

Bureau of Development Services
Bureau Workload and Service Level Strategies
Updated May 20, 2016

Background

As the economy has rebounded, the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) has implemented innovative ways to address the resulting workload demands. Since November 2013, the bureau has added 113 new positions, converted 18 positions from limited term to permanent, and hired 105 staff to address its ongoing workload and service level needs. The bureau has also hired temporary workers, seasonal/casual employees, and retirees to augment its permanent workforce as it addresses spikes in workload levels.

Despite these staff additions, the construction industry has outpaced the bureau's ability to keep up with related workload and meet some of its service level goals. For the first quarter of 2016, permit applications were up 25% from last year, and Development Services Center (DSC) customer counts were up 15% for the same timeframe. Over the last 8 weeks, the DSC has had over 1000 customers/week. The bureau recently informed customers that new commercial building permits are averaging 35 days, although the goal is 20 working days, and residential building permit reviews are averaging 25 working days, although the goal is 15 working days.

Further, the bureau continues to be challenged to hire permanent and temporary employees to keep up with workload demands and fill on-going vacancies. With the addition of the 2016 Spring BMP, the bureau currently has approximately 58 positions that need to be filled. On-going, unfilled vacancies are due to a number of issues including:

- Limited candidate pools for positions, particularly for technical positions such as Plans Examiner;
- Promotion of current employees creating unanticipated vacancies in other positions and sections in the bureau;
- Staffing capacity challenges in the Training and Workforce Development section to simultaneously manage large numbers of ongoing recruitments all in various stages of recruitment (outreach, recruitment, interviews, backgrounds checks, etc.); and
- Logistical constraints for interview resources such as adequate conference room availability.

Hiring managers and panel participants are also having difficulty keeping up with the time demands associated with continuous application reviews and/or interviews. This time demand has compounded delays to the process of filling positions.

Strategies

In light of continuing workload increases, BDS is taking a multifaceted strategic approach to addressing its workload and service level needs including contracting out for services, augmenting staff with staff from other jurisdictions, adding internal recruitment staff, prioritizing hiring, and continuing to look at ways to streamline business processes.

- Contracting out for services –The bureau is exploring all options for contracting out various services including plan review, building inspections, land use reviews, and recruitment outreach.

Short-term options include:

- Entering into direct contracts with firms certified as minority-owned, woman-owned, or emerging small business (MWESB) by the State of Oregon;
- Sole source contracting (where appropriate); and
- Utilizing other bureau and State contracting authority.

In the long-term, BDS intends to conduct formal procurement processes for multiple year contracts.

- Augmenting staff – The bureau is enlisting the help of the State of Oregon and other jurisdictions by borrowing staff to augment BDS staffing in the area of plans review, inspection and land use services;
- Adding internal recruitment resources - BDS is adding 4 temporary staff to assist with its recruitment activities. This is in addition to the 2 staff currently working full-time on bureau recruitment activities and the dedicated Senior HR Analyst assigned to the bureau from the Bureau of Human Resources. The additional staff will allow the bureau to speed up filling its vacancies by increasing the bureau's ability to run more recruitments concurrently. It is expected that by adding these additional staff, the bureau will be able to fill all of its current vacancies within the next 9 months, shortening its recruitment timeline by up to 6 months. The bureau is also contracting with an outside recruitment outreach firm with the goal of reaching a broader candidate pool to fill its vacancies, particularly for difficult to recruit positions.
- Prioritizing hiring - The bureau is focusing on first filling its most critical positions based on its service level needs. This will allow the bureau to fill its most urgent positions that have the biggest impact on service levels.

- Streamlining business processes – The bureau is continuing to work on ways to be more efficient in its business processes. Efforts are focusing on enhanced customer education, improved outreach, and methods for reducing wait times in the DSC.

The bureau will continue to explore all options available with the goal of enhancing its service levels.