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SUCCESSION PLANNING IN LA COUNTY

December 22, 2004

The County of Los Angeles has over 90,000 employees; 38 Department Heads, of which about 10 of these are elected officials, (plus 1 or 2 Assistant Deputies); and 150 "Controlled Positions" (Senior Executive Service "SES/Federal" & Military Models).

One of the issues which needs to be addressed, in relation to this, is the process in place for Succession Planning by the County. Succession Planning is what you do inside your system in order to prepare and fill the vacancies which may arise. One problem present in the current process is that there seems to be a dearth of *internal candidates*, but an obvious *difference* in the *external pool*. The question then becomes, is the County doing all it can to reach the outside in their recruiting and "low-bid rule" process?

The average tenure and lifespan of a Department Head is 3 to 5 years. They usually take these positions toward the end of their careers, on their way to retirement. "This is a huge problem for the County. People are leaving and it is really hard to hand the baton over." -- *Conny B. McCormack*, LA CO Clerk and Registrar/Recorder.

Upon further review, it can be concluded that a program needs to be created, and implemented, which maximizes the use of the resources and talent pool. The candidate pool has to comply with, among other things, diversity, civil service criteria, political realities, etc. Another problem which exists is that people get locked-in to their Pension Plan, Health Plan, Benefits, etc., and this makes advancement and growth very difficult.

The LA County Citizen's Economy and Efficiency Commission has created a special task force, Chaired by Commissioner William J. Petak, which has been commissioned to study this issue and make its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors within a short period of time.

During its first Task Force meeting in December 2004, there was a lot of discussion by the appointed members, on finding out what exactly the County is doing and, after comparing this to other programs in place within organizations in the public and private sector, maybe reference and recommend examples of model programs used by others, which have been successful. "If you don't do anything until you have a vacancy, I call that crisis management. You have to have something in place in order to be prepared. You have to slay the "sacred cow" approach that may be in place due to political and/or human factors present in the system. It is simply amazing how, in this country, we have Freedom and Capitalism, yet, in the work-place, we have become very socialistic and/or communistic." -- *William J. Petak*, Succession Planning Task Force Chair.

The Succession Planning Task Force Members are: Commissioners Annie E. Cho; Ronald J. Ikejiri; Julia Sylva; Isaac D. Barcelona; Tony Tortorice; and Chair, William J. Petak.

Isaac D. Barcelona

12/22/04

For further information on any this or any other news released by the Economy and Efficiency Commission, contact Bruce J. Staniforth, Executive Director at eecomm@co.la.ca.us , or by phone at (213) 974-1491 or fax at (213) 620-1437.

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