

**FY 2023-2024 BUDGET QUESTION**  
***Response to Request for Information***

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DEPARTMENT(S): Aviation

CBQ NO.: 164

REQUESTED BY: A.Alter

DATE REQUESTED: 07/26/2023

DATE POSTED: 07/31/2023

REQUEST: How are we addressing the vacancies at the Airport?

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**RESPONSE:**

The Department's staffing levels were greatly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and we still feel the impacts of the pandemic today. Leading up to the dramatic increase in airline activity and passenger growth following a department-wide hiring freeze spurred by the pandemic, the Department of Aviation took pro-active steps to increase staffing levels to support increased passenger activity. The Department enlists a range of strategies to appropriately staff the airport. The dramatic contraction and expansion of the workforce needed to operate the airport has placed the Department in a challenging position.

In an immediate response to the increased airline activity, the Department began hiring temporary employees to fill the needed operational roles. The Department continues to leverage this strategy today as a way to fill vacancies, train new staff and grow internal candidate pools for full-time positions since we are not able to attract talent from other airports. The Department continues to leverage this strategy as a way to fill our vacancies, grow internal candidate pools for Aviation and our Airport partners and train newcomers to our industry. Since summer of 2021, the Department has hired more than 300+ temporary employees with no prior aviation or airport experience and has trained them creating a pool of internal candidates.

The Department proactively identified the staffing gaps and procured contracts to provide staff augmentation and fill the critical maintenance positions until we fill the vacancies. Additionally, the Department regularly recruits retirees who retired from the airport, both as City of Austin employees and partner agency employees, to re-join the airport as a part-time temporary employee. This benefits the Department by bringing in experienced airport professionals who are familiar with the organization and operation to fill in gaps and assist in training and mentoring new employees.

The Department of Aviation has initiated several solutions to attract and retain talent:

- Creating a Retention and Incentive Program to retain current staff and attract new talent.
- Promoting Department of Aviation and other airport partner agency careers and vacancies through paid, owned and earned marketing efforts.
- Hosting Job Showcase and Hiring Fairs that have brought in more 200 attendees to learn more about jobs at AUS.
- Recruiting candidates using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. The department has contracted with a technology company that uses artificial intelligence to search for job seekers that match AUS posted positions.
- Advertising open positions with Airport trade organizations to attract experienced airport and aviation professionals.
- Collaborating with the local high Schools, trade schools, community colleges and nonprofit organizations to develop partnerships and advertise job opportunities.

The Department struggles to attract candidates with experience in airports or the aviation industry. Aviation is grateful for the support of the City Manager's office to conduct the first Airport specific market study and approval of the hiring authority to attract talent. The Department has dedicated funding for a market research study to be conducted in the next 6 months. Additionally, Aviation is finalizing expanded hiring authority with Human Resources Department (HRD) which will allow Aviation to hire, within their budget, at the amount necessary to bring in qualified candidates to fill positions within the salary range of the position.