

INTER OFFICE MEMO

To: Administration & Finance Committee
From: Kristina Martinez, Director of Human Resources

Date: 10/28/2024

Reviewed by:



SUBJECT: Employee Referral Pilot Program Extension

Background:

In November 2023, the Board of Directors approved an Employee Referral Pilot Program from January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024. This pilot was implemented to address staffing shortages primarily in the Transportation and Maintenance departments, including the Transit Operator, Mechanic, Service Worker, and Storekeeper positions. While significant headway has been made in recruiting new employees, staff will continue to evaluate new methods to fill open positions as normal attrition rates occur. Additionally, these efforts will be crucial to prepare for enhanced service levels, as ridership continues to improve.

Pilot Program Analysis:

The Employee Referral Pilot Program was first implemented with the administrative staff, with an option for represented employees to be included in the program upon approval by their respective union representatives. All three represented groups elected to participate in the program with understanding of the pilot timeline and that any extension would be subject to Board approval.

Over the course of the pilot, to date, County Connection has recruited twenty (20) new Transit Operators, one (1) Mechanic, and two (2) Service Workers. Of this, a total of four (4) applicants (or 17% of new hires) were referred by County Connection employees. It is anticipated that an additional one to two positions in the Mechanic ranks will be filled by the end of the year.

While both the Transportation and Maintenance departments have made considerable progress over the last year, the Transit Operator position continues to be the most challenging to fill in response to the constant state of attrition. For perspective, the Authority has had twenty-two (22) separations since January 2024. Tables 1 and 2 below outline the budgeted vs. filled positions in 2023 compared to 2024.

Table 1: Budgeted vs. Filled Positions as of October 2023

Title	Budgeted	Filled	Shortage
Operators	155	141 (+2 trainees)	12-14
Mechanics	18	13	5
Storekeepers	2	1	1

Service Workers	11	8	3
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Table 2: Budgeted vs. Filled Positions as of October 2024

Title	Budgeted	Filled	Shortage
Operators	155	138 (+4 trainees)	13-17
Mechanics	18	15	3
Storekeepers	2	2	-
Service Workers	11	10	1

The Human Resources department continues to assess staffing levels with the recognition that the Transit Operator position will be ongoing. This will be vital in protecting current service levels and responding to any new service demands. In support of this ongoing effort, staff is recommending a two-year extension of the Employee Referral Pilot Program to assist in reducing the employee shortfall. Internally, staff are working closely with the Transportation and Maintenance departments as well as the Marketing team to engage with our communities as well as interested candidates for employment. Additionally, County Connection continues works with external agencies such as the California Employment Development Department (EDD), Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County, and local schools and community groups in recruitment outreach.

Financial Implications:

The original estimated cost for the pilot program was \$12,000. It is anticipated that a total of \$5,000 will be expended by the end of the pilot program on December 31, 2024, for employee referrals. These costs are covered under the existing Recruitment budget. Assuming an upward trend in the coming years, staff would estimate a cost of up to \$10,000 in each subsequent year, or about half of the vacancies, to be filled by a referral. Similarly, these costs would be covered under the existing Recruitment budget.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends a two-year extension to the Employee Referral Pilot Program from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2026.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the A&F committee forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to approve a one-year extension to the Employee Referral Pilot Program from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2026.