Improving hiring for San Francisco

Request for Information (RFI)

March 2018

Contents

Vision

The City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) is looking to modernize its hiring practices by using an integrated and modular approach to acquiring a new applicant tracking system (ATS). Through this iterative process, CCSF envisions a world in which intuitive, user-friendly tools help candidates find the right opportunities in government, and help managers and HR professionals hire the right talent while staying true to the merit-based system.

Value statements

The City follows a few core values when it comes to hiring:

- **Merit-based:** We strive to offer the best services to the public, therefore we follow a hiring process that ensures all employees have objectively met the minimum qualifications of a position and have been hired for their ability to perform the job (see the merit-system principles in the [Important Resources](#) section below)

- **Embracing diversity:** We believe our City employees should represent the communities we serve

- **Finding the right balance:** Government hiring is a tricky balance between effectively meeting hiring needs and ensuring compliance with civil service rules and policies to ensure fairness

There are also several key stakeholders who play varying roles in the hiring process. They each focus on something a little bit different but, together, allow San Francisco to stay true to the principles and philosophies it wants to embody when it comes to hiring.

The **Civil Service Commission** ensures departments hire the best qualified candidate through a fair and merit-based process. The Civil Service Commission is also responsible for having an open forum in their decision-making process.

Unions play a key role in ensuring the City follows fair employment practices and provides promotional opportunities to their members.

The **Department of Human Resources (DHR)** ensures merit-based processes are followed when conducting permanent civil service hiring. DHR does this by setting policies, procedures and best practices, auditing and providing consultation and other services to the City's departmental HR.

Departmental HR leads, facilitates, coordinates and ensures compliance of fair and consistent hiring processes.

A **hiring manager's** core role is to hire the best candidate possible.

Project plan

Work completed

Below is an outline of the work we have completed to date.

We recognize this is an evolving project with constantly changing needs. This project will go through several cycles of discovery, ideation, prototyping and testing.

Phase 1: Discovery (July - October 2017)	- Reviewing current rules, policies and practices - Mapping as-is decentralized human resources processes - Understanding current existing processes - Understanding hiring challenges across CCSF - Understanding challenges experienced by HR professionals - Understanding challenges experienced by hiring managers - Understanding challenges experienced by candidates
Phase 2: Ideation (October - November 2017)	- Solution identification & defining the north star - Identifying low-hanging fruit (small wins) - Defining the various service modules in government hiring
Phase 3: Testing and implementation (November 2017 - March 2018)	- Experimenting and prototyping low-hanging fruit - Beginning procurement process

Roadmap

We've identified 7 key modules in the government hiring process and plan to build/procure each module incrementally. The 7 key modules include:

- Succession planning
- Defining roles
- Number of hires needed by role
- Getting the word out
- Assessing skills
- Determining fit
- Onboarding

As a means of helping people better understand how this project could come together, here is a tentative roadmap showing how the different pieces could get tackled. We of course recognize that this will likely evolve as we continue to test and get feedback (and input from the vendor community):

Phase 1	- Building the infrastructure to facilitate the integration between existing and new systems (current ATS is JobAps, current Human Capital Management is PeopleSoft 9.2)--this could be in the form a hub (the role of the hub architecture is to provide a common exchange and data broker through which various vendors, projects, and products can pass relevant events and data) - Procure two initial modules: - Getting the word out - The purpose of this module is to ensure that CCSF is getting open positions and upcoming exams in front of prospective candidates and that enough qualified people apply/take the exam - Assessing skills - The purpose of this module is to ensure that CCSF is objectively and effectively: - Determining which candidates have the appropriate skills and qualifications for a given position

	● Ranking these candidates based on merit
Phase 2	● Build/procure certification/referral solution: 　○ The purpose of this piece (which straddles multiple modules) is to ensure that the right number of candidates is being shared with hiring managers accounting for how many hires are needed, civil service rules, etc. ● Procure determining fit module: 　○ The purpose of this module is for appointing officers (i.e. hiring managers) to establish a process for selecting an eligible candidate and determining whether the candidate is the right fit for their department/team through: 　　■ A selection process (e.g. interviews, etc.) 　　■ Any additional screening tied to the duties of the positions (e.g. background checks, medical examinations, etc.) ● Migrate legacy data 　○ Identify, transform, and migrate 10+ years of legacy data. We anticipate this process will involve significant planning efforts and will include many interrelated data models. Please note that while CCSF would ideally like to migrate all legacy data we recognize this may not be a fully realizable goal. We expect any respondent(s) to work with us to identify the data that can be reasonably migrated.
Phase 3	● Build/procure two additional modules: 　○ Number of hires needed by role: 　　■ The purpose of this module is to understand the amount of hiring that is needed for each class during a given period of time 　○ Onboarding:

	■ The purpose of this module is to ensure that the selected candidate is funneled through the appropriate steps before becoming an actual employee with CCSF. This includes:
	   ● If needed, collecting additional information from the candidate
	   ● Ensuring all the right systems have the necessary information so the selected candidate can collect benefits, get paid and start working on Day One
	   ● Provide the selected candidate with a good experience when becoming a CCSF employee

Phase 4	● Build/procure defining roles module:
	   ○ The purpose of this module is to define the common tasks and duties that are shared by a particular group of positions and to create a classification mechanism by which to categorize them
	   ○ These classifications define the skills that are needed by CCSF to deliver services to its constituents
	● Procure succession planning module:
	   ○ The purpose of this module is to allow hiring managers and HR professionals to:
	     ■ Identify and develop new leaders who can replace leaders who are separating from CCSF
	     ■ Increase the availability of experienced and capable employees who are prepared to assume new roles as they become available

Milestones

- [Completed] Identify project steering committee to ensure collaboration across CCSF:
  - San Francisco Department of Emergency Management
  - Port of San Francisco
  - San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
  - San Francisco Department of Public Health
  - Human Services Agency
  - Mayor's Office

- ○ Civil Service Commission
  - ○ San Francisco Department of Technology
  - ○ San Francisco Digital Services
  - ○ San Francisco Public Library
  - ○ Controller's Office
  - ○ General Services Agency
  - ○ San Francisco International Airport
  - ○ San Francisco Public Works
  - ○ San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
  - ○ San Francisco Police
  - ○ San Francisco Department of Human Resources
- ● "[In progress] Foundational work:"[1]
  - ○ [Completed] Product vision
  - ○ [In progress] Identify product owner and team
  - ○ [V1 completed (see above)] Product roadmap
  - ○ [In progress] Funding strategy
  - ○ [In progress] Market research and vendor outreach
  - ○ [In progress] Acquisition strategy
  - ○ [Not started] Technical prototyping
    - ■ The State of Alaska had a great way of framing up technical prototyping which we've included below:
      - ● "In working with legacy systems, it's especially important to test technical assumptions before scoping any kind of procurement, because there are likely unknown hazards that could put your procurement at risk, and these hazards can't be known unless you start building something."
      - ● "Unlike most kinds of prototypes, technical prototypes are not focused on user experience, but rather on the mechanics behind the user's experience. They test things like "Can we really access the data we think we need?", or "How does this external API actually work?"—so they're pretty bare-bones. They show just enough of the user-facing functionality to verify some kind of technical implementation. Practically, the prototype follows some user on a "happy path" user flow through that implementation."
      - ● "Prototyping a small end-to-end user flow is something that teams can do quickly before writing an RFP, and should help identify any hazards in the code, the deployment process or any other technical aspect of a project. This will help teams properly scope

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[1] We want to thank the State of Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services Modernization Project Team who put together an [RFI](#) that we used as a reference point. Some of the content herein on the importance of module procurement and agile practices has been repurposed https://github.com/AlaskaDHSS/EIS-Modernization/blob/master/README.md#near-term-milestones

the procurement and build out a reasonable RFP with some useful documentation for buyers and for vendors."[2]

- RFI release: March 26th, 2018
  - See [information for interested vendors](#) below
- General project questions due: April 27th, 2018
- RFI responses due: May 4th, 2018
- Evaluation period: Spring/Summer 2018
- First solicitation: RFP release TBD
- Award first contract: TBD
- Subsequent acquisitions: TBD

Challenges

Hiring is extremely complex and experienced differently by three main users: candidates, hiring managers, and HR professionals. Below is a list of problem statements identified by the three main users.

Challenges faced by candidates
How might a candidate serve the community, knowing that a substantial sacrifice is necessary to afford to work for CCSF and to live in the Bay Area?
How might a candidate stay engaged, knowing that the hiring process is a long process with little communication?
How might a candidate apply for similar roles, knowing there is not a common application?
How might a great candidate find the right job, without fully grasping the hiring process and job description?
How might out-of-town candidates be accommodated during the pre-employment process, knowing that the entire process could require them to be in San Francisco for an extended period of time?
How might a qualified candidate find information about the process (exams, etc), knowing most external candidates haven't experienced this before?
How might a qualified candidate provide employment verification, when they have had no contact with previous employers or the employer no longer exists?
How might a candidate provide verification of experience, when their previous employers will not provide verification in the format that CCSF requires?
How might candidates get jobs/a career in government, knowing the hiring process is very long

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[2] https://github.com/AlaskaDHSS/EIS-Modernization/blob/master/technical-prototyping.md

and complex?
How might a candidate who is unfamiliar with the civil service process (namely eligible lists) apply for a job?
How might a candidate learn about job openings they're qualified for, when positions aren't posted on LinkedIn, Indeed, or other platforms, and the candidate doesn't know where to look?
How might a candidate who is not good at standardized exams get a job?
How might a candidate determine if this is the right job, when the recruitment posting lacks sufficient information?
How might a candidate obtain a meaningful job, when there may be a discrepancy between expectations and the reality of the job?
How might a candidate take advantage of career advancement, when there is not always a defined career progression/ladder?
How might a candidate figure out where they are in the hiring process, given long delays in communication?

Challenges faced by hiring managers

How might a hiring manager attract the best candidate, knowing that candidates can earn better perks elsewhere?
How might a hiring manager feel confident about the hiring process, when different HR professionals handle the process differently?
How might a hiring manager fill a vacancy with the most qualified candidate, when the labor agreement (Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU) may require the position to be filled by an existing employee requesting reassignment?
How might a hiring manager get a current 'superstar' employee promoted, knowing the employee is not good at taking tests?
How might a hiring manager hire the most qualified candidate for the position, when that candidate cannot be reached under the certification rule?
How might a hiring manager hire the best candidate, when the recruitment didn't generate a good candidate pool?
How might a hiring manager hire quickly, when built-in time constraints and civil service rules slow down the process?
How might a hiring manager gather a diverse and qualified hiring panel, when qualified and diverse panelists are difficult to find?
How might a hiring manager pay competitive wages, when compensation rates set by the MOU and CCSF rules provide little flexibility?

How might a hiring managers retain qualified staff, when they cannot promote them and they are not reachable on an eligible list?
How might a hiring manager hire the best candidate for the job and their team, when the exam process may not allow candidates to showcase their individual talents?
How might a hiring manager fill a vacancy, when there are not enough qualified candidates available?
How might a hiring manager show the full value of the total compensation package to candidates, when they are unfamiliar with public sector pensions, etc.?

Challenges faced by HR professionals

How might an HR professional meet the expectations of hiring managers and candidates, when both have little knowledge of the hiring process?
How might an HR professional find qualified candidates, when minimum qualifications are inconsistent with job requirements?
How might an HR professional conduct a timely job analysis, when the subject matter experts are not available/difficult to schedule?
How might an HR professional communicate the process clearly to candidates, when it can be technical and confusing?
How might an HR professional assist in hiring good candidates, when candidates find other jobs due to the length of the hiring process?
How might an HR professional educate hiring managers about the hiring process, when they are unfamiliar with public sector hiring requirements?
How might an HR professional improve recruiting (make government employment more attractive), given the financial constraints of CCSF and the highly competitive labor market?
How might an HR professional ensure the interview panel is diverse, when the selected panelists are not available to participate?
How might an HR professional find a diverse interview panel, when there is not much diversity in the class series?
How might an HR professional expedite the hiring process, given the many hurdles the applicants must overcome?
How might an HR professional provide a positive experience to candidates, when CCSF processes are not clear to candidates?
How might an HR professional preserve a merit-based system, knowing that the hiring manager already has a specific candidate in mind before the competitive process even starts?
How might an HR professional ensure the process is timely, when current technologies aren't optimized for speed and processing large amounts of data?

How might an HR professional support the departments' mission, when hiring managers want to make the mission "hire my friends"?
How might an HR professional complete the recruitment process efficiently, when the systems used do not support all processes and workflows?
How might an HR professional begin to address implicit bias by removing names, addresses, and schools from applications shown to hiring managers, when the system doesn't support it?
How might an HR professional carry out their work more efficiently, when they are required to manually enter and re-enter data at multiple points in the process?

Our approach

Process

"We want to move away from a legacy "Big Bang" waterfall acquisition process to a more modular approach, emphasizing user-centered design, agile product development, and DevOps practices. We believe doing this will incrementally improve the current hiring process in a measurable and sustainable way, and eventually allow CCSF to use something more modern, flexible and maintainable."[3]

We will know we are successful if we are able to provide an exceptional applicant experience where candidates understand the hiring timeline and are appropriately supported throughout the process. We will also be able to measure and increase HR productivity by allowing analysts to focus less on manual data entry and more on providing effective consultation services to hiring managers. Hiring managers will understand what hiring options are available to them within the constraints of the complex merit-based system and receive the right level of support to be able to hire the best possible candidate in the shortest amount of time.

How we work

In an environment where there might be a number of different integration cycles happening at the same time, we think it is critical that each vendor work closely with the appointed PM at CCSF. For that work, we expect to adhere to the basic practices of agile software development.

Every two weeks we expect to conduct sprint meetings to go over items in the backlog and plan the upcoming sprint (defining the work to be done over the next two weeks). Sprints end with a sprint review (demonstrate work done, and accept or reject that work) and a sprint retrospective (review how we performed in that sprint).

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[3] https://github.com/AlaskaDHSS/EIS-Modernization/blob/master/README.md#our-hypothesis

Interested in seeing what these cycles look like? We always welcome prototyping opportunities and invite vendors to test with us. Let us know if you'd be open to this, or if you'd like to present your product(s).

How we remain grounded in users' needs

See Important Resources section below.

Architecture/Interface requirements

We want to implement a modular and interoperable solution utilizing various vendors and products. Therefore, any implemented solution (whether an individual module or a broader platform implementation) must present an ecosystem-friendly approach with:

- Heavy use of standards-compliant exchange formats (such as JavaScript Object Notation, or JSON)
- Prolific and well-documented endpoints
- Event-based hooks or triggers that allow integrating
- Pre-built connectors or data-exchange formats for direct connection with other modules and services (without requiring custom coding)
- Responsive design assuming usage on different devices (desktop, mobile, tablet)
- Configurable capabilities that allow the application to be easily modified by non-technical staff when laws or policies change

Implementation risks

"Description"[4]	Criticality (1-5)*	Status
The depth of the vendor pool available that understands agile delivery and can do modular procurement might be limited, at least in the early phases of the project.	4	In progress
The level of effort required to read or write data across multiple environments is not well known yet.	5	In progress
The quality/consistency of the data may be a blocker to goals we have around reporting and analysis.	2	In progress
The availability of appropriate platforms within CCSF's technology environment for deploying prototypes is not well understood yet.	3	In progress

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[4] https://github.com/AlaskaDHSS/EIS-Modernization/blob/master/README.md#risks

There is a risk that vendors won't be able to easily work with existing systems.	5	In progress
Ensuring the landscape of existing solutions that could potentially be leveraged instead of building from scratch is taken into account for each module.	3	Research in progress
There is a risk that by having multiple vendors contributing to the project, we increase the complexity of integration. There could be problems that arise specifically from the logistics and timing of multiple contributors.	3	Derisked through internal integration team
Significant risk associated with migration of 10+ years of legacy hiring data.	4	Limited research
This project will require time and effort from other departments (e.g. Controller's Office, Department of Technology) to ensure solutions are in line with existing rules and processes. Everyone has to be on board and have sufficient resources.	4	In progress

* 1 = low criticality; 5 = high criticality

Ongoing strategic concerns

Some overall, high-level questions we are constantly asking ourselves are included below. Their relative importance depends on how we ultimately decide to move forward with procurement and implementation.

- How do you effectively manage/coordinate multiple contracts simultaneously?
- How best to hold vendors accountable and ensure they don't just point fingers at one another?
- How do you make sure the code is consistent and compatible while using multiple vendors?
- What skills will be needed in-house over time to own this technology solution, since the needs might be evolving?
- How do you create the culture within CCSF where people aren't afraid to try something new?
- How do we ensure CCSF has consistent data definitions and tracking mechanisms across all departments?
- What communication methods are most effective to ensure external (vendors) and internal (in-house) teams are on the same page?

- How do we ensure effective system integration between various modules?
- How is the maintenance team being supported?
- What is the most effective form of project documentation and who will be held accountable for it?

Technical requirements

Key integration points

CCSF utilizes Oracle PeopleSoft as a primary data-source, data-connection, and data-integration point. Therefore, solutions (module, platform, or extension) that will provide additional functionality or process-flow support must support data exchange with PeopleSoft PeopleTools.

The preferred connection methodology is the PeopleTools Integration Broker. Specific planning and execution of the Integration Broker development (or an alternative equivalent approach) will be necessary.

Implementation design - Desired guidelines

As mentioned above, CCSF' is looking to implement a modular and interoperable solution utilizing various vendors and products. Therefore, any implemented solution (whether an individual module or a broader platform implementation) must present an ecosystem-friendly approach with:

- Heavy use of standards-compliant exchange formats (such as JSON)
- Prolific and well-documented endpoints
- Event-based hooks or triggers that allow integrating
- Pre-built connectors or data-exchange formats for direct connection with other modules and services (without requiring custom coding)
- Responsive design assuming usage on different devices (desktop, mobile, tablet)
- Configurable capabilities that allow the application to be easily modified by non-technical staff when laws or policies change

Maintenance, improvement, and extensibility

When putting together a solution composed of many sub-processes, vendors, and products, special planning and attention must be given to the long-term support and management of all components and interconnections involved. This, at the very least, includes a comprehensive

plan to ensure consistency in the face of changing personnel, vendors, products, and requirements.

Provider platform requirements

Any procured service (Software as a Service, or SaaS) or custom-implemented solution must meet a desired level of security, reliability, and performance. The data involved and transferred related to CCSF hiring is sensitive and often legally protected. In addition to a minimum industry-standard level of data protection, preference is given to those solutions that present a comprehensive approach to keeping all data and flows secure and available.

Included is a list of the relevant focus areas:
- Well-designed and implemented security architecture that meets the relevant standards and best practices
- Design of a highly-reliable & redundant system that can be expected to provide maximum uptime
- Plan of data backups, recovery, and protection
- Response plan for security, incident, and downtime response
- Service-level agreement (SLA) for security, performance, and uptime

Security - System and data

The envisioned system and modules must secure applicant, employee and all types of PII data stored and accessed by the application(s). The system, including processes, interfaces, databases, and connections must be secured against intrusion, injections, or other means intended to gain access to the application, data, or CCSF infrastructure.

Important resources

The following list is a link of comprehensive research documentation, data analysis and future experiences (north stars) that help provide context to the project. We envision these documents serving as reference points for the work to ensure we are staying true to user needs. Updated resources will continuously be added to this list.
- Merit System Principles (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board)
- Summary of findings
- Project blog updates
- Data flow analysis
- Ideal future experiences (candidates, hiring managers and HR professionals)

Project questions

We understand questions might come up as you are reading through this document and thinking through different ways you can contribute. At any moment, if you have any questions, please feel free to post them on our site here, and we will be sure to publicly answer them within 72 hours.

All questions must be submitted by April 27th, 2018.

Information for interested vendors

Overview

Thanks for your interest! "We're developing a new way of working with the vendor community. We want to collaborate with vendors as a cross-functional product team, working on smaller modules, in the open, to iteratively improve the government hiring process for CCSF hiring managers, HR professionals and candidates interested in working for CCSF. That means we will *not* be pursuing a stand-alone, multi-year, monolithic contract that would take a long time to complete, and a long time for the vendor team to deliver working functionality.

This won't be a panacea, and it will take us time to work through this new approach, but it will be a great experiment in trying a new way to incrementally build software that works for the vital users of the system."[5]

With that said, CCSF envisions a transparent procurement process and foresees a variety of responses some of which might not be included in the list below (we are excited to hear what thoughts you have and how you want to be involved!):

- A single vendor whose product addresses all modules and who has capacity to build any additional custom integrations that might be needed
- A single vendor acting as an integrator and subcontracting out modules to different entities with products/custom solutions addressing specific needs
- Smaller vendors providing products/custom solutions for different modules and built in a way that allows all the different parts of the ecosystem to easily speak to one another
- Or another approach explored and shared by interested vendors

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[5]

https://github.com/AlaskaDHSS/EIS-Modernization/tree/master/vendor-info#information-for-interested-vendors

We're not attached to a particular approach, rather we want to ensure *all of the work* is completed through an iterative process and is built in a way that allows for flexibility as we know hiring needs and the talent landscape more broadly speaking will constantly be changing.

How the interested vendor community is expected to engage

- See "how we work" section above

Overview or timeline and what we're looking for moving forward

- See "project plan" section above

Learn more about working with the City and County of San Francisco

Interested vendors should become aware of CCSF's compliance procedures. Vendors can visit http://sfgov.org/oca/qualify-do-business for further information.

Responses to this RFI become the exclusive property of the City and subject to the California Public Records Act and the City's Sunshine Ordinance. Please be aware that any information submitted, even personal identifying information may be disclosed to the public.

Interested vendors submission components

Interested vendors should respond to this RFI here with answers to the following questions. Responses are due Friday, May 4th, 2018 at 5pm PT.

Integration, implementation and technical thought process:

1. Which modules are you interested in working on? If you're interested in working on all modules, how would you integrate them, which off-the-shelf solutions (if any) do you envision using? In your answer please explain how your proposed solution addresses the desire to support a modular, multi-product ecosystem.
2. Link to your product's API and describe how you would, from a technical perspective, approach this project. In your answer please explain how your proposed solution will implement and integrate with Oracle PeopleSoft.
3. Explain how your proposed solution meets the requirements for the handling of sensitive and legally protected data as well as data backup, reliability, and incident response.

Team, resources & pricing:

4. How will you arrange the team structure (including key points of contact for CCSF)? What will their role(s) be?
5. How do you envision your proposed solution being supported and managed long-term in the face of changing teams, personnel, vendors, products, and requirements? Feel free to share examples of previous projects where you think this worked well/didn't work well if you have any.
6. How does your organization approach enterprise pricing (list prices for products and professional services)? Can you include an example of how pricing has worked for a similar project? If possible please provide a reference with information about the client?

Questions for us:

7. What questions do you have for us about this project?