Major City/County Meeting  
January 29 – 31, 2020  
San Diego, CA  
Discussion Summary

The following organizations participated in the meeting:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alameda County, CA</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
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<td>Bellevue, WA</td>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
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<td>City &amp; County of Denver, CO</td>
<td>Fremont, CA</td>
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<td>Fulton County, GA</td>
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<td>Maricopa County, AZ</td>
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<td>Metro Regional Government, OR</td>
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<td>Multnomah County, OR</td>
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<td>Ramsey County, MN</td>
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<td>City and County of San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>Virginia Beach, VA</td>
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Succession Plan Development

- There are different definitions of succession planning. One organization is looking more at knowledge transfer and doing workforce planning to make sure people aren’t exiting without sharing their knowledge.
- One organization developed a formal succession plan and it didn’t work. They now have an informal program that allows employees to self-identify if they want opportunities. They provide tuition assistance. They want to establish a pipeline of employees ready to move into positions. They encourage departments to have conversations with their employees and tell them they have potential. They require that 70% of vacancies be filled from inside the organization. There is a need to be deliberate and tell employees that you believe in them.
- One organization has a merit system and had challenges since their leaders weren’t planning or the departure of employees. Leaders did not understand the skill set of employees and tended to select long-term employees. They developed a workforce readiness program. They work with the leadership to identify their key jobs, who will be
retiring, and help them identify a pool of talent and have development plans to get them better able to compete. This has been a big cultural shift – some agencies are seeing positive results, others are resisting. The result has been an increasing number of employees being promoted. This is a slow process that takes consistency and follow-up.

- One organization tried to do a workforce plan about 15 years ago. It required a lot of work and wasn’t done well. They have regrouped and established a two-prong approach. They identify the skill sets needed in the next 5 – 10 years and what employees need to do to make sure that they have the talent needed. They have a one-year mentoring program that has specific milestones that people must achieve. The milestones – the number of times they meet, having conversations on issues such as formal education, networking opportunities, etc.
- One organization struggled with implementing a succession planning program. Everyone needs an opportunity to compete. They developed certification programs for different jobs that qualifies employees to promote to the next position. It’s a 13-month program that has been in place for 3 years. They have a leadership certification program that enables employees to compete for entry-level supervisory jobs. The program has been well received and employees have been promoted. Public safety wanted its own leadership program, since they see themselves as unique and that has been developed.
- Developed institute of classes to prepare employees for new positions. If completed the academy, employees got credit as part of the minimum qualifications for the position and could substitute for experience.
- One organization has offered temporary appointments where they have a promotional opportunity that needs an exam, which will take multiple months to fill. If multiple people express interest, they divide the time. This gives employees a sense of the position and they believe they are better able to compete. They look at the work unit and see who is qualified for the position and ask who is interested. The program builds confidence in the fairness of the process.
- One organization advertises county wide for people who want to work in an acting position. This program has been well received.
- There was acknowledgement of the concern with diversity when working to promote current employees.

Developing Leaders

- One organization has tried different ways to develop leaders and they have not been successful.
- One organization decided that all supervisors would go through leadership training. The program ratings have been positive. They are looking at a program for HR staff.
- One organization has sent employees to the University of Virginia Leading, Educating and Developing program (LEAD). They also have a 5-day program taught by the staff. These programs have been popular and help to level the playing field within the organization.
- It was noted that where you have leadership turnover, it impacts implementing culture change. There is a need to work with new leaders to educate them about the training
being done and get their buy-in. It is important to be flexible and engage new leaders in the process.

Minimum Qualifications and Educational Requirements for Job Descriptions

• One organization is looking at minimum qualifications and the skills of newer employees. Another organization is revamping its minimum qualifications and discarding most educational requirements. They give departments leeway to figure it out.
• Most of the organizations are establishing alternative ways in which people can show that they can meet the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the position. They want to eliminate artificial barriers. The greatest pushback they get is from managers who have positions that receive the most applicants.
• One organization has a set of desirable qualifications and will look at any combination that will enable you to perform the job.
• Some organizations are using video interviews, and this has worked well. Some also use phone interviews.
• On the job training can be more demonstrative as to how they can perform the job.
• Educational barriers could result in a disparate impact so consideration should be given to eliminating them except where required by state law.
• One organization is providing experience equivalencies for degrees. They are questioning jobs that say they need a degree and they are looking at every classification. They forward the highest qualified candidates first to hiring managers and then work their way down as needed. This has resulted in stronger hires. They develop a recruiting plan with managers for every position. This helps the recruiters to select the top candidates for the position that will be referred to the hiring managers.
• One organization used videos for IT positions and candidates were ranked on their answers. They had an issue since hiring managers said they didn’t have the time to do the ranking.
• One organization offers an HR analyst training program with an internship. A bachelor’s degree but no experience is required to participate. They get placed into departments and if they pass the test, they will become HR analysts. They developed a self-study program. They have a diverse group that wants to get into the professional HR ranks. Completing the training program meets the educational requirement for the position. Thirty people completed the program and passed the test. The program provides an opportunity to get out of the clerical/administrative zone and into the professional ranks.
• One organization eliminated the degree requirements years ago and it is now accepted. It is not hard to screen applicants since they ask for their experience.
• It was noted that supervisory requirements can be a struggle. One organization has individuals who have progressed but have never supervised. How can they qualify if you have this requirement? They defined 6 factors that comprise supervision. If you meet 4 of the 6, you are a lead worker and can meet the supervisory experience requirement.
Modified Duty Programs

- In one organization, the police department is struggling to manage since they are accommodating a lot of personal injuries. There is a need to find assignments for those who are injured that uses their skills.
- One organization developed program for the fire department that is transitional in nature. They found work that could legitimately be done and employees either have the ability to do the work or not. If you can’t do the job, the employee stays home. This has worked better.
- One organization maintains an ongoing list of work that needs to be done that is meaningful and can be done by those who are injured. The home department pays for the work if it is outside the employees’ department.

Planned Cultural Initiatives

- One organization is planning a healthy conflict engagement program. They are looking to get conversations going at the start of a conflict before it escalates. The program has been piloted in a couple of areas.

Tools to Increase Employee Engagement

- One organization is using the Gallup survey to do an annual employment engagement survey. They added inclusiveness questions. Recognition programs and greater leadership communication was focused on based on the results of the engagement survey.
- Greatest need for engagement was found in public safety and focus groups were conducted, which was enlightening. The greater issues were not pay. Employees appreciated the focus groups and felt that they were finally being listened to. They were concerned with being punished for comments that are perceived to be negative.
- In one organization, the engagement manager provides training on how to develop action plans. The motto is to pick one thing, do two things about it and communicate it three times.
- One organization conducts an engagement survey every two years of all employees. The lowest response rate is among police, fire, and the sheriffs’ department. They meet with the agencies to talk about results. The agency head selects the survey team and the team leader to look at the results and formulate action plans. HR spends time on marketing, communicating, and consulting with the departments. Pulse surveys are encouraged as well as conducting focus groups. This has been successful, with an engagement score of 74%, which has been increasing. They are considering using a shorter annual survey.
- One organization does an engagement survey inhouse annually. Department directors are responsible for communicating the results to their employees. They have a high participation rate. They conduct town hall meetings. They also give spot awards of $25.
- One organization does a survey every 2 years. They look at the scores, which don’t move. They are very high – 3.8 on a 5-point scale. They use a consultant to conduct the survey because they don’t want employees to think that they can see the surveys of
employees. They create action plans based on the survey results. Departments are given their scores and develop focus areas and measures. Employees complained about getting too many surveys. Departments are required to do pulse surveys and have recognition plans. They can get $25 per employee in a department to use for recognition.

- One organization conducts an engagement survey every 2 years. Results are shared with the department leadership. They have found that one-on-one discussions will improve engagement results. A union has been objecting to administration of the survey to its members on the grounds that they are asking questions that are directly related to bargaining. The engagement survey is perceived as an interference with bargaining.
- While it is important to address the issues that employees raise, it should be recognized that organizations can’t take on too many issues, since they won’t be able to get it all done.
- In one organization, the employee voice is the name of the engagement survey. They ask departments to advise as to what they have accomplished since the last survey and communicate it to the entire organization. The goal is to demonstrate the work that has been accomplished since the last survey.
- One organization is using stay interviews as part of employee engagement.
- There was an almost even split among the participating organizations between those that do the survey every year or every two years. Seventy percent of employees in one organization want the survey done annually.
- One key to engagement is how much attention you pay to employees.

Transforming HR With Data Analytics
- What skill set do you need for HR analytics work? One organization hires analytics people that work in HR.
- One organization changed its strategic plan to emphasize analytics. Looking at how to improve learning programs.
- One organization reported that it has the data but struggles to implement operational changes.
- One organization creates a report on HR results at the organizational level and then breaks it down by department. They are in their third year and are starting to see improvements.
- It was acknowledged that it is easy to overwhelm managers with data. There is a need to make sure that you are giving data to departments for a reason. One organization is focused on workers compensation and hires after 6 months. They have embedded specific questions in the engagement survey to get data.

ROI on Success of Your Learning and Development Offerings
- In one organization, a Masters’ program with a university is offered at the county offices. They are looking at whether the investment resulted in promotional opportunities. One-third of the graduates got promotions and one-half left the
organization. Many department heads don’t know about the program since departments are very siloed.

- One organization conducts a series of evaluations following training programs. They are launching level 3 evaluations (Kirkpatrick) and are surveying supervisors about performance post-training.
- IPMA-HR is partnering with the ROI Institute on a case studies book highlighting government ROI effort.

How Have You Furthered the Role of the HR Department in Being a Part of the Organization’s Success?

- In one organization, the HR staff is very busy and does not have the time to transition to higher level roles. They are wondering how you can do transactional work differently or stop doing it?
- One organization created a special projects team. Employees stay on the team for 6 - 8 months at a time and then go back to their positions.
- In one organization, they are trying to move to being consultative business partners. They try to determine where the departments want to go and how HR can help them navigate. They are working to collect the right data to be able to tell their story.
- HR in one organization went to departments to focus on employee claims and develop relationships when they have issues.
- It was noted that it can be a struggle for HR to build trust with the departments. It is a long, hard road to try to overcome the barriers. HR is often seen as the department that always says no.
- HR worked in one organization to shift from being very transactional to being strategic. They looked for HR staff with stronger consulting experience. This resulted in some staff leaving the organization. They raised the salaries of the HR staff and offered them more strategic education opportunities.

HR Strategic Plan

- In one organization, individual departments have a strategic plan, but there is no overall organizational strategic plan.
- One organization has a county strategic plan, department strategic plans, and collects and reports on annual workforce data. They don’t have a structure in place to report out on progress on the strategic goals.
- One organization had a 5-year strategic plan. They want to do a new plan differently. The last plan didn’t have input from other departments.
- One organization only involved HR in the development of the strategic plan.
- One organization met with the departments to see what they valued among the services that HR provides.
- One organization identified initiatives being worked on and have a conversation with the departments to determine their priorities. They conduct a lot of interviews, develop a plan, and share it with the departments to get validation. They have a kickoff meeting
with HR staff to share the results from last year and what will be worked on in the current year.

Most Significant HR Trends
- For many organizations, the biggest challenge is in the recruitment area.
- One organization is implementing a state-based paid leave program. There is a new payroll tax paid by employers and employees. The benefit is on a sliding scale. They previously had a 6-week paid leave benefit that needs to be dismantled to comply with the new state law.
- ICMA is finalizing a study on firefighting that is scheduled to be released in March.
- There is a growing trend of PTSD state laws for first responders.

What Is the HR Professional Development Topics and Areas You are Providing to Your HR Staff?
- How do you strengthen the HR role and value to the organization?
- There was a detailed career path for the HR profession that was created by an HR association in Singapore.

Process Improvement Designing/Implementing to Help with Budget Sustainability
- One organization is looking at the duplication of services and centralized vs. decentralized programs. They are examining where there can be efficiencies.
- One organization has concern if the long-term economic outlook is fiscally sustainable. They have gone through belt tightening and if more cuts are needed, the elected leadership needs to determine what needs to be cut or reduced. They were asked to prioritize the remaining services and they could not identify what should be cut. The public likes everything and don’t want the government to stop doing anything.
- In one organization, the budget drives workforce allocations. What do you have to have and what can be eliminated? Cuts are based on priorities. They have a transition program and has never laid off an employee. They can transition employees to other departments and train if necessary.

Public Safety Recruitment Strategies
- One organization changed public safety requirements to allow facial hair and visible tattoos. The tattoos can’t be offensive.
- One organization is conducting monthly testing that has helped with having a pool of candidates resulting in speeding up the hiring process.
- One organization hired a PR consultant to redesign the police recruitment process. A micro recruitment site was developed. The goal is to reach a different audience by emphasizing the service aspect of the jobs. They are providing a $10,000 recruitment bonus.
- Several organizations are:
  - Poaching from other public safety departments,
  - Giving signing bonuses, and
Looking at improving the recruitment process.

- One organization conducts on-the-spot hiring events. They can make an offer pending a background check.
- One organization is using existing staff to help recruit public safety candidates.
- One organization is providing retention bonuses, since they were losing officers due to not having a defined benefit pension.
- One organization is looking at what work can be taken from sworn officers to make best use of them. They had officers who had been working a great deal of overtime and were getting burned out.
- Organizations have less of an issue finding and retaining firefighters. They have much lower turnover as compared to police officers.
- Most organizations have eliminated the requirement that public safety needs to live either within or within a certain mileage of the jurisdiction.
- Most organizations have diversity issues in the fire department, especially with females.

**Public Sector Recruitment Strategies**

- For some organizations, lower level positions such as crafts, water treatment, building trades can be challenging to recruit.
- Apprentice programs is one possible strategy.
- One organization conducts expos with high schools to make them aware of government jobs.
- One organization is training people to get their commercial driver licenses.
- One organization created a finance fellows’ program with universities to find accountants. They hire candidates right out of school. The program provides experience in different departments. They have found this a good to grow their own employees.
- One organization hires former prisoners for positions since the prisons provide specific training in areas of need.
- One organization requires a reentry program of 16 weeks before former prisoners can be considered for employment.
- One organization looks at the nexus between the criminal offense and the job for which they have applied.
- It was noted that many offenses are drug related. There would be a different consideration when there is a history of violent offenses.
- One organization examines whether the conviction would prevent someone from being effective in the job. The process is centralized in HR. If the conviction is unrelated to the job, the department isn’t informed. If there is a nexus, HR allows the person to give more information – recency, relevancy & rehabilitation are the factors. They have a committee process that clears almost everyone.
- One organization evaluates based on the crime involved.
LinkedIn Recruiter for Recruiting

- One jurisdiction uses LinkedIn Recruiter but most of the applicants come from their website. LinkedIn is helpful in professional classifications where the market is tight. It isn’t the solution, especially for lower level positions.

One Strategy for Increasing Candidate Diversity

- Suggested strategies include:
  - Using employee resource groups to reach out through their networks;
  - Widening the box to whom you reach out to for recruitment;
  - Changing minimum qualifications for jobs;
  - Evaluating the language in job descriptions to ensure it isn’t creating barriers. (One organization has used Textio to evaluate job descriptions and applications; and
  - Translating applications into different languages.

How do you get Your Candidates to Pass the Drug Tests?

- One organization provides 1st time offenders with 30 days to get into a program, and then are subject to random testing and if they test positive, they are terminated.
- It was noted that testing services are not keeping up with the legalization that has occurred.
- It is not legal to be on drugs when at work despite legalization that has occurred in some states.
- One organization conducts saliva testing for reasonable suspicion or post-accident. They are struggling to find a provider who can do the testing.
- One organization terminated a probationary employee for refusing to take a drug test.
- Some organizations remind employees that they are responsible for what they put in their bodies.

How Often Do You Conduct Compensation Studies? Do You Use a Consultant or In-House?

- One organization can pay a little less than the market due to the environment. The new board wants to look at conducting a compensation study. What do you do with the results?
- In one organization, studies are done in-house by the compensation team. They are done before labor negotiations. Their compensation is generally at or above the market. They look at the private sector for some occupations.
- One organization benchmarks against 5 area counties and pay at the median of the counties. Where there is a recruitment/retention problem, they will adjust a classification.
- One organization benchmarks against other cities. They are bringing everyone to market over 2 – 3 years based on a study.
- One organization did a study with an outside company. They try to pay the median. They benchmarked against 19 organizations. Some recommendations were not implemented due to the cost.
• One organization used an outside consultant for a library that looked at years of service in a classification. Some positions in libraries are unique to them.

• One organization does several classification studies, some required under municipal code and include a market review done internally. They benchmark certain jobs and make recommendations on those jobs that should be increased in level. Their rules provide that if a job moves up 2 levels, employees get a 9.1% increase automatically; if the job moves up 1 level an automatic 4.5% increase is provided. They are required to be audited every 4 years to make sure HR is doing it correctly. Off cycle adjustments can occur due to a pay study. If a job has grown, employees can ask for a study to have their jobs reallocated to a higher level.

• One organization had not done a classification/compensation review in many years. They are concerned with internal equity. They are also looking at recruitment/retention issues and will adjust as needed. They can make equity adjustments where they bring in new employees at a higher rate than incumbents.

• One organization does workforce studies every three years through collective bargaining. Their biannual study is limited to 15% of the workforce or 30 classifications. They negotiate which classifications will be studied. This process has worked well. If a range is adjusted, it doesn’t necessarily result in a pay raise. They give a half step immediately and the other half on the anniversary date. Individual adjustments can be requested by either the union or management. A pay equity study only resulted in adjustments to 2 classifications impacting 200 people whose pay was adjusted, most were non-represented employees.

• Most give both cost of living and merit increases to department heads.

Student Loan Forgiveness
• One organization provides student loan debt assistance to employees who have obtained a degree. The organization pays $50/month towards an employee’s outstanding student loans and this amount is considered taxable income.

• One organization gives health care providers in corrections who work in facilities that are not Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) loan forgiveness as a retention tool.

• One organization provides employees with information about the federal loan forgiveness program.

• One organization offers student loan counseling to employees.

Most Popular, but Relatively Inexpensive Benefits
• Benefits discussed include:
  o Pet insurance is offered and paid totally by employees. The advantage for employees is that they get a group discount and can pay for it through a payroll deduction.
  o A one-hour massage for $25.
  o Unions are seeking paid time for exercise. One organization refused due to potential workers compensation claims. One organization provides it for firefighters and another for police.
Using sick leave for employees to volunteer. Time provided ranges from 1 – 3 days. One organization restricts it to city projects.

Leave exchange program that allows employees to designate up to 160 hours in to be paid out in 80 hour increments twice a year. Employees need to be there for several years and have a minimum number of accrued hours of leave to participate in the program.

Front new employees 6 months of annual/sick leave. This has been a positive recruiting tool.

One organization is considering an infant at work pilot. It is seen as a benefit for the higher levels since they have their own offices.

Free flu shots.

Non-traditional family members being included in benefits for leave including bereavement.

Providing up to 40 hours of sick leave for citizenship and residency related issues.

Paid parental leave for 4 - 6 weeks and care giver leave for 2 weeks.

One organization has been asked to extend parental leave to include grandparent leave.

### Effective Events, Approaches, & Efforts Being Taken by IPMA-HR Chapters to Support HR Professionals

- A chapter in Washington is starting and was looking for suggestions.
- The Virginia chapter is divided regionally, and they try to have each region director conduct one seminar during the year. They also have an annual conference and an annual leadership retreat, which is designed for a higher-level conversation.

### Relationships with Other Departments or Public Sector Organizations for Mutual Benefit

- One organization is considering sharing names from recruitment registers among the governmental organizations in its area.
- One organization participates in a public sector partnership program with local and state government. They are looking at ways to elevate and get people interested in public sector employment. They sponsor a program for economically disadvantaged individuals to provide them with training and skills. They also have one-wee Internships. These efforts have been successful.
- One organization has an informal arrangement for swapping services with the state. The police chiefs in the area share information about applicants.

### Inclusion and Diversity Officers Summit

- The City of Chicago hosted the first summit with about 30 attendees.
- Denver will host the 2020 meeting in July/August and additional information will be provided.

### Equity and Inclusion Training
• Several organizations participate in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), which provides training.
• One organization offered a mindful approach to differences training for the first time and it was well received.
• One organization provided training for 3 days to supervisors and managers. They are looking at how to roll it out to the rest of the organization.
• One organization requires department heads to take a one-day training program on implicit bias. They also provide training online. They are developing a respect in the workplace and communicating across cultures training.

Background Checks
• Most organizations do criminal background checks on all new employees.
• Some only do background for safety sensitive positions.
• In one organization if a background check has not been done in the past 5 years and the employee is promoted, it is done again.