

Audit Report

Austin Police Department Recruiting and Hiring Audit

April 2025



The Austin Police Department (APD) is experiencing staff shortages and is struggling to attract enough applicants to fill vacancies. APD's vacancy rate for police officers more than doubled to 18% between 2020 and 2024. However, APD does not have an effective recruitment strategy to address hiring challenges. APD also does not have a measurable objective or goal, action plans to reach its objective, or a thorough process to evaluate efforts. Additionally, APD lacks a recruitment pipeline that could give interested applicants more opportunities to explore a career with the department.

APD Recruiting and Hiring

Objective

Is Austin's Police Department effectively, efficiently, and equitably recruiting and hiring sworn staff?

What We Found

The Austin Police Department (APD) is experiencing staff shortages and is struggling to attract enough cadets to fill the vacancies. Between 2020 and 2024, APD's police vacancy rate increased from 7.4% to 18%. As of January 2025, APD had over 330 vacancies among its sworn officers,¹ with over 41% of those positions open for over a year.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) says an effective recruitment strategy is vital in addressing hiring challenges and should contain four things: objectives, a strategy, relevant recruitment actions, and a process to measure results and evaluate efforts. However, APD does not have a specific recruitment plan or social media strategy to guide their efforts and measure success. The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan lists three strategies that APD plans to follow to achieve their objective of recruiting a diverse and skilled sworn workforce. However, the strategies are broad, lack measurable targets, and the Recruiting Unit does not have action plans for these strategies. Additionally, APD recruiting staff are manually entering data inconsistently, limiting their ability to measure the success of their efforts. Without an effective recruitment strategy and accurate data, APD cannot effectively determine if their efforts are helping the department reach its recruitment objective.

Recruitment pipelines are a series of programs that provide opportunities for the community, usually youth, to engage with the department. The Department of Justice says that recruitment pipelines can increase the applicant pool. APD does not have a recruitment pipeline or programs that retain interest in the department. APD has two programs that engage and build positive relations with Austin youth but lacks a coordinated recruitment pipeline. Additionally, APD's two programs only engage students from 8 to 18 years old. However, applicants interested in Austin's Police Academy cannot join until they are 20.5 years old. APD does not have any other programs to retain youth interest in the department until they are old enough to join. Lastly, APD only has one program that targets recruitment in adults and this program only recruits retired officers. Without a sequential and comprehensive recruitment pipeline that measures success, APD limits the reach of their programs.

¹ As defined in the Labor agreement between the City of Austin and the Austin Police Association, officer means all police officers, not including the department head and the assistant department heads. This term does not include cadets, civilian employees, retirees, and reserve officers.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Chief of Police work with the Recruiting Unit to strengthen its recruitment strategies and pipeline. This includes developing action plans with measurable objectives, providing training for recruitment staff to increase data reliability, creating a social media strategy, and developing a recruitment pipeline for interested applicants.



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Cover: Austin Police Department Officers, APD Recruiting Unit.

Objective

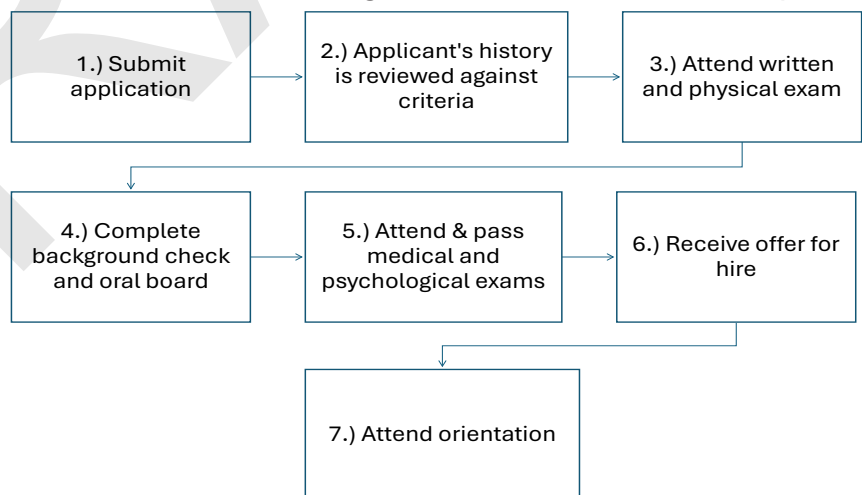
The objective of this audit was to determine if the Austin Police Department is effectively, efficiently, and equitably recruiting and hiring sworn staff.

Background

The Austin Police Department (APD) Recruiting Unit is responsible for the department's recruitment and hiring of police officers or sworn staff. The Recruiting Unit also handles background checks for applicants to APD's Police Academy and engages in recruiting activities such as attending career fairs.

APD is experiencing staff shortages and is struggling to attract enough applicants to fill vacancies. APD staff attribute challenges to being out of contract for more than a year, low pay, and lack of community trust. During our scope period, the City of Austin contract with the Austin Police Association ended on March 2023 and a new contract started in October 2024. The new contract increased pay to attract interested applicants and be more comparable to peers. As of January 2025, APD had 330 vacancies out of 1816 positions for police officers. 41% of these vacancies were open for more than 1 year.

Exhibit 1: APD's Hiring Process for the Police Academy



Source: Audit analysis of Austin Police Department's hiring process, October 2024

To join APD, an interested applicant must be 20.5 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, a valid driver's license, be a US citizen, and read, speak, and write English. Exhibit 1 shows the steps of APD's hiring process to the Police Academy.

The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan is the department's guiding document outlining the department's priorities for the next five years.

All applicants who pass a written examination, background check, and physical and mental examinations are offered a conditional offer of employment. According to APD's recruiting website, the hiring process could take between 6 to 12 months to complete depending on when the applicant applied, available test dates, and the speed of the background check. Applicants with a conditional offer of employment must attend an on-site orientation before the Police Academy begins. Applicants must then complete Austin's Police Academy to become a police officer.

Once an applicant is accepted into an Academy class, they are called a cadet. Each Academy can accommodate up to 104 cadets. However, from 2020 to 2024, Academy class sizes averaged around 56 cadets.

APD is aware of their hiring challenges and identified three strategies in their 2024-2029 Strategic Plan to help them meet their objective to recruit a diverse and skilled sworn workforce. Best practices agree that these strategies, if implemented effectively, can help recruitment and build community trust.

Exhibit 2: APD's three recruitment strategies in the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

Broaden the reach of the recruitment program through innovative outreach

Enhance the recruitment pipeline through applicant support and career pathways

Identify additional resources to further enhance the recruitment program

Source: Audit review of APD 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, March 2025

APD also signed the national 30x30 Initiative to increase the percentage of women in all ranks of law enforcement to 30% by 2030. The 30x30 Initiative is a pledge that law enforcement agencies make to show their dedication to increasing the percentage of women in law enforcement. Over 350 law enforcement agencies nationwide have signed the pledge. Agencies that sign the 30x30 Pledge agree to:

- Take measures to increase the representation of women in all ranks of law enforcement,
- Ensure that policies and procedures are free from bias,
- Promote equitable hiring, retention, and promotion of women officers, and
- Ensure their culture is inclusive, respectful, and supportive of women in all ranks and roles of law enforcement.

The 30x30 also encourages signed agencies to share their challenges and victories to help each other develop programs and initiatives to address barriers to women's advancement in law enforcement. APD signed the pledge in 2022.

What We Found

Summary

The Austin Police Department (APD) is experiencing staff shortages and is struggling to attract enough applicants to fill vacancies. APD's vacancy rate for police officers increased from 7.4% in 2020 to 18% in 2024. However, APD does not have an effective recruitment strategy to address hiring challenges. APD also does not have a measurable objective, action plans to reach its objective, or a thorough process to evaluate efforts. Additionally, APD lacks a recruitment pipeline that could give interested applicants more opportunities to explore a career with the department.

Finding 1

APD's Recruiting Unit does not have an effective strategy to increase the number of sworn staff.

According to the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), recruitment plans need to establish objectives that outline what the agency wants to accomplish. These objectives should be measurable, directly tied to specific recruitment actions, and include a timeframe.

Effective recruitment strategies list the activities or actions the agency will take to meet its objectives. They should say what is going to be done, who is going to do it, and when it will be conducted.

The Society for Human Resource Management says that an effective recruitment strategy needs four things to be successful: objectives, a strategy, relevant recruitment actions, and a process to evaluate efforts.

APD does not have measurable recruitment objectives

APD's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan lists one objective related to recruitment: "Recruit a Diverse and Skilled Sworn and Civilian Workforce." However, this objective is not directly tied to specific recruitment actions or measurable target. The 30x30 initiative provides some insight into what a diverse sworn workforce could look like by setting an objective of increasing the percentage of women in all ranks of law enforcement to 30% by 2030. However, outside of this initiative, there are no other metrics establishing what the department specifically wants to accomplish. APD's Strategic Plan lists no additional goals that outline what a diverse and skilled workforce should look like. Additionally, the Recruiting Unit has not provided any additional insight into this objective. Without a measurable objective, it is unclear how the department will know when they have accomplished their objective.

APD does not have an effective recruitment strategy or action plans

As mentioned in the background section of this report, the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan lists three strategies that APD plans to follow to achieve their objective of recruiting a diverse and skilled sworn workforce:

- Broaden the reach of the recruitment program through innovative outreach methods,
- Enhance the recruitment pipeline through applicant support and career pathways programs, and
- Identify additional resources to further enhance the recruiting program.



However, APD's recruitment strategies are too broad to lead the department towards its objective. The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan states that the department will develop each strategy into action plans to achieve its objective.

However, as of March 2025, the Recruiting Unit has not developed any action plans for these strategies. Additionally, the Recruiting Unit has not created any strategies or action plans to meet the 30x30 Initiative. The 30x30 Initiative recommends that agencies develop a strategic plan with measurable targets to increase the number of women in sworn ranks. Without an effective recruitment strategy or action plans, it is unclear what specific tasks should be implemented to reach the department's recruitment objective.

The Recruiting Unit also lacks a social media strategy. Social media is one approach that provides the highest impact for the lowest cost that the department can take to maximize their reach. However, the Recruiting Unit does not have objectives or strategies for its social media platforms.

Additionally, the Recruiting Unit's social media staff and APD's Public Information Office do not work together to share recruitment messages on their social media accounts. These two accounts post very different things. APD's Recruiting Unit's social media pages regularly posts content featuring women and minorities, provides information about the application process and dates, and advertises information about recruitment events. Meanwhile, the department-wide social media pages do not appear to make many posts about recruiting applicants. The department's social media posts are a mixture of advertisements for community meetings, general events, press conferences, case information, and educational posts. Exhibit 3 shows examples of Austin's Police Department's Facebook page and the lack of recruitment posts.

Exhibit 3: APD's department-wide's and recruitment unit's social media show different types of information

APD's Department-wide Facebook	APD's Recruiting Unit's Facebook
	
<p>APD's Department - wide's recent Facebook posts show general information and initiatives, like DWI Enforcement.</p>	<p>APD's Recruiting Unit's recent Facebook posts show information about recruiting.</p>

Source: APD Recruiting Unit and Department's Facebook page, March 2024

Additionally, the Recruiting Unit's pages have a more limited reach than the department-wide pages. Exhibit 4 provides additional details on the four social media platforms (Facebook, X, YouTube, and Instagram) that APD's Recruiting Unit and Department use and the difference in followers between the two pages.

Exhibit 4: APD's Recruiting Unit's social media pages have less followers than the department-wide pages

Platform	APD's Department Pages' Followers	APD's Recruiting Unit's Pages' Followers	Difference in Followers
Facebook	104,000	10,000	94,000
X	213,800	1,915	211,885
Youtube	4,190	666	3,524
Instagram	26,000	3,843	22,157

Source: Audit analysis of APD Recruiting Unit and APD's department-wide social media pages, October 2024

APD staff state that they could coordinate efforts between the two pages to maximize the reach of recruitment efforts, but they just have not had the chance to orchestrate their efforts due to workloads. Including social media into APD's strategic efforts could allow the department to create measurable objectives and an action plan to effectively use the resource.

APD is implementing relevant recruitment activities

According to SHRM, once measurable objectives and a strategy are agreed upon, relevant recruitment activities should be implemented. Although APD's Recruiting Unit lacks a measurable objective and a recruitment strategy, they are making efforts to recruit in a way that increases the diversity of their sworn staff. Some of the unit's strategies to increase the diversity of cadets include hosting recruiting events at military institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and local high schools. While at these events, recruiting staff say they also try to be proactive and approach women about a career in law enforcement.

APD does not have a thorough process to evaluate success

The Recruiting Unit does capture some metrics to track the success of their recruitment efforts. When applicants apply to the Police Academy, they can share where they heard about APD. Additionally, recruiters document how many people they speak to when they attend an event. They also track applicant demographics (race/gender), hiring status (hired, disqualified, etc.), when the applicant applied, the state the applicant is from, and the reason the applicant dropped out by individual Academy class. They use this information to guide their efforts and make decisions, such as which career fairs to attend and in which states they should increase their recruitment outreach. While the data collected are related to APD's objective to recruit a diverse and skilled workforce, they don't have measures related to the strategies or specific actions the department wants to take to reach their objective.

Measuring and evaluating the results of recruitment efforts is vital to determining if recruitment objectives have been achieved.

Since APD lacks measurable objectives that define what success looks like for the department, APD cannot effectively evaluate the impact of their efforts on their overall objective to recruit a diverse and skilled workforce.

Additionally, we found data reliability issues that limit APD’s ability to evaluate success. Staff in the Recruiting Unit are entering data into their tracking system inconsistently.² While some information is automatically populated into the system when an application is submitted, details about the applicant’s movement through the hiring process are manually entered. One field that must be entered manually is the written exam test date. Some staff were entering the anticipated written exam date whereas other staff entered the date the applicant attended. Additionally, nearly 70% of applicants did not have any information in the field about attending the written examination. However, some of the blank fields may be correct because the applicant did not qualify for the written exam or show up. Due to inconsistent data entry, it was unclear which blanks were correct or contained errors. Lastly, over 100 applicants had testing dates that were earlier than the date they applied. Exhibit 5 shows some of the issues with APD’s applicant data because of the data inconsistencies.

Exhibit 5: Identified issues with APD’s applicant data between 2020 and 2024

Issue	Count	% of All Applicants
Applicants without a test date for the written exam.	5940	70%
Applicants that had a written test date before their application date.	121	1%
Applicants that were hired with no recorded test date for the written exam.	11	0%

Source: Audit analysis of APD applicant data between February 2020 to July 2024, December 2024

These inconsistencies, among others, make it hard for APD to answer questions about their hiring process, like which groups of people don’t show up for the written exam or how long it takes for someone to complete each step of the process.

The recruiting staff lack the training and guidance to ensure consistent data entry. They are primarily trained through job shadowing another person in the unit. The unit has a manual that contains a standard operating procedure for data entry. However, this procedure does not include step-by-step instructions on how staff should enter data into the system to ensure consistency in understanding. The Unit also lacks a review process that checks the accuracy of the entered information. Accurate data is an important component of evaluating success as it gives decision makers the confidence to adjust efforts and allocate resources accordingly.

According to CALEA, the key to good decisions regarding recruitment is having good data to evaluate.

² APD uses the Internet Collaborative Information Management System (also referred to as iCIMS) to manage applicants to the Police Academy.

Without the components of an effective recruitment strategy, APD cannot determine the direct impact various efforts are having on recruitment. With a stronger recruitment strategy, they could identify what successful or ineffective efforts were, reallocate money appropriately, and advocate for additional funding.

Finding 2

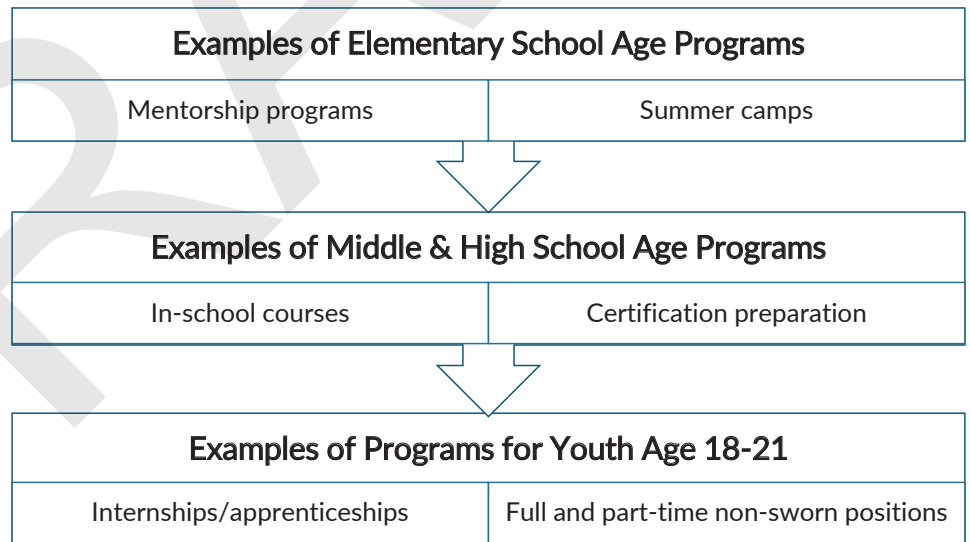
APD does not have a recruitment pipeline to give interested applicants more opportunities to explore a career with APD.

According to the Law and Public Safety Education Network (LAPSEN), agencies should develop long term strategies that engage with elementary age youth, to youth closest to the application age.

APD's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan mentions the department's commitment to enhancing their recruitment pipeline through career pathways programs. A recruitment pathway or pipeline is a series of programs that give potential applicants, usually youth, the opportunity to learn more about a job or organization. The Department of Justice states that recruitment pipelines can help increase interest in the law enforcement career. Pipeline programs typically include middle school, high school, and post-high school programs.

These programs are long-term strategies that often engage with the community to create interest in official employment opportunities with the organization. Exhibit 6 gives examples of a sequential recruitment pipeline and the types of programs at each age range. As potential applicants interact with the department and police officers, they get direct experience in law enforcement and may be inspired to join the department as an officer.

Exhibit 6: Sequential recruitment pipelines contain a variety of programs to retain interest over time.



Source: Audit Analysis of Law Enforcement Recruitment Pipelines, February 2025

Recruitment pipeline programs are usually a combination of two types of programs that either work together or feed into each other. The two types are school-career programs and non-school career programs. School-career programs exist within a traditional educational environment and include programs like high school courses or certification preparation courses in criminal justice. Non-school programs exist outside of a traditional educational environment and include programs like internships or summer camps specific to law enforcement.

APD does not have a recruitment pipeline

APD has two programs that engage and build positive relations with Austin youth but lacks a coordinated recruitment pipeline. APD's two programs, the Police Activities League (PALs) and Criminal Justice (CJ) Pathways programs, can be considered a non-school and school-career program, respectfully. The PALs program aims to build positive interactions between the police and the community through mentorship and coaching at one of the Boys and Girls Club in Austin. The program serves Austinites between the ages of 8 and 15 years old.

The CJ Pathways program serves high schools and colleges in Austin that already have a criminal justice program or courses in their school. The CJ Pathways program aims to increase interest in policing by interacting with students, modeling positive policing, and letting students know that policing is a viable career option. The program provides a one-time glimpse into law enforcement.

However, these two programs are not a part of a coordinated recruitment pipeline. The programs don't interact with each other, help students move from one program to the next, or promote other recruitment efforts. Additionally, APD staff only consider the CJ pathways program as a program that aims to increase student's interest in policing as a career. Staff view the PALs program as a community engagement program not a program geared towards recruitment or part of a recruitment pipeline.

A study of 850 academy recruits from 15 academies by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training found that 50% of youth knew they wanted to join the law enforcement career by the 12th grade. A consistent and sequential recruitment pipeline for youth can result in the successful recruitment of participants.

APD has acknowledged they do not have a robust recruitment pipeline for local youth; however, they used grant funds to create a youth initiative program. The Youth Initiative Program aims to develop a local recruitment model that expands the cadet applicant pool based on conversations with local youth and young adults. However, this program is a grant funded pilot that is still in its early phases and will need external funding to implement the identified recruitment plan.

According to LAPSEN, offering full-time, paid programs that bridge the gap until potential applicants are old enough to apply can help keep top applicants involved in the agency.

APD lacks an internship or apprenticeship program to retain youth interest

Both the PALs and CJ Pathways programs engage youth from 8 to 18 years old, however, potential applicants to APD's Police Academy cannot join until they are 20.5 years old. APD does not have any other programs to capture and youth retain interest in the department. Agencies that do not continue to invest in interested youth until they are able to apply, may lose those they have identified as strong applicants after two to three years.

Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. were identified by the Department of Justice as cities that exhibit best practices in recruiting and hiring for police. Both cities have coordinated and sequenced youth programs/pipelines that allow young people to engage with the department up until they are eligible to apply, while providing employment opportunities that could increase their interest in their policing as a career.

Los Angeles has sequenced youth programs from ages 11 to 21 years old and a magnet program partnership that feeds into their Police Academy. Washington, D.C. has both a high school partnership and a college intern program that feeds into their Police Academy. APD had an internship program in the past that allowed interested individuals to experience working for APD, however, staffing challenges have limited the department's ability to implement a program since 2019.

APD also has limited recruitment programs for non-youth applicants. They have one program that hires honorably retired APD officers as temporary employees. APD created the Reserve Officer's Unit to address critical staffing levels in 2023. While this program has already helped APD fill some staffing gaps,³²the program has a limited scope focusing only on retired officers. This program is managed by the Special Events Unit. APD does not have any other program that provides opportunities for adults to work with APD.

APD is not the only City that does not have many targeted programs in their recruitment pipeline for adults. Most peer cities that have a recruitment pipeline focus on engaging and investing in their city's youth through internships, junior cadet, and apprenticeship programs. Without more targeted programs for adults, APD may be limiting their reach and missing potentially interested applicants.

Staffing and data challenges limit the impact of recruitment geared programs

As mentioned earlier, staffing challenges limit the impact and reach of APD's current programs. Both the PALs and the CJ Pathways programs lack staffing to maximize their ability to connect with as many students as possible. The PALs program only serves students in one Boys and Girls Club in Austin and is staffed by two APD officers. Meanwhile, the CJ pathways program serves local high schools and colleges but according to staff, it is only staffed by one officer, which may limit the reach of the program.

APD also cut other recruitment efforts due to staffing shortages. The Explorers program worked with youth between the ages of 14 and 20 years old and helped show them the many career opportunities available in law enforcement. The program was staffed by eight officers, but was cut.

Additionally, outside of informal testimonials from students and their families, neither program has any metrics to measure the impact and success of the program. The Department of Justice recommends agencies develop a performance monitoring system to track progress.

Staffing limitations can make building a recruitment pipeline more difficult. By creating and staffing a sequential recruitment pipeline and collecting data to measure success, APD could increase the impact and reach of their recruitment programs.

³ If a reserved officer should encounter a critical situation, like a fight, or any other disruption, APD officers will step in to cover those incidents.

Recommendations and Management Response

1

To create a more effective recruitment strategy and better determine the impact of recruitment efforts, the Chief of Police should work with the Recruiting Unit to:

- Create action plans with measurable targets to make progress towards APD's recruitment priorities.
- Regularly use recruitment data to evaluate progress towards recruitment targets and adjust efforts accordingly to maximize effectiveness.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The Chief of Police and Executive Team will work with the Recruiting Unit to create a data-driven recruiting model with a comprehensive plan to engage with diverse communities, effectively market APD, recruit well-qualified candidates, maintain relationships, provide supportive services and growth opportunities, streamline the hiring process, minimize Cadet drop offs, and retain sworn personnel. The model will provide multiple strategies with fully detailed goals, objectives (with related performance measures and target data), activities, data collection methods, key positions, timelines, projected annual costs, potential partnerships, and unmet resource needs. In addition, the deliverable will explore cost-effective options for assessment and evaluation that allow leadership to adjust activities to meet recruitment targets.

Proposed Implementation Date: The recruiting model will be published in September 2025. The implementation schedule will be contingent upon the availability of funds, personnel, and resources.

2

To improve the reliability of recruitment data, the Chief of Police should work with the Recruiting Unit to update their Standard Operating Procedure and train staff to ensure consistent guidance for staff entering data into their applicant tracking system, that includes an internal review process for manually entered data.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The Recruiting Unit is currently composed of 28 highly trained and dedicated sworn and civilian personnel. This team does not include a professionally trained data analyst and, with our growing reliance on accurate data to inform decision making, our long-term plan is to hire an analyst to fill the identified gaps in knowledge and expertise. Over the short term, Recruiting Unit leadership will provide the training and guidance needed to minimize errors with data entry. As well, the Recruiting and Risk Management Units will collaboratively develop an internal review process for manually entered data. In accordance with APD policy, the Recruiting Unit updates their Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) annually. The Chief of Police and Executive Team will work with Recruiting leadership to further revise their SOPs to reflect updates as we move forward with implementation.

Proposed Implementation Date: The short-term training and internal process piece will be complete by July 2025. Our FY27 budget request will include the analyst position (earliest start date: October 1, 2026); however, the Department will make every effort to leverage existing analysts' time immediately. Of note, last year APD was in the process of reclassifying an FTE to fill the analyst role; however, HR mandated the elimination of positions not filled by the fall. This timeline did not allow Recruiting staff to complete the reclassification work.

Recommendations and Management Response

3

To enhance the impact of APD's recruitment outreach efforts, the Chief of Police should work with the Recruiting Unit to coordinate APD's department-wide social media accounts with their recruiting social media accounts.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The Department's social media account, which has a wide following, is primarily used for disseminating public safety awareness, timely messages and news alerts to the public. Leadership within the Recruiting Unit and Public Information Office (PIO) created a process to share content to maximize the potential of APD's social media accounts. PIO will share recruiting posts on the main account for more viewership. The collaboration between PIO and Recruiting will continue to evolve in content and creation. Recruiting will benefit from the additional exposure and the Department will benefit from citywide posts that reflect a recruitment theme.

Proposed Implementation Date: In effect as of April 2025.

4

To give interested applicants more opportunities to explore a career with APD, the Chief of Police should create and implement a career pathways program, such as an internship or apprenticeship, that captures interest and provides consistent opportunities for interested applicants to work with/learn more about APD.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: In response to the first recommendation, we explain the creation of a recruiting model. The model will be developed over the next six months in partnership with community members, including over 60 Austin-area youth (ages 16 - 18). Students will collaborate with police and project partners on a model for mentoring and recruiting that begins sophomore year and considers the following: trust, legitimacy, and understanding the day-to-day of the policing profession; generational differences in the workplace; the gap period (time between high school graduation and cadet eligibility) and sustainable solutions (e.g., working for the City while earning a City-funded associate degree); retention (base pay, soft benefits, retirement, community support, organizational resilience, health and wellness); and, marketing the profession. Students will also consider what supportive services they believe recruits will need for their model to succeed (such as dedicated tutors, case managers, physical fitness training, mental health therapy).

Proposed Implementation Date: The recruiting model will be published in September 2025. The implementation schedule will be contingent upon the availability of funds, personnel, and resources.

Scope

The audit scope included Austin Police Department's (APD) efforts to recruit and hire sworn personnel between fiscal years (FY) 2019 and 2024.

Methodology

To complete this audit, we performed the following steps:

- Interviewed staff in Austin Police Department and the City's Human Resources Department
- Interviewed members of the Public Safety Commission
- Analyzed APD turnover data between FY 2019 and FY 2024
- Analyzed APD vacancy data between FY 2020 and FY 2024
- Analyzed APD salary data and compared with police salary data in nearby cities
- Analyzed recruiting data between FY 2020 and FY 2024
- Analyzed cadet withdrawal data between FY 2020 and FY 2024
- Analyzed the staffing composition of APD's Recruiting Unit
- Researched recruiting and hiring best practices
- Reviewed the Austin's Police Association 2013, 2018, and 2024 contracts with the City of Austin
- Reviewed funding information related to APD's Recruiting Unit and their operations
- Reviewed APD's police cadet hiring process
- Reviewed the Austin Community Survey for questions and responses related to APD
- Reviewed results from relevant audit reports
- Evaluated APD's recruiting and hiring strategies
- Evaluated APD's social media approach for recruiting
- Evaluated internal controls related to the APD's recruitment and hiring process
- Evaluated the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse related to APD's recruitment and hiring process and efforts.

Audit Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The Office of the City Auditor was created by the Austin City Charter as an independent office reporting to City Council to help establish accountability and improve City services. We conduct performance audits to review aspects of a City service or program and provide recommendations for improvement.

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