person. If there is an assistant city manager who may be considered for the new city manager position, the city council will often appoint this person so they can observe first-hand how the person handles the job. Other times, the city council may feel more confident with a department head who is clearly not going to be a candidate for the position, but whom they feel is mature, seasoned, respected by fellow employees, and a competent administrator.

In some cases, the city council may not feel there is anyone on staff to whom they can appoint to serve in the interim role. In this case, it may be possible to retain the services of a recently retired city manager, or a city manager who is presently unemployed or in transition. A list of in transition persons can be found on TCMA's website: www.tcma.org.

Regardless of who is appointed, it should be clear to the city organization that the person appointed to the interim role is in charge, and it should also be clear that the person does not have an inside track to the new city manager position. The city council should make it clear that they are not conducting a charade recruitment process – i.e., knowing full well that their intention was to appoint the interim city manager as the permanent manager. They are going to undertake a comprehensive recruitment to find the best candidate. If the interim manager is ultimately selected, it will only be because that person proves to be the best in relation to other applicants.

4. Obtain a status report on organization and projects

Even when there is a city manager vacancy, it is not desirable for the city council to immerse itself in the administrative affairs of the city, and it may be contrary to the city's Home Rule Charter. However, before the city manager leaves, it is important that the city council receives a briefing regarding current organizational problems and the status of important projects. In this way, the city council can better monitor progress on important matters and provide direction regarding priorities to the interim city manager. If possible, the interim manager should be involved in these briefings.

5. Defer key actions where possible

The city must obviously continue to operate during the recruitment period, and the city council and interim manager should do whatever is necessary to be sure that important projects and the delivery of services continue. However, in terms of assuring effective administrative leadership in the future, it is desirable to involve the new city manager in as many important policy decisions as possible.

The input of the city manager is important for major decisions. For example, major policy decisions with long term effects and requiring lengthy implementation should be delayed, if possible, for the new city manager. Similarly, holding off filling a vacant department head position can be an opportunity for the new city manager to begin building an

administrative team. This opportunity can be used persuasively to pique the interest of good potential candidates during the recruitment process, because it would allow them to have an immediate impact on shaping the leadership team. As such, it is desirable for the city council to defer key actions where possible until the new city manager is appointed.

However, there are pros and cons to such intentional deferment. For example, addressing a difficult policy decision now rather than waiting for the new city manager avoids placing the new city manager in a precarious policy conflict early in his/her tenure. Also, delaying a major policy decision now could cause public harm or even threaten its future adoption when the circumstances might have changed. Good judgment is required in deciding what to defer or not to defer.

6. Organize for the recruitment process – There is no one best recruitment process for all cities. Organizing very much depends on the totality of circumstances based on the conditions of the city with the vacancy. See Chapters 2 and 3 for more detail.

Chapter 1 Summary

Once the vacancy becomes known to the city council, they should immediately schedule a meeting to agree upon a course of actions and responsibilities in the recruitment and selection processes. At this meeting, they should decide upon an interim manager, determine whether to use a search firm, determine what they want in the new city manager, and agree upon the recruitment process. All this should be accomplished with a good understanding of the current problems and important projects facing the city, because these should affect the selection criteria for the new city manager.

Chapter 2 – The Recruitment Process -- Who conducts it?

Just as it is necessary to determine who will provide interim management, it is also important for the city council to determine who will be responsible for conducting the recruitment of a new city manager. Three alternatives are available – utilizing in-house city resources such as the HR department completely, outsourcing to a recruitment firm, or a hybrid of in-house and outsourcing. (See Table II)

Table II -- Recruitment Alternatives

1. The city council conducts the recruitment in-house.
2. The city council outsources the recruitment.
3. The city council uses a hybrid alternative – i.e., it conducts the recruitment and retains a third party to assist at certain points in the process.

Recruitment Alternatives

1. The city conducts the recruitment in-house using the city council, city staff such as the human resources (HR) department, and/or interim city manager or some combination thereof.

Many cities have successfully conducted a recruitment for a new city manager. If this alternative is selected, it should be with the understanding that it is time consuming and requires someone on the city council or in the city organization who has both the time, capacity, and skill to do the necessary tasks.

Unless a recruitment is well planned and led by someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in this area, many things can occur that diminish a city's chances of getting the best candidate. City staff, such as HR employees, can assist the city council in placing advertisements, and they can collect and acknowledge resumes as they are received. However, because they will be supervised by the new city manager, it may be difficult for them to play a greater role in the recruitment process. Thus, should the city choose to conduct the recruitment itself, they should be sure there is someone on the council, or in the city organization, whom they respect and who has the time to provide the leadership and follow through with all that is necessary at every step in the process.

2. The city council outsources the recruitment.

Most outsourcing means contracting with a firm that specializes in providing executive search assistance to cities. A recruiting firm offers a broader array of services and resources than an in-house HR department can, which includes an existing network of potential candidates, a marketing/media presence, and a specialized niche that standard HR departments can't offer. Some believe that hiring a recruiting firm results in a more active recruitment, while traditional methods may be more passive.

When utilizing an executive search firm, the city council does not give up any of its authority with respect to the selection of a new city manager. The council continues to define what it is looking for in a new city manager, it makes the decision on finalist candidates, it does

the interviewing and, of course, it makes the selection. However, when hiring a qualified firm, the city council obtains the full-time coordination necessary to conduct an effective recruitment, and it also gains expertise that can be important at each step in the process.

It is important to note that the city council usually cannot contract away its right to access documents that are held by a consultant if the information would otherwise be considered public. For example, an open record decision has held that a city manager could not contract away the public's right to inspect a list of applicants for a city job even though the list was developed by a private consultant for the city.

The city cannot contract away its open records responsibilities.

Ideally, the executive search firm begins by meeting with the city council, both individually and as a group, to assist them in thinking through what they are looking for in a new city manager. Depending on what the city has stipulated in the contract, it can be the responsibility of the firm to facilitate this discussion and to assist in reaching a consensus on items such as desirable work experience, personal characteristics, timing and scope of the recruitment, and compensation. Once these matters have been reviewed, the firm coordinates the overall recruitment process and assumes responsibility for all tasks until it is time for the city council to select and interview finalists. The firm acts as a resource to the city council throughout the recruitment process, and the city council has the comfort of knowing that the process is being handled professionally by individuals who are familiar with municipal government, know candidates and potential candidates, have contacts that assure good background checks, and are available to assist with other matters such as the selection process and negotiating a final compensation package.

Deciding whether to use a recruitment firm is not a simple yes or no due to four factors affecting the decision, which are the presence of a qualified in-house employee, the city's capacity to perform in-house recruitment, the reason for the vacancy, and the challenges facing the city.

1. The presence of an in-house employee who is capable, suitable, and willing to perform the city manager's job. The in-house candidate must have the skills, knowledge, and experience to perform the job, be a good fit with the mayor and city council and want the job. In such a situation, a recruitment firm may not be needed, because why go through the expense of an outside recruiter when a qualified candidate exists in-house?
2. The city's capacity (e.g., staffing, expertise, time, etc.) to undertake the recruitment process either piecemeal or turnkey. The lack of capacity indicates that a recruitment firm most likely would be beneficial. In such a case, the only decision would be the scope of the firm's participation – piecemeal or turnkey, and if piecemeal, its scope.

However, just because the city has the capacity to handle the recruitment process or parts of it, does not automatically mean that a recruitment firm should not be hired, because there are two other factors to be considered – i.e., the reason for the vacancy and the challenges facing the city.

3. The reason for the vacancy

a. If the vacancy were the result of a voluntary resignation such as a retirement, a better job, or a change in career, then the previous city manager was not “pushed out” of the job, and such a vacancy usually is not an issue in recruitment.

Accordingly, a recruitment firm may not be necessary since such vacancies do not raise a red flag to potential candidates.

b. If not a voluntary resignation, there are two possible reasons. Either the previous manager was pushed from the position “for cause” or was pushed out due to the city council’s desire for a change of direction for the city. A satisfactory for cause reason such as poor performance, malfeasance, misconduct, etc. can be easily explained to and understood by potential applicants, and so a recruiting firm may not be necessary. Still, a recruiting firm may provide benefits if potential candidates might be wary of the reason for vacancy.

If the council pushed out the city manager due to a desire for a “change of direction” – e.g., the council wishes to emphasize quality-of-life projects over economic development and believes a manager with that perspective is needed -- then a recruitment firm may not be needed, because such action is easily explainable to potential applicants.

4. Even if the previous three factors indicate that a recruitment firm is not needed, if there are unique challenges – e.g., economic, natural geographical, political, or social -- facing the city, then a recruitment firm may be justified to better explain the challenges to potential applicants. However, for easily explained challenges a recruiting firm may not be needed since the elected officials should be able to do the messaging to potential applicants.

As reflected in the last two factors influencing the decision to hire a recruitment firm, the more explainable and understandable the vacancy situation, the less the need for a firm. On the contrary, a less understandable and explainable situation would more likely justify a recruitment firm to attract more qualified applicants.

See Appendix B for an evaluative criterion for selecting a recruitment firm and determining which recruitment tasks should be outsourced, if not all.

3. The city council uses a hybrid approach conducting the recruitment and retaining someone to assist at certain points in the process.

This means that the city council is responsible for conducting the recruitment, but with assistance from an executive recruitment firm or similar resource. In some cases, the city council may wish to have assistance at the outset in thinking through the overall recruitment process and defining what they are looking for in a new city manager. In other cases, the city council will place advertisements for the vacant position, and then retain an executive search firm to assist in reviewing the resumes, conducting background checks and social media searches, and structuring an appropriate interview process. Social media searches and analysis are areas where in-house expertise may be lacking and search firms can provide. As a guide for the hybrid alternative, use Appendix B's list of recruitment tasks to help decide which should be performed by the city and which by the recruitment firm.

Consequently, executive recruitment firms can be used to conduct a "partial recruitment," and this hybrid alternative may be appropriate where cost is a consideration or where the city council desires to take a more active role in the actual recruitment process.

Chapter 2 Summary

Deciding on who conducts the recruitment process depends on the city's situation as depicted by the four factors above – e.g., if the city wants to conduct an extensive marketing campaign, lacks capacity to perform all or certain tasks related to recruitment, has a difficult political situation, etc., then outsourcing all or some of the recruitment tasks could be appropriate. One size does not fit all.

Chapter 3 - The Recruitment Process -- Establish Parameters

Prior to starting the recruitment process, the city council must decide on the parameters for the overall recruitment process – e.g., the necessary steps, the marketing and selection criteria, the participants, etc. Items to be considered by the city council include the following:

Scope of the Recruitment

Once a city manager vacancy is advertised, resumes will usually be received from individuals in different parts of the country. It is assumed that the city is looking for the best candidate, and that all resumes received will be reviewed carefully. Some cities will choose to focus on their state or region, thinking that these candidates may have a better understanding and orientation to problems they face, legal issues, financing alternatives, and similar matters. On the other hand, some cities prefer an aggressive nationwide search.

Although a city may receive 100 or more applications for the position, the difference between quantity and quality is important. For a variety of reasons, the labor market in terms of outstanding applicants is increasingly tight, and the number of candidates meeting the council requirements may be limited. While it is always possible to generate applications from individuals just by placing advertisements in various publications, the concern of the city council should be in quality rather than quantity of applicants. Those individuals that the city council would consider outstanding are often employed elsewhere, and they may have given little thought to a job change. As such, it is desirable to supplement the advertising process by aggressively identifying and talking with potential candidates.

Table III – Steps for conducting a comprehensive recruitment process:

1. The position should be well defined in the city council's recruitment criteria.
2. The position should be effectively advertised.
3. As a supplement to the advertising process, outstanding potential candidates should be identified and invited to apply.
4. All resumes should be acknowledged, and applicants should be notified regarding the status and timing of the recruitment.
5. Resumes should be carefully reviewed against criteria developed by the city council, and backgrounds of leading applicants should be thoroughly examined, with work-related references as a basis for selecting finalists.
6. A selection process consisting of interviews, background and reference assessments, exercises designed to assess the full range of skills and personal attributes required, or similar technique should be used as a basis for making a hiring decision.
7. A total compensation package should be negotiated, and all terms and conditions of employment placed in writing.

Steps to be Followed

In addition to the scope of the recruitment, it is important for the city council to determine at the outset the steps to be followed and the selection approaches to be used in the overall recruiting process. If an executive search firm is involved, they will provide leadership in this area. In either case, the city council should understand the basic steps and, if the council is conducting the recruitment itself, who will be responsible for accomplishing each step. This may be the mayor, a city council committee, or the city council itself. The basic steps include placement of advertisements; identification of and invitation to potential candidates; review of resumes, including the conduct of work-related background checks and social media searches and analysis; a selection process and subsequent procedure for negotiating a compensation package with the person selected. See Table III.

The Participants

Who will be involved is an important question and this should be addressed by the city council at the outset of the recruitment.

- City Council--Initially, the city council needs to decide who will have responsibility for conducting the recruitment. (See Chapter 2) Once this decision is made, there are related questions concerning the involvement of others in the recruitment. These concern the role of the staff, the role of citizens or citizen committees, and the role of the press.
- City Staff--With respect to the staff, their role can vary, depending upon whether the city council or an executive search firm is responsible for conducting the recruitment. If the city council is conducting the recruitment, staff will often times be responsible for placing advertisements and collecting resumes. They may also assist in scheduling interviews. If an executive search firm is involved, the firm could be responsible for all of these administrative details. In this case, the role of the staff is usually limited to providing information about the city and to coordinating generally with the firm. Regardless of the approach used, it is important that time be set aside for key staff to visit with finalists.
- Citizen Committees-- The city council needs to decide whether or not to involve citizens or citizen committees in the recruitment process. In the majority of cases, the city council assumes responsibility for the recruitment, on their own or with a firm, and goes through the process of selecting a new city manager. However, in some cases, city councils have involved citizens or citizen committees in the process of defining what the city is looking for in a new city manager; in the review process leading to the determination of finalists; and/or in the selection process itself. If desired by the city council and structured properly, it is possible for citizens to play a role in the process.

While citizen involvement can play an important role in recruitment, two cautions must be noted:

- The city council must not lose control in terms of making the final decision, so that candidates do not receive the impression that they are being hired by a committee as opposed to the city council itself.

- Most often the public does not fully understand the job of the city manager especially how it relates to the city council, how government works, the complexity of the public policy arena with multiple diverging perspectives, etc. So, the public's preferences should not trump the council's preferences.

Timing

The timing of a city manager recruitment can sometimes be affected by publication deadlines which are important in terms of properly advertising the vacant position. However, an ideal timeline would provide 30 - 60 days from the start of the recruitment to the deadline for submitting resumes; 30 - 60 days to review resumes, have interviews, conduct background checks, and make a selection; and a minimum of 30 - 45 days for the new city manager to relocate to the city. Candidates often look at submitting a resume as a major career decision and it is important that they have adequate time to consider the opportunity, discuss it with their family, and prepare an appropriate resume. Similarly, the city council or the executive recruitment firm needs sufficient time to review resumes and conduct background checks in order to ensure that good candidates are not overlooked and that finalists meet the desired qualifications of the city council. Overall, the recruitment should move forward in an expeditious way, allowing adequate time for a thorough and comprehensive process.

Selection Criteria

Identifying what is needed in the new city manager goes to the heart of the recruitment and should not be put aside based upon statements such as "we will never be able to agree", "anyone with good management experience can do the job", or "we want someone just like our former city manager." Because no one is an expert in all areas, and because city managers have various backgrounds and experiences, it is important for the city council to reach a general consensus on competencies, experience, education level, skills, etc. they want the new city manager to possess and objectives that they will look to him/her to achieve.

These competencies, experience, objectives, etc. will help the city council to specify, in some detail, the kind of work experience and personal characteristics they believe their new city manager should possess. Bundle all these together, and you will have the recruitment information for advertising the position and the selection criteria for screening the applicants. In doing this, of course, the city council should keep the size of the city, the nature of the city, and services provided in perspective. Remember that what succeeded in another city may not work in your city due to different community cultures, geography, demographics, politics, financial resources, etc.

By reaching a general consensus on selection guidelines/criteria at the outset, the city council will be better able to tell potential candidates what they are looking for in a city manager. Also, the city council will also have a specific basis for reviewing resumes, selecting finalists, and making a hiring decision – i.e., the criteria will be vital for screening the candidates.

The parameters can be used in three ways during the recruitment process:

1. For advertising the position and responding to applicant's questions about the position and the process;
2. For the selection criteria when reviewing the resumes, evaluating the interviewees, and conducting reference checks; and
3. For assessing the performance of the new city manager after he/she is hired and on the job.

Compensation

A final item to be considered at the outset of the recruitment is compensation. While it is important for the city council to have some general understanding of the salary parameters that will be acceptable, it is also important that the council leave itself some flexibility in this area.

Some city councils leave salary open, commensurate with background and experience. From a practical standpoint, every city has political or other limits in terms of compensation, and this can be taken into account by reviewing the current salary of applicants at the time finalists are selected. Another approach to consider is listing the current city manager's salary or the proposed salary range, while stating the salary is negotiable. For determining a salary range, the TML has an annual survey of salaries and benefits provided for 27 positions in Texas cities, including the position of city manager.

Chapter 3 Summary

The city council should discuss and reach a consensus on each of the above parameters at the outset of the recruitment. Not only will this help to ensure that the city council is unified in its approach and thinking regarding the recruitment of a new city manager, but it will also result in a framework for conducting the overall recruitment. Once this has been completed, the recruitment process can move forward.

Chapter 4. The Recruitment Process

The recruitment process is distinguished from the selection process (See Chapter 5) by virtue of the fact that it focuses on the generation of a sufficient pool of qualified and diversified applicants so that the selection process has a good number of applicants to screen. Also, it is during the recruitment process that applicants obtain their first impressions of the city, so it is important to be professional, punctual, responsive, etc. to make a good first impression on the applicants. Keep this in mind during the process for advertising and obtaining applications for the position.

Understanding Qualified and Diverse Applicants

Qualified means more than technical and administrative skills and experience, but also the “non-task-related factors” of the job. The city manager’s job definitely has certain well-defined tasks, such as budgeting, supervising, communicating, etc., that are vital to the organization’s core operations. In addition, there are non-task-related factors that are needed in a more subtle, less obvious way to provide support in the organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the city organization exists. (Klingner et al, 2010, 184) A city manager may be very good in the well-defined city managerial tasks but may be lacking in the non-task-related factors resulting in poor overall performance. An example would be similar to the medical doctor’s bedside manner – i.e., a medical doctor is the expert on individual health care and speaks with authority when communicating with a patient. However, if the doctor cannot adequately communicate with a patient so as to demonstrate empathy, understanding, caring, listening, etc., then all the expertise in the world will not make the patient feel better. This is basically what non-task related factors are – bedside manners which help the public to understand the city’s perspective on a problem, etc.

Diversity is about heterogeneity, variety, etc. in today’s complex public sector, because communities are an ever-increasing mix of races, ethnicities, religions, sexual preferences, etc. The 2020 US Census reveals that US racial and ethnic diversity increased from 2010 to 2020 – e.g., people of color represented 43% of the total population in 2020, up from 34% in 2010; and Texas is ranked #6 on the Diversity Index for the 50 states with a diversity score of 67%, while the national average is 61%.¹ In other words, diversity is real and must be acknowledged and reckoned with in the recruitment process. It is not just a buzzword or politically correct sentiment to be acknowledged and then forgotten, because it only makes sense that the city’s work force should be reflective of its community.

Diversity in the recruitment process should result in the applicant pool being composed of a cross section of applicants who can help enable the city organization to better reflect the community in the provision of public services. There are two ways to accomplish this – by targeting minority job markets, schools, and professional groups, and by allowing job experiences required for the position to include assistant city managers and department

¹ Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census. US Census Bureau. 8-12-21 <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html>

heads. (See Appendix D for recommendations to achieve a diverse applicant pool. by ICMA)

Relations with Applicants

As indicated previously, the recruitment of a city manager is a two-way street. For applicants, it is important that key information be packaged and presented effectively, and that the process be flexible and well organized so as not to discourage the potential applicant from pursuing the vacancy. Similarly, the image that others have of the city is reflected in how the recruitment is conducted and this is a further reason why relations with applicants are important. Considerations to keep in mind in establishing positive relations with applicants include the following:

Application form -- Few cities require applicants to complete a standardized application form. If an application form is used, it should be easy to complete, and the information requested should be related to the vacant position.

Most city councils prefer to provide some flexibility by permitting applicants to submit a resume in whatever format they believe will be the most effective. From the standpoint of the applicant, this approach provides the ability to present past work experience in a way that is directly related to the vacant position. At the same time, it permits the city council to see how the applicant organizes and presents material in a written format, and the manner in which materials are prepared can also be an initial indication as to the real interest of the person in the position.

Providing information -- Serious applicants will not submit a resume for consideration until they have done their homework and satisfied themselves that the vacant position does, in fact, represent a good career opportunity. Often times, they will seek information about the city and the position as part of their review of this particular career opportunity.

This is one of the first places where a potential applicant will form an impression of the city. If the impression is that the recruitment is disorganized, that members of the city council are not sure what they are looking for or they are saying different things, or that sufficient information about the city is not easily obtained, they may simply lose interest and not apply. On the other hand, if their impression is that the city council has spent time considering the position, that the recruitment is well organized, and that information about the city is positive, complete, and effectively packaged, this can tilt the scales in favor of submitting a resume. These are the preferred types of applicants because they are selective in their job searches, and do not take a shotgun approach to all job vacancies.

Whether the city council is conducting the recruitment or an executive search firm is involved, a basic information packet should be prepared that includes:

- a copy of the recruiting guidelines indicating key objectives and priorities, and what the city council is looking for in the position
- ordinance or charter requirements if they contain significant or unusual provisions regarding the position

- summary information about the city government, including biographical information on council members with length of service, organization structure, personnel practices, number of employees, services provided, and budget data
- a timetable indicating the principal steps and time frame for the overall recruitment
- information about the city including data on key businesses, in the form of a Chamber of Commerce brochure or publication, if such is attractively prepared and available.

As an alternative, you might want to provide the city's website address and let the applicants know that summary information about the city government is thereby available. Doing this lets the council know something about the applicant's level of initiative, seriousness about the job, and knowledge of using digital media for information gathering.

Acknowledging resumes & providing status report -- A simple and courteous step in the recruitment process that is often overlooked is acknowledging resumes as they are received and notifying applicants as to their status as the recruitment proceeds. Prompt acknowledgment of resumes is one indication that the recruitment process is being handled in a businesslike way, and it can further impress the applicant in a positive manner. Notifying all applicants as to their status, even if they are not selected as a finalist, is a basic courtesy that will pay benefits in terms of how the candidate views the city. The initial acknowledgment can also reference the recruitment timetable and, unless there are unusual or unanticipated delays, this notice should be sufficient until applicants are actually notified as to their final status. Applicants should be notified before their name is printed in a newspaper. To maintain confidentiality, any correspondence from the city should be directed to the applicant's home, not business address.

Confidentiality -- As indicated previously, confidentiality is an important consideration in any recruitment. Obviously, a recruitment must be conducted consistent with applicable Texas "sunshine" laws – e.g., the Open Meetings Act and the Public Information Act (PIA). Applicants recognize that city councils, or their representative in the recruitment process, will need to conduct background checks before a hiring decision is made. However, applicants are also aware of the problems that can be created locally if premature disclosure of their interest in another position is made public.

From a recruiting standpoint, it is in the interest of the city to maintain confidentiality throughout the process. Assurance of confidentiality, within the law, will simply result in more applications for the city council to consider, particularly from those individuals who are presently working. While applicants realize that the city will want to contact their present employer at some point to assess the job they have done, they typically prefer to wait until it is clear that they are going to be considered as a finalist.

Because of the importance of confidentiality to both parties, it is important for the city council to determine, at the outset, with advice from the city attorney, the extent to which the recruitment process will be confidential. If disclosure of the names of applicants is likely to

occur at any point, potential applicants should be advised so they may take this into account in making their decision whether or not to pursue the position. Assurances regarding confidentiality should be honored, and contacts with present employers should be coordinated with the applicants in order to provide the applicants with adequate time to first notify their current employer.

There is no faster way to lose good applicants and, in the process, to damage their present security and long-term career than to violate the trust or assurance that was given regarding confidentiality.

Public Information Act (PIA) -- In general, materials submitted by an applicant are considered public information and subject to disclosure.² The names and qualifications of candidates for a position are not exempt from disclosure under PIA which exempts from disclosure "personnel files, the disclosure of which would constitute clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" since candidates' names are not facts of a highly embarrassing or intimate nature, which, if publicized, would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person.³

The city council usually cannot contract away its right to access documents that are held by a consultant if the information would otherwise be considered public.

If information in the possession of a governmental body is available to the public under the PIA, the public body cannot make an enforceable promise to keep it confidential.⁴ Nor does the mere fact that information was discussed in an executive session make it confidential under the PIA.⁵ For example, if the city council receives a request for information containing the names of applicants for the position of city manager, the fact that the information was presented to the council during an executive session does not authorize the city to withhold that information, except for the minutes of the executive session in which the applicants were discussed.⁶

Information prepared by consultants, such as a search firm, for a city is generally considered public information even though the information may not be physically within the city's custody.⁷ A city may not authorize its agents (e.g., a private search firm) to keep information confidential if the city has no authority to do so. Absent a specific statutory provision, names of applicants for public employment are not excepted from disclosure under the PIA.⁸

² Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. ORD 455 (1987).

³ *Hubert v. Harte-Hanks Texas Newspapers, Inc.*, 652 S.W.2d 546 (Tex.App.-Austin 1983, writ ref'dn.r.e.).

⁴ Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. Nos. JM-37 (1983), H-258 (1974), ORD 585 and ORD 605.

⁵ Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. ORD 485 (1987).

⁶ Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. ORD 605 (1992).

⁷ Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. ORD 462 (1987)

⁸ Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. ORD 585 (1991)

Recruiting Applicants

To recruit, you must market the job so that its requirements are clear to potential applicants and the target audience is more that adequately addressed. This means that the process of recruiting applicants should be comprehensive, and should incorporate the following elements:

Advertising -- To attract a qualified and diversified applicant pool, it is important that everyone who might have an interest in the vacant position be aware that the recruitment process is underway. Even if considerable time will be devoted to the identification of potential candidates, a comprehensive advertising program is important in terms of assuring that no one is overlooked. This is taking both a rifle approach – i.e., identifying specific applicants -- and a shotgun approach – i.e., spreading the job vacancy to a wide range of potential applicants.

An advertising program does not have to be extensive or expensive to be comprehensive. For example, most cities avoid advertising in general circulation newspapers for a city manager, unless there is a local requirement to the contrary. This is typically the most expensive form of advertising, and it produces the fewest results. Commonly used sources would include the city's website and Facebook page, TML's website and publications such as *Texas Town & City*, the newsletter of the International City/County Management Association, and publications of related national organizations such as the National League of Cities and the American Society of Public Administration. Diversity objectives can be enhanced by the careful placement of advertisements in minority publications such as the National Forum of Black Public Administrators, Public Service Careers.org, and by using the International City/County Management Association Job Center (<https://icma.org/job-center>).

Cities have some flexibility when preparing and placing advertisements, but at a minimum they should include the name of the city; the title of the vacant position; the population of the city; the amount of the operating and capital budgets; the number of full-time employees; services provided; a statement of the salary range, with background and experience desired; the filing deadline, including any special items of information desired such as current salary and work-related references; and brief description of key areas of interest and desirable experience and qualifications. Some publications permit the use of display ads which can, usually for a modest extra cost, offer the city an additional opportunity to impress potential candidates through the use of an innovative format incorporating the city logo and/or graphics.

Solicitation of Applicants -- The objective of any recruitment process is to assure that highly qualified and diversified applicants are available to be considered when filling a vacant position. Advertising can generate outstanding applicants, and cities should look closely at all resumes that are received. However, in order to assure that they have a sufficient number of good candidates, cities increasingly supplement the advertising process by identifying outstanding potential candidates and inviting them to apply. Those invited to apply will typically vary from city to city, recognizing the different types of background, experience, and personal characteristics that are required in one city manager position as compared to another.

Given what the city council is looking for in a city manager, an executive recruiting firm can use its knowledge of individuals in the profession to identify a group of individuals who meet the city's specific requirements.

This process can also be utilized where the city council, as opposed to an executive recruiting firm, is conducting the recruitment. However, the city council should be aware that it is extremely time consuming and, to be effective, should be done by one person who is knowledgeable about the city and what the city council is looking for in a city manager.

The identification of outstanding potential applicants is one way to assure that those the city council would like to consider are aware of the opening, as well as the interest of the city council in receiving a resume. Suggestions regarding potential applicants can come from a variety of sources – e.g., city council members, the departing city manager, and city officials in adjacent cities may have recommendations. Staff members and officers of TML and TCMA, while not recommending particular individuals, can be a source of names, as can individuals who work with cities generally in a professional capacity and in whose judgment the city council has confidence.

Once a list of names has been completed, and the emphasis in this regard should be on quality rather than quantity, a personal letter of invitation can be sent advising the person of the opening and requesting a resume. Email would be appropriate if the potential applicant had expressed some interest prior to the email and if you are using personal email address.

Once the letter has been mailed or email sent, a follow-up telephone call should be made to confirm the message was received, assure the recipient that it was not a form message, indicate why it is a good career opportunity, and answer questions. The same deadline for submitting resumes should be used in both the advertisements and the supplemental letters/emails of invitation.

In-house Applicants -- In addition to resumes that are submitted in response to advertisements or invitations to apply, the city council may receive applications from current city employees who want to be considered. In fact, it would not be unusual for other applicants to ask whether there are "in-house" applicants.

The city's advertising program should ensure that city employees are aware of the opportunity and know how and when to apply. It may be that the city council will even want to invite one or more employees to submit a resume. In either event, it is important that in-house applicants be treated in the same manner as other applicants. In this regard, it should be made clear that if an in-house applicant is ultimately selected as city manager, it is only because the city council felt he/she was the best choice.

While most applicants will receive a written notification as to their status, the city council may wish to talk personally with in-house applicants who were not selected as a way of assuring good communication with city staff, maintaining good morale, and helping to assure

an orderly and positive transition.

Chapter 4 Summary

Generating a sufficient pool of qualified and diversified applicants is the goal of the recruitment process. To accomplish this, relations with potential applicants and applicants must communicate the city's professionalism and responsiveness, and provide accurate and descriptive information about the city, the position, the community, etc., and the status of the process. The city must stress that confidentiality will be maintained per the law. The city can use both the shotgun and rifle approaches for reaching out to potential applicants while making sure that both approaches emphasize diversity in the applicant pool.

Chapter 5 - The Selection Process

Once the deadline for submitting resumes has passed, the selection process begins. Included in the process are those activities leading to the final selection of a city manager. Principal steps in the selection process include reviewing resumes and determining finalists, interviews with finalists, and post-interview activities. There is neither a short cut in the selection process steps nor one selection method (e.g., resume, interview, assessments, references, etc.) that works best. In addition, vital to the selection process is including diversity in the process and its importance to the final decision, and why partisan politics should not be a factor in the selection. All will be discussed below.

No Short Cuts

There are several methods used in the selection process to screen applicants, and these include biographical data [as in the resume and/or application], reference letters, aptitude tests, assessment centers, background checks, social media, and interviews, both face-to-face (face-to-face) and virtual. Each method has its pros and cons, but all have their limitations so there should be no dependence upon a single method – e.g., some interviewers claim to know everything they want about an applicant from an hour or so interview. An extreme example of a short cut is the claim that all that is needed is to observe the applicant when he/she walks in the door, shakes hands, sits down, and introduces his/herself, and this does not even include the remainder of the interview.

Table IV below provides an indication of the strengths of standard selection methods as reflected in their validity (the accuracy of a measure – i.e., whether the results really do represent what they are supposed to measure), reliability (the consistency of a measure – i.e., whether the results can be reproduced under the same conditions) and cost. While the assessment centers may provide the best indication of an applicant’s probability for success, they are costly, labor intensive, and can be difficult to administer. Interestingly, the interview along with the reference letters are rated the lowest. The point is that it is best to use several methods with the understanding that each has its limitations, but that a combination of the methods will most likely reveal the applicant’s real self, abilities, etc.

Table IV -- Comparison of Selection Methods (Arvey and Faley 1993)

| Method | Validity | Reliability | Cost |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. Biographical Data | Moderate | High | Low |
| 2. Reference Letters | Low | Low | Low |
| 3. Aptitude Tests | Low | Moderate | Low |
| 4. Assessment Center | Moderate | High | High |
| 5. Interviews | Low | Low | High |

Of course, the dependability of the selection method is affected by the capacity of screening participants, the amount of training/instruction they received, and the quality of any selection criteria, scoring rubrics, etc., which they will use to facilitate the screening. If

they are not prepared – e.g., do not know (or use) the criteria for the new city manager; have not reviewed the resumes and prepared questions to ask; etc., then the dependability will be lacking.

Diversity

Even though the recruitment process may have successfully achieved a large, diversified applicant pool, this is not sufficient if the participants in the selection process are not also representative of the community demographically. It is important that the participants in the screening represent a cross section of the community as much as possible. Of course, many times the city council is already diverse, so this may not be a major concern.

Diversity in the selection process can lead to a better hiring decision than if a homogeneous body does the selection, because research shows that more diverse groups make better decisions than homogeneous groups. And this likewise results in the higher probability of the hire being a good fit. (See Appendix D for ICMA information on diversity.)

Politics in the Recruitment Process

The city council’s role in the recruitment process and the selection of a city manager should remain politically neutral, and they should not expect the city manager to share their political perspectives. This is necessary because political neutrality is the hallmark of the city management profession.

The singularly most important premise of the council-manager form of city government is non-partisanship behavior by the city manager who is professionally required to perform in a non-partisan manner and to avoid electoral politics. This professional standard, along with education and training, ensures that the city manager relies on technical and administrative reasons in his/her official duties and not political reasons. It is the city council’s role to bring politics into the policy-making process.

Avoid political partisanship in the selection process.

There is nothing inherently wrong with politics per se, because they are basic to democratic government where public resources are divvied up among various issue areas, interest groups, geographical areas, etc., when addressing the public interest. In this political process, city managers must avoid becoming an actual participant in the political arena where votes are cast for or against proposed public policy or candidates. Simultaneously, they must be politically astute and understand the politics of any situation, while their recommendations overwhelmingly reflect the technical/administrative evidence/data and not the political positions of their elected bosses.

For city managers, there is a difference between big “P” and small “p” political activity. Big “P” activity, which is prohibited, includes any conduct related to a candidate’s

campaign for any publicly elected office. City managers cannot endorse candidates, sign petitions, make financial contributions to candidate campaigns, or contribute to the organization that fund candidates. However, engaging in public issues, i.e., small “p” activities, is allowed, because city managers play a role in the presentation of issues related to local government and advocate for [public] issues before the city council based upon the facts and as directed by the city council. (PM, Martha Perego, April 2021)

The point is to let the elected officials handle the give-and-take of political electoral processes while the city manager addresses the fact/data-driven recommendations and implementation processes. Managers must neither let politics drive their decision-making nor their problem-solving.

To top it off, city managers understand that they work for the elected officials – i.e., the mayor and the city council are their boss as represented by a majority vote of the city council. Managers are obligated to implement the policies adopted by the city council. And even if they do not agree with a policy, they must still implement it, or resign. They must never sabotage the will of the elected officials. This is spelled out in the *Texas City Management Association Code of Ethics* as evidenced by Tenets 1, 5, and 7 of the *TCMA Code of Ethics* in Table V (See Appendix E – *TCMA Code of Ethics*).

And this understanding of the city manager’s role and non-involvement in politics should be on display during the selection process by the elected officials. That is, politics should not be a criterion for the selection of the city manager since an applicant’s political leanings do not matter in the city management profession.

Bottomline for the city council is not to inject partisan politics into the selection process.

Table V -- TCMA Code of Ethics – Why city managers avoid politics.

Tenet 1. Be dedicated to the concepts of effective and democratic local government by responsible elected officials and believe that professional general management is essential to the achievement of this objective.

Tenet 5. Provide elected officials with facts and advice on matters of policy and implement local government policies adopted by elected officials.

Tenet 7. Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators and from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.

Reviewing Resumes

The process leading to the determination of finalists is extremely important because it separates all applicants into two groups--those who will receive further consideration and those who won't. Unless this process is done with both care and consistency, it is possible that outstanding applicants will be overlooked.

The selection process begins with a review of all resumes that have been submitted. While a deadline for submitting resumes is typically established, this can be viewed as a planning deadline and if so, all resumes are considered, even if they arrive after the planning deadline. Depending upon circumstances, a city can receive in excess of 75 resumes for a vacant city manager position. The review of resumes will take time, so guidelines as provided below, need to be developed to assist in narrowing the total to a smaller group for further investigation.

Organizing the review -- Unless the city council has retained an executive recruiting firm to assist in the selection process, it must organize to review resumes. There are at least three alternatives, and the city staff could be involved in all three:

1. Give each council member a fixed period of time to review all resumes, and to recommend a smaller number for further consideration. Someone on the city council should then act as a coordinator to group the common choices together, and to resolve whether those who were not picked by the majority of the city council will receive further consideration.
2. Ask a committee of the city council to assume responsibility for the application review process, and to ultimately recommend a group of finalists to the city council.
3. Use an outside third party such as a retired and respected city manager, university professor with city management experience, etc. to help screen the resumes and narrow them down as far as the basic criteria – e.g., years of experience, amount of education, types of competencies, etc. Or, let the city's HR director perform the initial screenings so that the city council will not have to review all the resumes received.

Key elements -- As discussed briefly earlier, three key elements, as listed below, are particularly important in the overall resume review process regardless of how organized:

- **Acknowledgement:** The resumes should all be acknowledged. Ideally, this will be done when they are received, and the acknowledgment will incorporate a broad timetable that provides the city council with adequate review time before finalists are selected.
- **Timeliness:** The process should move forward as promptly as possible, consistent with a thorough review. If the review process takes too long, it could be construed as a signal to the candidate that there is a lack of leadership and the process is not well organized. For this or other reasons, the city council can lose good applicants who simply have second thoughts and change their mind.
- **Confidentiality:** Consistent with applicable State law and the advice of the city attorney, the confidentiality of resumes submitted for the city manager position should be maintained. Contact with others as part of the review process is important, but it should be coordinated with the applicant as a courtesy and to avoid jeopardizing the applicant's current position. While there may be times during the resume review process when it is helpful to check with others, this type of contact normally occurs after the city council has narrowed down to a smaller group which will be subject to more thorough work-related background checks. Please note that

using a search firm for the recruitment process does not prevent its records from being subject to release under the Public Information Act. For example, if a consultant maintains or holds records for a governmental body, the documents are still considered public information if the governmental body owns the information or has a right of access to it.

Use the Council's Criteria -- Those reviewing the resumes should compare them with the recruiting criteria that were adopted by the city council at the outset of the recruiting process. In this way, the factors that were most important to the city council will be considered in narrowing down to a smaller group of applicants. Other questions to address in the screening process include:

1. Has the applicant had experience working in a city of comparable size?
2. Has the applicant had experience with the variety of services delivered by the city?
3. Has the experience been comparable in terms of size of budget and number of employees?
4. Has the applicant worked in a similar geographic area? Is the applicant likely to be comfortable in a rural or urban setting, and familiar with the problems faced generally by the city?
5. Has the applicant had broad administrative and supervisory authority, or has the experience of the applicant been limited to research or administering activities in specialized areas?
6. Has the applicant worked directly with a city council? Does the applicant have experience working with citizen and other groups?
7. What is the employment history of the applicant? Does it suggest a pattern of broad experience and increasing responsibility? Does the applicant have good tenure with each employer, or is there a pattern of frequent movement from one position to another?
8. What is the current salary of the applicant? Does it fit within the parameters of the city?
9. How have the resume and letter of transmittal been prepared?
10. Does the letter of transmittal suggest a real interest in the city manager position?
11. What does the resume itself tell you about the person?

Determining Finalists

When the resume review process has been completed, it should be possible to narrow the total group of applicants to a smaller second-round group consisting of perhaps 10-15 applicants. This smaller group will be subject to more thorough background checks including references and social media usage history. Also, virtual interviews could be used to help narrow the second-round applicants to the final round which will be 3-5 applicants who are the finalists and invited to the city for an interview.

Three cautions on the screening:

- Accurate understanding of social media usage: social media exist, for good or bad, so it should not be ignored in the screening process of applicants. However, searching

social media in a free-lance, hit-and-miss basis should not be allowed, but a more systematic, comprehensive search should be used so that the norm of “social media stuff” is not confused with something that should be of concern. This may best be accomplished with search firms that specialize in such searches or, if available, staff personnel with knowledge of social media.

- Do not short-cut the process: The city council should resist the temptation to select finalist candidates before background checks have been completed. When reviewing resumes, some may suggest that the city council pick those that they feel are best and move right ahead to interview. However, while resumes are helpful as an initial screening device, they can also be misleading and as mentioned earlier, they are not a short cut in the selection process. They tell you nothing about the personal characteristics of the individual in terms of ability to work effectively with people – i.e., his/her non-task related factors of the job as described earlier. They can also leave an exaggerated impression of the actual background, responsibilities, and accomplishments of the individual. It is neither practical nor necessary to conduct background checks on all applicants, but an important interim step is to conduct background checks on a smaller group as a prelude to and basis for selecting finalists.
- References’ awareness of city government: Be sure the background checks that are completed are work related. While there is nothing wrong with talking with community leaders and other general references regarding the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate, the purpose of the background checks is to provide the city council with a solid reading as to the candidate's ability to handle the job from an administrative standpoint, and to work effectively with the city council, staff, and people generally. Consequently, background checks should be conducted primarily with people who know local government, understand the job of city manager, and who have a firsthand knowledge of the performance of the applicant in this area. Such work-related background checks would normally be based on conversations with current and former council members, staff members the applicant has worked closely with and/or supervised, and others who have worked closely with the applicant. As indicated previously, confidentiality is extremely important, and the city should be sure to coordinate with the applicant in terms of any background checks that are undertaken.

Background Checks -- When conducting background checks as a basis for narrowing to a group of finalists, several guidelines are important:

- The background checks should be done by the same person to assure consistency.
- Similar areas and questions should be covered with respect to each applicant to provide a good basis for comparison.
- Talk with enough people to get a consistent reading as to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual. If a person can only say good things about the applicant, ask them directly about the applicant’s weaknesses.
- Use the background checks as a vehicle to learn about the person's ability to work

effectively with people, as well as to develop a more complete understanding of the applicant's work experience and specific accomplishments.

Based upon the result of the background checks and keeping in mind the city council's selection criteria which reflects what the city is looking for in a city manager, the city council should be able to narrow to a smaller group of 3-5 finalists. The city council obviously makes the final determination as to who and how many will be interviewed, but the finalist group should be large enough to expose the city council to an array of personalities, diversified applicants, competencies, and skill sets. In most cases, a minimum of 3-5 should be interviewed face-to-face as finalists. The city may also wish to establish a back-up group in case some of the finalists decide not to pursue the position.

Interviews

The number of first round finalists can vary, as mentioned before, from 10 to 15 depending on the council's preference. The normal process is for there to be at least two sets of finalists – the first round would have a much more in-depth screening than the preliminary resume screening, and possibly include short virtual interviews– e.g., 30 minutes -- prior to the final cut. A preliminary virtual interview should expedite the screening process by better revealing more about the applicants than the resumes, background checks, etc. Then once the final cut is made to the final round of finalists, the interviews should be face-to-face and much longer – e.g., at least one to two hours.

Steps for Contacting Finalists and Scheduling Interviews (both virtual and face-to-face) --

Once finalists have been selected, a representative of the city council should call each finalist and confirm appropriate next steps. Among other things, the city should:

- Confirm with each individual that he/she has been selected as a finalist. Each individual should be congratulated and made to feel that the city council is delighted to have their resume. At the same time, the continuing interest of the individual in the position should be confirmed.
- Advise each finalist of the nature of the interview process, e.g., virtual and/or face to face; entire council or committee; etc., as well as the date and time. Also confirm how many will be interviewed, whether there are any in-house candidates, and when you expect a decision to be made. Indicate that this will all be confirmed in a follow-up letter.
- Unless State law or the advice of the city attorney dictates otherwise, assure the applicant that the confidentiality of the process will be maintained. If the names of finalists are to be made public, the applicant should be advised of this, and given the opportunity to withdraw.
- Indicate that a more complete packet of information about the city will be mailed directly to the applicant's home. Material to be included might include:
 1. Current budget and financial report
 2. Recent bond prospectus
 3. Organization chart
 4. Personnel rules and regulations

5. List of council members, their bios and length of service
6. Copies of city council minutes for the past several months
7. General plan and land use map
8. Statement of city goals, objectives, priorities
9. Any other material that would be of particular relevance, given the goals and objectives of the city council.

Since the city's website is full of information, you might not want to spoon feed the applicants by sending them a full package of information, but see if the applicants have the initiative, computer savvy, etc. to find the information himself/herself using the website.

Interviews – Face-to-Face and Virtual -- A 30-minute virtual interview is a good tool to use for the first round of finalists, because it should improve the quality of the final round finalists for face-to-face interviews. This gives you the advantage of seeing a broader pool without spending travel costs on a larger pool. For example, this allows less traditional candidates, and ones more geographically isolated, to get a closer look than they might otherwise get when the city is weighing the travel costs to bring them in.

While virtual interviews are not a replacement for face-to-face interviews, they are better than a telephone conversation or printed documents, because the applicant's image is available for observation. However, it is important to be aware that with information technology such as Zoom, Facebook, Skype, etc., there are two selves -- the virtual self and the physical self -- resulting in the ability for someone to "diverge" as two human beings, each with a distinct persona and history." (Leonard Brody 2013) For example, the virtual self can be self-confident, well-spoken, use proper grammar, in control of his/her emotions, etc. while the physical self may be lacking in all aspects. Or it could be vice-versa with the physical self being superior to the virtual self.

Of course, while the two-selves makes the screening of applicants even more difficult, it is not impossible; it is just something to be aware of. However, it is not much different from reviewing resumes and trying to figure out who is the real applicant; or doing the same in face-to-face interviews. Bottom line, you must be aware that the applicant is performing to get the job, and your job as a screener is to determine if that performance reflects the real person. For the pros and cons of virtual interviews, please see Appendix F.

The Interview Process -- With respect to the actual interview, the city council obviously has the ability to structure an approach it feels comfortable with and believes will permit it to make the best decision regarding a new city manager. The interview process should be well organized and the setting comfortable. A discussion leader should be designated, and all council members should participate. Typically, the city council meets individually with each finalist for an hour or more. During this time, the council has an opportunity to question the individual about a variety of matters such as overall work experience, specific accomplishments, career objectives, alternative approaches to practical problems faced by the city, and similar matters. The candidate, of course, also has an opportunity to assess the council as a group, and to ask questions.

During both the formal and informal meetings between the city council and the finalist, discussion and questions should focus generally on those things referenced in the recruiting guidelines. Obviously, discussions should stay within acceptable legal parameters which suggests, in part, no questions concerning politics, religion, and sexual preferences. The focus must always remain on KSA – knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Don't spend time during the initial interview talking about compensation, except to ask about the candidate's expectations. If the council is aware of general expectations, they can take this into account in making a final selection and, in subsequent negotiations, on total compensation. To discuss this subject in detail during the initial interview deprives the council of a chance to consider more substantive questions and can result in a defensive or argumentative atmosphere with a candidate before it is even clear that the position will be offered.

Structured interviews fare better for predicting performance.

Research has shown that structured interviews fare better for predicting performance. While an unstructured interview might resemble a chatty discussion between the interviewers and candidate with question topics varying for each candidate and with little linkage to the job criteria, a structured interview is the opposite with predetermined questions such as about the candidate's behavior in past situations. A rating scale and rubric should be used to score each candidate. The rubric gives examples of what average, good, or great answers look like. Each interviewer scores the rubrics and then meet as a group to discuss their scoring and decide on the best candidate. The aggregation of interviewers' judgments on scoring should improve the selection process and produce the best candidate. (Kahneman et al. 2021, 309) (See Appendix G for Suggested interview questions.)

While the process provides the city council with an opportunity to improve its knowledge of finalists, it also results in an impression on the part of the candidate, which can affect interest in the position. In part, the process should help to cement the interest of the candidate in the position. In this regard, the city council may wish to arrange for additional events such as a dinner or a tour of the city.

Community/City Employees Involvement in Interview Process -- Most often interviews are simply discussions between the city council and the finalists. Sometimes, however, the city council may choose to supplement the interview process by inviting city employees and/or community leaders, and even the public in general, to participate. For example, finalists may meet with the department heads or other staff to review departmental operations in more detail, or to receive a tour of the city. Similarly, finalists may meet with selected community leaders to receive their input on matters they consider important to the city. If this is done, it should be emphasized that it is to provide the candidate with additional information about the city, and that these individuals will not be involved in the actual selection of the city manager. Obviously, the city council should use care in selecting the individuals with whom the finalists will meet, and the importance of maintaining confidentiality should be

emphasized to all concerned. Also, care should be taken to assure that the process does not confuse, offend, or take the candidate by surprise.

Spouse Involvement -- If the spouse is invited to accompany the finalist candidate, it is also important that this part of the process be well organized. While the spouse may prefer to have some free time, the interests of the spouse should be determined and accommodated. This could include a tour of the city, an opportunity to talk with realtors and visit homes, and a briefing on schools in the area. Spouses should not be included in a formal interview process or made to feel like they are being interrogated in any way. As with the candidate, including the spouse should be viewed as a courtesy that lets both the city council and the spouse get to know each other, and should result in the same positive impression concerning the city and the city manager position.

Reimbursement of Expenses -- Confirm the city's policy on reimbursement of expenses in conjunction with the interview. While this is obviously a policy decision to be made by the city council, it is clearly the practice of most cities to reimburse candidates for any actual out-of-pocket expenses. These typically include transportation, room, and board. Some of the finalists may have submitted their resume in response to an invitation from the city but, regardless, city reimbursement of expenses is another way the council can demonstrate their interest in the candidate. This tends to reinforce the positive nature of the process and can also make the difference in some cases as to whether the finalist is able to attend. When there is strong reluctance on the part of the city council in this area, some cities have agreed to share expenses with the candidate or have indicated they will reimburse all expenses after the first trip.

With respect to actual travel arrangements, the city can offer to handle all reservations, transportation, and related matters. However, this can be quite cumbersome and time consuming for the city. In most cases, the city confirms the time and place, and lets the finalist make their own arrangements. Finalists tend to prefer this approach.

Making the Selection

When the selection process is over, there are three possible outcomes--either one finalist has emerged as the clear choice of the city council, or they have narrowed down to several that they would like to pursue further, or none of the candidates were acceptable.

If there is one clear first choice, the city council, through its representative, can simply notify the candidate, confirm the willingness of the candidate to accept the position, and then move to finalize a total compensation package and other arrangements.

If there are still two or three applicants to whom the council would like to give further consideration, several options exist. The city council may wish to invite the candidate and possibly the spouse for a second interview. A longer interview, coupled perhaps with some sort of function like a dinner, can often times provide the city council with the insight it needs to make a final decision. Other options include conducting more extensive background checks with individuals in the candidate's current community or making an on-site visit to the

candidate's current community. Either of these latter two activities can be helpful to the council in reaching a final decision, but it is essential that they be coordinated and conducted with the full advance knowledge of the candidate.

If none of the finalists meet the council's expectations, some of the options mentioned above when there is no obvious clear choice may be taken. However, it may be best to rescreen some of the applicants who did not make the first round of finalists; or a final, worst-case option is to restart the entire process.

It is important that the council should take whatever time is necessary to arrive at a comfortable and well-reasoned decision. However, the "do-over" interview process and related follow-up activities should also move forward as promptly as possible so as not to lose momentum or any remaining serious applicants.

Of course, once a final decision has been made, all of the other applicants should be notified. Until all arrangements have been finalized with the first-choice candidate, the city council should table notifying the other finalists. In the event they are unable to satisfactorily conclude negotiations with the first-choice candidate, the city council may want to reopen discussions with some or all of the other finalists. Again, from an image standpoint, it is important that all applicants learn first from the city, as opposed to hearing about it from another person, seeing it on TV, or reading it in a newspaper or on social media.

Finalizing Arrangements

Once the city council has decided and the individual has indicated a willingness to serve as city manager, there are several things that need to be done in order to finish the process. Among them, a compensation package needs to be negotiated, and several transition activities need to be completed before the individual relocates and begins work.

Negotiating Compensation --The process of negotiating a total compensation package needs to be handled correctly by the city council to assure that relations with the new city manager begin well.

The Texas Municipal League collects salary information for city managers (and 26 other positions) and this data is available at <https://salarysurvey.tml.org/>.

Initially, the mayor or councilmember responsible for negotiating compensation with the new city manager needs to be someone who can deal firmly with the new city manager and, at the same time, be friendly, flexible, and realistic.

- Friendly in the sense that this approach will cause both parties to relax in what can be for either an unusual or tense situation.
- Flexible meaning that there may well be more than one way to meet the financial objectives of the new city manager and negotiating implies a willingness to consider options and alternatives in pursuit of an acceptable package.
- Realistic in the sense that, no matter how beautiful and desirable the community, the city council realizes that the person, except in highly unusual circumstances,

will not accept the new city manager position for an amount equal to or less than his or her present salary.

When negotiating compensation, base salary is the place to start, while always keeping an eye on total compensation. It is important that the person negotiating compensation on behalf of the city council understand what is overall acceptable to the council. The current salary of the applicant plus an indication of compensation expectations as expressed at the interview should give the council an idea of salary parameters. If an executive recruiting firm is being used, they are often asked to serve as an intermediary between the council and the candidate and to, in fact, negotiate compensation.

As a prelude to actually negotiating a compensation package, the city council should ask the person who has been selected to provide the council with a written itemization of current total compensation, along with a copy of a current employment agreement if one exists. This can serve as a starting point for the council and permit a proposed compensation plan to be prepared that is both competitive and realistic.

Benefits – Often times there will be no negotiation on some benefits that are similar from one city to another. For example, medical insurance or holidays were provided there, and they are also provided here. The variables will most likely relate to cash compensation that the city manager may have. Elements of a total compensation package typically include:

- Base salary
- Deferred compensation
- City car or car allowance
- Cell phone usage
- Retirement plan
- Medical and related insurance (e.g., dental, optical, life, disability)
- Severance
- Vacation
- Holidays
- Sick leave
- Membership dues and conference attendance

After receiving a listing of the current total compensation package of the new city manager, the city council or its representative should outline a proposed package that leaves the individual with a complete overview of basic benefits, provides an appropriate step forward in cash-related benefits, assures no reduction in take-home pay, and deals with any particular financial objectives that the new city manager may have. For assistance in deciding upon a benefit package please check the TCMA link <https://tcgservices.com/tcmaagreements/> .

As a part of the compensation negotiation, there will undoubtedly be some issues that don't relate to the ongoing compensation package but may well have significant financial implications for both the city and the applicants. Here again, both parties need

to be flexible and realistic in dealing with these issues, which may include:

- Moving expenses-- it is common for a city to pay the one-time cost of the city manager to move his or her family and household furnishings to the new city. Sometimes a *not to exceed* figure is agreed upon based on estimates from moving companies.
- Temporary housing -- Until the new city manager is able to sell their former home and/or relocate family to the new city, an allowance is often provided for temporary housing in the new city. Typically, this amount is sufficient to cover the cost of a modern furnished apartment or condominium. Again, both parties may agree to a fixed time period or amount.
- Commuting expense -- As with temporary housing, the city council will often times agree to reimburse the city manager for periodic trips to visit family, or for the spouse to come to the new city for house-hunting purposes.

There are occasions where a city council is unable to reach agreement on compensation or other matters with its first-choice candidate. In these instances, the council typically enters into negotiations with its second-choice candidate. As indicated previously, when an agreement has been finalized, all other applicants should be promptly notified.

Once salary, benefits and other finance-related issues have been resolved, it is time to address a few remaining and important transition activities.

Transition Activities

Transition activities refer to those things that occur, or should occur, between the time the city council selects a new city manager and that person begins the job. Such activities can be grouped under three broad categories, as follows:

Employment agreement-- An employment agreement is simply a written summary of the terms and conditions for employment for the new city manager. While such an agreement typically does not refer to a specific term of employment, thus permitting either the city council or the city manager to terminate for cause or at will, it does generally include a section providing the city manager with severance pay for a fixed period of time if terminated by the city council.

Employment agreements are increasingly used to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of either the city council or city manager on the basic terms and conditions of employment. While not a lengthy legal document, they are typically drafted by the city attorney, although the city council sometimes provides the city manager with an opportunity to prepare a first draft for consideration. The International City/County Management Association recommends the use of employment agreements and has published a report and sample agreement. For the TCMA sample employment agreements for city managers please check the link <https://www.tcma.org/414/Financial-Planning-and-Employment-Agreem>.

Once the city council and city manager have reached agreement on compensation, start

date, method, and timing of announcing the selection in the city manager's new and old city, and similar matters, the next step is to prepare and execute the employment agreement. At a minimum, a formal letter of understanding should be prepared.

General assistance -- To affect a smooth transition, the city council should, at its initiative, offer to provide general assistance as the new city manager prepares to move to the city. Such assistance might include introductions to realtors and bankers, assistance to the spouse in finding suitable employment, and similar types of activities.

Getting started on the right foot -- In addition to providing general assistance as needed, there are some additional things the city council can do, at its initiative, that will be constructive, and in the best interest of all concerned in terms of getting things off to a good start. These include:

- Orientation meeting -- The city council should arrange to introduce the new city manager to department heads and city staff. While the city manager may have met some of these people during the interview process, a special meeting or reception can be a pleasant way to turn responsibility over to the new city manager. In addition, the city council may wish to arrange similar meetings, briefing sessions, and/or receptions in order to introduce the city manager and family to community groups, civic leaders, and citizens in general.
- Council orientation and review of objectives -- While some of these things may have been discussed during the interview process, it is desirable to have an initial work session with the city manager where initial expectations on both sides are discussed and clarified, and city goals and objectives are reviewed. This initial communication can help both the city council and the city manager be sure their relationship is working in the same direction from the outset.
- Performance evaluation -- Using the goals and objectives as a starting point, the city council and city manager should agree to discuss annually or semi-annually the performance of the city manager. This established and more formalized process helps to assure that communication between the parties is maintained, that progress is monitored, and that goals and objectives are reviewed and refined on a regular basis.

When a city council commits itself to a comprehensive recruiting process, on its own or with the assistance of an executive recruiting firm, the chances of a long-term relationship that will be of benefit to the city council, city manager, and the community are greatly enhanced.

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter reviews the various steps, choices, and activities related to the selection of finalists and eventually the new city manager. Stick with the process agreed upon by the city council:

- take no short cuts

- have diversified participants involved
- avoid political partisanship
- review the resumes systematically per the city council's criteria
- background checks, and
- conduct structured interviews.

When the process is completed, the city council must decide what to do – i.e., either hire, reinterview the top 2 or 3, review applicants who didn't make the first-round cut, or restart the entire process.

APPENDIX A—Recruiting and Selecting a City Manager

| Important Actions | Timetable |
|---|------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, designate an interim manager | Week 1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a status report on related organization and projects | Week 1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the recruiting process that will be used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determine who will be responsible for conducting the recruitment – Establish recruiting guidelines for the position – Confirm scope of the recruitment – Confirm steps involved in the recruitment process – Confirm compensation parameters – Establish a timetable for the recruitment process | Week 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and place advertisements for the position in appropriate publications | Week 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify outstanding potential candidates and send them a written invitation to apply for the position | Weeks 3 and 4 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally, contact the outstanding potential candidates as a follow-up to the written invitation to apply | Weeks 5 and 6 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge all resumes as they are received | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all resumes received after the application deadline has passed | Week 7 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct work-related background checks on a smaller group of applicants | Week 8 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the selection process that will be used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Confirm finalists – Agree on a specific selection process – Establish a timetable for the selection process – Determine policy on reimbursement of finalist expenses | Week 9 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify finalists and schedule them for interviews | Week 9 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct interviews, follow-up interviews and make a selection | Weeks 10 and 11 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate terms and conditions of employment and reduce to writing | Week 12 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize related arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determine a start date – Confirm a method of announcing the hiring decision – Advise all other applicants of their status – Plan an orderly transition | Week 12 |

Appendix B -- Recruitment Firm Tasks and Vetting Criteria

As discussed in Chapter 2, the city council may decide to outsource all or parts of the recruitment process to an executive recruitment firm. Whether to outsource or not depends on several factors, including the presence of a qualified in-house employee, the city's capacity to perform in-house recruitment, the reason for the vacancy, and the challenges facing the city. Chapter 2 reviewed these four factors.

Outsourcing is not an all or nothing proposition because, in lieu of a turnkey job, the city council might only outsource a few tasks of the recruitment process such as advertising and screening while performing the other tasks in-house. Again, this will mostly depend on the city council's capacity to handle all or parts of the recruitment process. Definitely, no size fits all.

Tasks to be provided by the Recruitment firm

Below are two lists of recruitment tasks – the first list might be considered a basic package for a recruitment firm while the other list would be extras that could be added for more of a turnkey package:

Basic Package to be Provided by the Recruitment Firm

1. Provides application management, candidate evaluation, and ranking.
2. Provides a project manager with career local government experience or significant experience recruiting comparable positions to the city manager's position.
3. Assigns support staff to assist the client and candidates throughout the process.
4. Conducts highly detailed mainstream and social media candidate vetting. Note that in the past this task would not have been considered as basic but with the prevalence of social media and its use, reviewing the finalists' social media use has become much more important.
5. Conducts media searches for candidates at the semi-finalist level and/or finalist level to facilitate thorough ranking and screening (news, social media, education, career, etc.).

Extras that could be included with the Basic Package

1. A dedicated project manager
2. Specific support staff
3. Develops and provides press releases announcing selection of finalists and new hire
4. Provides professionally designed tools such as questionnaires to further evaluate candidates.
5. Offers online recorded candidate video interviews prior to finalist selection
6. Offers recommendation of on-site interview questions tailored to the city manager's position
7. Offers facilitation of on-site interviews

8. Provides an online platform for application management, candidate evaluation, and ranking
9. Has an experienced on-staff Public Information Officer available to develop and provide press releases announcing selection of finalists and new hire
10. Provides options for psychometric assessments for candidates and teams.
11. Provides an experienced, in-house Media Search Specialist to conduct highly-detailed mainstream and social media candidate vetting
12. Conduct stakeholder engagement activities such as stakeholder interviews, community meet and greets, staff meetings, facilitating media interviews, community profile input meetings, surveys, etc.
13. Provides an Applicant Pool Guarantee – search will be repeated for no additional fee if initial pool is unsatisfactory
14. Length of Service Guarantee – professional fee waived for new search if selected candidate leaves within specific length of time of hire
15. Offers expertise and assistance in developing professional performance evaluation to be used after selected candidate's first year on the job
16. Option for facilitated team building, goal setting, and strategic visioning retreats for governing body and staff with an experienced, professional facilitator
17. Access to 24/7 contact with project manager for clients and candidates during the entire recruitment process
18. Provides e-news alert service to candidates to help them learn more about your organization's community
19. Offers onsite job analysis interviews with search committee, key staff, community leaders, and stakeholders
20. Offers assessment exercise to determine candidate management style and organizational match prior to onsite interviews
21. Provides experienced, in-house social media expert to develop and lead the digital talent marketing campaign for the recruitment
22. Provides customized, comprehensive, multi-platform digital marketing recruitment campaign (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.)
23. Assists with salary negotiations

Vetting Executive Recruitment Firms

It is important to choose an experienced recruitment firm that

- understands the unique dynamics of local government in general and the city manager position specifically
- can effectively market the position and reach top candidates, and
- can effectively screen the candidates.

To assist you in selecting a recruitment firm, below are 35 examples of evaluative criteria and ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm. These examples provide objective measures and ranking values that can be revised and adapted for your city’s particular situation. Also, you can vary the ranking values to reflect your priorities. For example, when only a dichotomous choice is offered for a criterion, such as for criterion number 5’s specific staff support is either valued at zero or five, you could reword the criterion so that the values from 1-5 can be used.

Table VI - Examples of evaluative criteria & ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm

| Ranking Value | |
|---|--|
| COMPANY EXPERTISE | |
| <p>1. Specializes in local government recruiting. 0 = no specialization 1 = minimum specialization 2 = standard specialization 3 = advanced specialization 4 = primary specialization 5 = exclusive specialization</p> | |
| <p>2. Experience in diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruiting candidates that emphasizes the importance of working with diverse populations; highlighting existing diversity present in the community/organization; advertising the position with diverse professional organizations, etc. 0 = none 1 = minimal 2 = acceptable 3 = good 4 = better 5 = best</p> | |
| <p>3. Length of experience conducting recruitments for similar positions 0 = less than 1 year 1 = 1-4 years 2 = 5-9 years 3 = 10-14 years 4 = 15-19 years 5 = 20 years or more</p> | |
| <p>4. Provides a dedicated Project Manager (PM) with career local government experience or significant experience recruiting comparable positions to the position being recruited. 0 = no local government/recruitment experience 1 = PM has local government/recruitment experience but not comparable 2 = PM has 0-5 years of comparable local government/recruitment experience 3 = PM has 6-10 years of comparable local government/recruitment experience 4 = PM has 11-15 years of comparable local government/recruitment experience</p> | |

Table VI - Examples of evaluative criteria & ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm

| | Ranking Value |
|---|---------------|
| 5 = PM has 15+ years of comparable local government/recruitment experience | |
| 5. Assigns specific support staff to assist the client and candidates throughout the process. 0 = No 6. 5 = Yes | |
| 7. Has experience conducting stakeholder engagement activities such as stakeholder interviews, community meet and greets, staff meetings, facilitating media interviews, community profile input meetings, surveys, etc. 0 = none 1 = One activity 2 = Two activities 3 = Three activities 4 = Four activities 5 = Five or more activities | |
| 8. Offers provision of comprehensive, professionally designed tools such as questionnaires to further evaluate candidates 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 9. Offers online recorded candidate video interviews prior to finalist selection 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 10. Offers recommendation of on-site interview questions tailored to the position profile 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 11. Offers facilitation of on-site interviews 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 12. Provides options for psychometric assessments for candidates and teams 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 13. Assists with salary negotiations 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 14. Has an experienced on-staff Public Information Officer (PIO) available to develop and provide press releases announcing selection of finalists and new hire 0 = No 5 = Yes | |
| 15. Provides an Applicant Pool Guarantee – search will be repeated for no additional fee if initial pool is unsatisfactory 0 = No 5 = Yes | |

Table VI - Examples of evaluative criteria & ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm

| | Ranking Value |
|---|---------------|
| <p>16. Length of Service Guarantee – professional fee waived for new search if selected candidate leaves within specific length of time of hire 0 = No 1 = Yes, less than 3 months 2 = Yes, 3 months to less than 6 months 3 = Yes, 6 months to less than 12 months 4 = Yes, 12 months to less than 18 months 5 = Yes, 18 months or longer</p> | |
| <p>17. Offers expertise and assistance in developing professional performance evaluation to be used after selected candidate’s first year on the job 0 = No 2.5 = Yes, basic assistance 5 = Yes, comprehensive assistance</p> | |
| <p>18. Option for facilitated team building, goal setting, and strategic visioning retreats for governing body and staff year on the job with an experienced, professional facilitator 0 = No 2.5 = Yes, basic assistance 5 = Yes, comprehensive assistance</p> | |
| STRATEGIES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATION | |
| <p>19. Firm previously worked with our organization 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>20. Access to 24/7 contact with Project Manager for clients and candidates during the entire recruitment process 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>21. Provides e-news alert service to candidates to help them learn more about your organization’s community 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>22. Offers onsite job analysis interviews with search committee, key staff, community leaders, and stakeholders 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>23. Offers assessment exercise to determine candidate management style and organizational match prior to onsite interviews 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |

Table VI - Examples of evaluative criteria & ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm

| | Ranking Value |
|--|---------------|
| STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING TO AND NETWORKING PROSPECTS | |
| <p>24. Offers outreach via firm’s category-specific database to prospective candidates who have opted-in to be contacted about recruitment opportunities 0 = No category specific database 1 = Less than 100 prospective candidates 2= 101 to 500 prospective candidates 3 = 501 – 1,000 prospective candidates 4 = 1,001 – 1,500 prospective candidates 5 = More than 1,500 prospective candidates</p> | |
| <p>25. Provides experienced, In-house Social Media Expert to develop and lead the Digital Talent Marketing campaign for the recruitment 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>26. Provides customized, comprehensive, multi-platform digital marketing recruitment campaign (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) 0 = No 1 = One social media platform 2 = Two social media platforms 3 = Three social media platforms 4 = Four social media platforms</p> | |
| <p>27. Firm has a strong following on social media platforms (combined) (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) 0 = None 1 = 1 - 500 2 = 501 – 1,000 3 = 1,001 – 5,000 4 = 5,001 – 10,000 5 = 10,000 +</p> | |
| <p>28. Has mechanism for regular communication to an opt-in subscriber network of potential candidates 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>29. Maintains a nationally recognized local government job board 0 = No 1 = Up to 1,500 visitors per month 2 = 1,501 – 5,000 visitors per month 3 = 5,001 – 10,000 visitors per month 4 = 10,000 – 15,000 visitors per month 5 = Over 15,000 visitors per month</p> | |
| <p>30. Provides a professional category-specific, opt-in, email marketing network 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |

Table VI - Examples of evaluative criteria & ranking values for selecting a recruitment firm

| | Ranking Value |
|--|---------------|
| <p>31. Has an extensive network of local government clients to attract a nationwide candidate pool 0 = In-state clients only 2 = Clients in 2-10 states 3 = Clients in 11-25 states 4 = Clients in 26-40 states 5 = Clients in more than 40 states</p> | |
| STRATEGIES FOR VETTING CANDIDATES | |
| <p>31. Provides an online platform for application management, candidate evaluation, and ranking 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>32. Provides an experienced, in-house Media Search Specialist to conduct highly detailed mainstream and social media candidate vetting 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>33. Conducts media searches for candidates at the semi-finalist level to facilitate thorough ranking and screening 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>34. Conducts comprehensive media searches for candidates at the finalist level (news, social media, education, career, etc.) 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| <p>35. Utilizes a licensed professional private investigation firm to perform extensive background investigations and credit checks per specific state laws and guidelines 0 = No 5 = Yes</p> | |
| Grand Total | |

APPENDIX C - Principal Resource Groups

A variety of professional association newsletters and publications can be utilized to advertise for city manager positions. Those listed below have national distribution or are distributed primarily within the State of Texas.

TEXAS

Texas Municipal League
1821 Rutherford Lane, Suite 400
Austin, Texas 78754-5128
512-231-7400
www.tml.org (Online classifieds)
Publication: *Texas Town & City*

Texas City Management Association
1821 Rutherford Lane, Suite 400
Austin, Texas 78754-5128
512-231-7400
www.tcma.org
Publication: Online newsletter

Urban Management Assistants of North Texas (UMANT)
Urban Management Assistants of South Texas (UMAST)
Urban Management Professionals of South East Texas (UMPSET)
Urban Management Assistants of Central Texas (UMACT)
Urban Management Assistants of West Texas (UMAWT)
Conference of Minority Public Administrators (COMPA)
(Note: Each of the above groups publishes a newsletter that contains a listing of job vacancies. However, officers of these organizations change annually. Consequently, it is necessary to check in order to determine the current address of the person to whom newsletter items should be sent)

NATIONAL

American Society for Public Administration
1120 G Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005-3885
202-393-7878
www.aspanet.org
Publication: *Public Administration Times*

International City/County Management Association
777 N. Capitol Street, NE, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-289-4262

www.icma.org

Publications: *Public Management Magazine and ICMA Newsletter*

National Association of Counties
440 First Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20001
202-393-6226

www.naco.org

Publication: *County News*

National Forum for Black Public Administrators
777 N. Capitol Street, NE, Suite 807 Washington,
D.C. 20002
202-408-9300

www.nfbpa.org

Publication: Quarterly newsletter and job line

National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1763
202-626-3000

www.nlc.org

Publication: *Nation's Cities Weekly*

APPENDIX D – Recommendations for Diversity in Hiring Local governments

Below are excerpts from ICMA’s Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator (2012).

Local governments are encouraged, whether working with an executive search firm or conducting the search on their own, to recruit a complete and diverse applicant pool from which to select the best candidate. Research demonstrates that unconscious bias is present in candidate screening and recruitment processes¹. Additionally, research has shown that more diverse groups make better decisions than homogenous groups². This is as important, if not more, at the City Council level than at the teams and implementation level.

Elected officials or Policy makers set the tone for the whole organization. Strategy, guidance, and culture originate at the top, or need the approval or support of senior leadership to be successful and resilient. Ensuring that top management understands this, and even reflects this diversity in the make-up of senior team structures will lead to better and longer lasting organizational health and productivity.

Accomplishing this can be challenging given our individual or collective unconscious biases, so hiring bodies and recruiters need to be more intentional in unwinding or mitigating those biases to ensure an effective recruitment. There are a variety of ways to begin this and signaling this intent to candidates can also lead to a greater, and stronger, applicant pool. For example, blind screening such as removing questions about gender, age families, salary history, group memberships, etc. is almost universal today. It’s a balancing act, as you need to know enough about a candidate to determine if they are a good match, but not so much that you’re making a decision based on a discriminatory basis.

Below are five key recommendations to help your community maximize the talent pool and get the best candidate for your management position from as diverse a pool as possible:

1. Connect with a variety of advertising opportunities to ensure your position is advertised widely, including partner and affinity organizations related to the national or state associations of managers;
2. Collect recruitment demographics on your applicant pool, and analyze to ensure you have a cross-section of experiences and backgrounds included— consider a blind screening process for your initial resume review;
3. Aim for a roster of finalists that includes representation of race, ethnicity, and gender proportionality similar to your community’s makeup—if the final roster is not closely aligned with community demographics, review your recruiting process to see where there may be gaps;
4. Develop a list of screening questions that can be applied equitably across all finalists, regardless of race, ethnicity, and gender (e.g., avoid provocative questions such as, “Does your husband approve of you taking this position, knowing it will take time away from your family?”);
5. Ensure that your hiring panel is diverse and includes a variety of backgrounds and

- perspectives; if your council or commission is lacking in diversity, consider expanding your panel to include community residents, business, and civil society representatives.
6. If hiring an external firm to assist in recruiting, ask for information about their strategy, skills and experience in recruiting a diverse pool.

ICMA is committed to promoting diversity in the local government management profession. Because of changing demographics in world, the current overall demographic profile of the local government management profession does not generally reflect the diversity of many of the communities in which ICMA members serve. Reflecting the communities we serve helps us make better decisions and improves public trust and relationships. Due to the current lack of diversity in the profession, the next generation of public servants may not see local government as an attractive option, making future talent development and recruitment challenging. ICMA is committed to ensuring that local governments are inclusive and mirror the diversity of our communities.

¹. David R. Francis, "Employers' Replies to Racial Names," The National Bureau of Economic Research, 2003: www.nber.org/digest/sep03/w9873.html

². Samuel R. Sommers, "On Racial Diversity and Group Decision Making: Identifying Multiple Effects of Racial Composition on Jury Deliberations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006

APPENDIX E – Texas City Management Code of Ethics

(as adopted in April 1984 and revised August 2020) See TCMA Code of Ethics guidelines

<https://www.tcma.org/DocumentCenter/View/122/Code-of-Ethics-with-Guidelines-and-Rules-of-Procedure-for-Enforcement-PDF>

Tenet 1. We believe professional management is essential to efficient and democratic local government by elected officials.

Tenet 2. Affirm the dignity and worth of local government services and maintain a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.

Tenet 3. Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.

Tenet 4. Serve the best interests of the people.

Tenet 5. Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts, and technical and professional advice about policy options; and collaborate with them in setting goals for the community and organization.

Tenet 6. Recognize that elected representatives are accountable to their community for the decisions they make; members are responsible for implementing those decisions.

Tenet 7. Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.

Tenet 8. Make it a duty continually to improve the member's professional ability and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.

Tenet 9. Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

Tenet 10. Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.

Tenet 11. Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit, so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.

Tenet 12. Public office is a public trust. A member shall not leverage his or her position for personal gain or benefit.

APPENDIX F – Virtual Interviews Pros and Cons

| Virtual Interviews – Pros and Cons | |
|---|---|
| An Employers' Guide to Video Interviewing - Digital Gurus | |
| Pros | Cons |
| Costs less than face-to-face -- You are able to see a broader pool without spending travel costs on a larger pool. | The quality of human interactions is lower – e.g., misses the human element of face-to-face such as the applicant’s body language and conversation characteristics |
| Allows less traditional candidates to get a closer look than they might otherwise get when the city is weighing the travel costs to bring them in. | Applicant may be a great performer online but poor face-to-face – i.e., is the virtual self the same as the physical self? Of course, the same question can arise in most selection tools. |
| Quicker to schedule and arrange because travel and lodging not required, mayor and council can meet from anywhere that broadband is available. | Can have less of small talk and “getting to know you” conversations, but research has shown that this such preliminary interchanges can be problematic in the selection process. |
| More structured and more likely to go straight to the point of the interview. | Distraction from the conversation – e.g., virtual interviews make it a lot easier to take an extra glance at your cell phone or scan for new tweets mid-conversation. On the flip side, you can become so consumed by analyzing body language that you miss what the applicant is saying in his/her responses altogether. |
| Makes geographically remote cities with vacancies more accessible to a larger pool of potential candidates. Also, the same can be said for city managers in remote locations -- i.e., they have access to more cities. | |
| Interview candidates anytime, anywhere and record the interview so you can refer back to it and shortlist candidates at a later date. Prior to recording interviews, please check with the city attorney, because the interview is most likely public information per the Public Information Act. | |
| Enables you to invite department heads, employees, and/or community members to participate in the live video interview. | |

APPENDIX G- Suggested Interview Questions

NOTE: These general questions may be supplemented with more specific questions related to particular objectives, problems, and priorities of the city.

1. Describe your background and experience. What have been the areas of emphasis?
2. How does your experience qualify you for this position?
3. Have you had experience in all areas of city service? If you have not had experience in certain fields, how would you approach management in these areas?
4. What particular experience do you have with respect to budget preparation and finance?
5. What particular experience do you have with respect to personnel and laborrelations?
6. How do you describe your management style?
7. What is your experience as a supervisor? How many people have you supervised?
8. Have you ever had to terminate someone? What process did you follow?
9. What are your thoughts with respect to performance evaluation? What process do you follow to set objectives and monitor performance?
10. How will you go about assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and identifying opportunities to improve?
11. How do you approach the planning process? What system do you use to set objectives and priorities?
12. What is important to you in establishing effective working relations with others?
13. How do you view the relationship between the city manager and city council? With department heads and city staff generally?
14. What techniques have you found to be most successful in assisting the city council to establish and implement long and short-range goals for the community?
15. To what extent do you believe contact with citizens and citizen groups is important? How do you typically handle this responsibility?
16. What experience have you had working on an intergovernmental or inter-agency basis? Have you worked directly with the state and federal government, councils of government, counties, and other units of local governments?
17. What will your first steps be upon assuming responsibility for this position? What do you hope to accomplish in the first year?
18. From your limited vantage point, what do you believe to be the challenges and opportunities facing our organization? How is this likely to change in the future?
19. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
20. Where do you want to be five and ten years from now?
21. Why are you interested in this position?
22. What are your expectations with respect to compensation?
23. What is your understanding of "diversity in the city organization"? If needed, how would you go about achieving diversity in the city organization.
24. What are your thoughts on efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the provision of city services and good?