Executive Summary: With the creation of Agile Organization, the County now offers a flexible and financially sustainable staffing structure to attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce so that the organization can continue to meet the critical and evolving needs of the community. The initiative has changed how we deliver work, created opportunities throughout all levels of the organization and established talent pipelines. We now offer a menu of different work delivery options that includes limited-term assignments, fellowships, internships, volunteers, and self-help. Each of the work delivery options serves a unique purpose in the County as they differ in length of assignment, type of work performed, and experience level of the applicant pool. This menu enables the County to:

- Attract talented individuals to the County.
- Create opportunity throughout all levels of the organization.
- Increase departmental flexibility by enabling hiring managers to judiciously and responsibly allocate their staffing resources.
- Adapt to the changing attitudes of the modern workforce.
- Better meet the needs of San Mateo County communities.

Background: The County of San Mateo, similar to many public agencies, has experienced many workforce changes and challenges during the last few decades. The high cost of living, the changing preferences of the modern workforce, and the attractive benefits of competing private sector organizations in the Bay Area have made it more difficult to attract talented individuals to public service. Additionally, the demands and expectations of local government have changed with the array of new technologies available today. Citizens expect greater transparency in government and want services to be available faster than ever before. Furthermore, the rising costs of health care and pensions combined with the unpredictability of government revenues have forced local governments to re-evaluate their staffing models.

In 2013, a team of County executives (spearheaded by our County Manager and Human Resources Director), community members, business leaders, and consultants gathered together to develop a framework that would enable the organization to respond to the challenges facing the County. This committee, called the Agile Organization Steering Committee, sought to find ways to make the County a more flexible, dynamic, and sustainable organization. They determined that the types of staffing resources available in the County were too limited, and in order to become a more agile organization, we needed to diversify these resources.

Work Delivery Options: With the implementation of the Agile Organization initiative, the County has changed the ways in which we deliver work. The traditional model of hiring lifetime government employees for every project or assignment is inefficient and financially unsustainable. By creating a menu of work delivery options, it has enabled the organization to responsibly allocate staffing resources. Hiring managers can now pick from a list of different work options when trying to staff projects and assignments, including:

Limited Term: Limited term employees are typically used for assignments that have a narrow scope and last for a period of 1-3 years. They have been used to help pilot new County programs, assist departments during periods of heightened workload, lead efforts to expand departmental operations, and even backfill for permanent employees who are working in a
different capacity for an extended period of time. Limited term employees receive full health benefits, as well as a portable retirement plan in lieu of a pension. Since September 2013, the County has hired over 200 limited term employees spread out among 16 of the organization’s 23 departments. The utilization of limited term has resulted in savings for the County. If the County had added the term positions as regular, the organization would have paid more than $2 million in defined benefits contributions annually. Another benefit of limited term is that these employees can be brought on through an expedited hiring process, allowing departments to fill positions quickly and efficiently.

While many limited term employees have experienced their assignment with the organization as a “tour of duty”. Nearly a quarter of limited term employees have successfully competed for regular positions – providing a valuable talent pipeline for the organization that has resulted in the reduction of hard to fill positions. In addition, regular employees that have had opportunities to work out of class in term positions have built new skills and in some cases have been promoted.

**Fellowships:** In the summer of 2015, we launched the San Mateo County Management Fellowship Program, which gives recent masters graduates the opportunity to work on complex, high-level projects alongside County executives for a period of 1-3 years. The County currently has partnerships with San Francisco State University, UC Berkeley, Stanford University, Santa Clara University and San Jose State University. In addition to valuable work experience, the fellowship program provides each cohort with leadership classes, informational interviews with County leaders, and the chance to attend local government conferences. In 2015, the first year of the program, we hired 3 fellows, and this year we will bring on 16 fellows for the 2016 cohort.

**Internships:** The County offers a variety of internship programs available to individuals of all ages and backgrounds. The Regional Internship Program is part of a two-county collaborative that aims to usher in the next generation of public sector leaders and employees. The Jobs For Youth program is geared towards helping youth, ages 14-21, find internship opportunities in the County and introduce them to the working world. The Supported Training & Employment Program (STEP) provides internship opportunities for recently emancipated foster youth and works to prepare them for their transition into adulthood. During the last year, we have expanded the summer program to a year-round program, and increased participation levels. These foster youth have the opportunity to participate in job readiness training, job shadowing and employment coaching, hands on work experience in a County department, and transition planning.

In addition, a Student Consultants Program offers current master’s degree students (from San Francisco State University) the opportunity to perform program evaluations with the County Manager’s Office.

**Volunteers:** Each year, the County has thousands of volunteers that help the organization in a variety of ways from search and rescue to park trail maintenance. Some of our volunteers are seasonal, while others are ongoing. However, volunteer coordination and tracking has historically been managed by the individual departments. Under the Agile Organization
initiative, we are working to house all of our volunteer information on one central website in order to give citizens a full look at the different volunteer opportunities available in the County. We also aim to build one database system through which all County departments track their volunteers.

**Self-Help:** The term “self-help” refers to any technological or community organizing effort that fosters a sense of shared responsibility and connectivity between the County and its residents or employees. In our efforts to expand this work delivery option, we have created an HR mobile application which provides managers and supervisors with all information related to employee relations. We have also organized the 2015 and 2016 San Mateo County Hackathon (Hack-SMC), an annual, day-long event where citizens come together to create working applications that will benefit the San Mateo County community. The finalists from the Hack-SMC event advance to an Apps Challenge held in the fall where the finalist present their finished apps to a panel of judges and compete for a $5,000 grand prize.

**Agile Organization Resources/Toolkit**
Agile Organization Website

http://hr.smccgov.org/agile-organization


Implementation Guides
http://hr.smccgov.org/agile-organization-implementation-guides

Limited Term Handbook
http://hr.smccgov.org/sites/hr.smccgov.org/files/Term%20Employee%20Handbook_FINAL.pdf

Management Fellowship Toolkit
http://hr.smccgov.org/fellowship-toolkit

- University Fellowship Proposal_SFSU
- Fellowship Overview San Mateo County
- Fellowship Design San Mateo County Year One and Two
- Fellowship Interest Form
- Sample Hiring Process
- Sample Fellow Offer Letter
- San Mateo County Management Program Flyer
- San Mateo County Management Fellowship Flyer
- San Mateo County Fellowship PowerPoint

Internship Toolkit
http://hr.smccgov.org/internship-toolkit

- Sample Internship Hiring Process
- Sample Internship Job Description
- Sample Internship Job Posting
- Sample Finance and Account Internship Job Posting
- Sample Internship Offer Letter
- SMC Managers Onboarding Guide
- Sample New Employee Onboarding Checklist
- Sample Simple Intern Onboarding Checklist
- Sample Intern Interest Profiler
- Sample Intern Schedule and Dress Code
- Sample Intern Activities
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For additional information, please contact Donna Vaillancourt with San Mateo County Human Resources Department at (650) 363-4132 or dvaillancourt@smcgov.org