



Work for 
California

Hiring and Recruitment Campaign

Lessons Learned & Recommendations
to Improve Hiring and Recruiting
Practices Statewide

May 2023

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Executive Summary

The Work for California (W4CA) hiring and recruitment campaign ran from January through March 2023 to improve the State’s recruitment and hiring practices. While initially started to attract recently displaced employees from the technology sector, the campaign also advertised many other employment opportunities across the State.

Collaborating with 21 departments across 9 agencies, Work for California team members engaged in the following activities:

Creating Awareness through Coordinated Communications

To California residents, state government is not a collection of departments but is one entity: the State of California. The campaign built this understanding into its brand, unifying around a single message: “Work for California.”

Building Interest with Targeted Outreach

A key part to improving the candidate experience was the adoption of modern recruitment tactics. Rather than simply posting on the CalCareers website and waiting for applications to come in, Work for California focused on proactive outreach to find eligible candidates and promote opportunities they might be interested in.

Having a Conversation at Recruiting Events

A key part of the Work for California campaign was hosting several recruiting fairs to have conversations between potential applicants and State staff.

Measuring Impact

Work for California was a pilot, intended to test new methods in order to evaluate effectiveness. Using three objectives as impact criteria, Work for California was able to accomplish the following results.

Objective 1: Increase Applications to State Jobs

A primary objective of the Work for California campaign was to increase applications to state jobs for all participating departments. Overall, the campaign contributed to a significant number of applications being submitted to jobs posted during the dates of the campaign.

Number of Positions Posted on CalCareers	7,401
Total Number of Applications	195,943

Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023.

Objective 2: Reduce High Vacancy at W4CA Participating Departments

The Work for California campaign was about finding and then hiring qualified candidates. Although the civil service hiring process can take several months to complete, early figures show already a substantial number of positions being filled.

Total Number of Hires To-Date	1,605
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Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023 and primarily reflects merit hires. Due to the length of the hiring process, the overall hiring numbers will continue to change for positions posted during the W4CA campaign timeline.

Objective 3: Reduce Application-to-Hire Timeframe

An initial requirement for departments to join the Work for California campaign was a promise to prioritize hiring, and to streamline the process for candidates as much as possible, within the established rules and policies set forth by CalHR and the State Personnel Board. The final objective of the Work for California tested our ability to fulfill this requirement by measuring the time it took to navigate the entire hiring process.

Average Time-To-Hire	83 days
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Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023 and primarily reflects merit hires. Due to the length of the hiring process, the overall hiring numbers will continue to change for positions posted during the W4CA campaign timeline.

Next Steps & Final Recommendations

Work for California represents the initial phase of a broader effort to improve statewide hiring and recruiting practices. To continue the growth and momentum necessary statewide, the following are a series of recommendations State leaders should consider.

Recommendation 1 – Make It Easy To Recruit.

To change our hiring and recruiting practices, we need to focus on the very first impression we give to potential candidates and grow from there. CalHR and department recruitment teams should continue to explore the use of an interest form or leverage other tools provided by hiring platforms to improve the candidate hiring experience.

Recommendation 2 – We need regular hiring campaigns, and more often.

Broad-based hiring campaigns across departments benefit everyone involved. Working collaboratively, staff can amplify each other's messages and leverage their networks. Work for California should be the first of many hiring campaigns. Each campaign should prioritize collaboration and learning ways to improve the overall candidate experience. In time, domain specific campaigns should emerge especially at the agency level which has a natural alignment with their department area of work.

Recommendation 3 – Executive leadership is critical.

Ongoing improvements to the State's hiring and recruiting practices are not limited to CalHR only and must include department and program leadership to be successful.

An Opportunity to Innovate

The Work for California (W4CA) hiring and recruitment campaign was a short-term effort designed to advertise and bring new talent into State service. While initially started to attract recently displaced employees from the technology sector, the campaign also advertised many other employment opportunities across the State.

The campaign ran from January through March 2023 and featured a high level of engagement by staff to recruit new talent into State service. All campaign activities centered around three core objectives:

1. Increase applications to State jobs

In recent years, applications for State jobs have been in decline. Statewide, the average number of applications per role has declined from 59 in 2019 to 22 in 2022. In order to continually grow and refresh our workforce, new audiences need to be reached and recruited to join State service.

2. Reduce high vacancy rates at participating departments

With an aging workforce and a competitive hiring landscape in the private and other government sectors, a high vacancy rate has become a persistent feature in many departments. Since 2016, the statewide vacancy rate gradually increased from 13.5% to 17.1% in 2021. The inability to hire for key roles has a significant impact on the State's ability to fulfill its mission and represents a significant risk to the health and well-being of our communities.

3. Reduce application-to-hire timeframe

Even when the State does hire, the time and effort required in the application and hiring process has become a significant issue for both candidates and employees alike. With some roles taking more than four months to fill, the need to streamline internal processes has never been higher.

The Work for California campaign was a partnership comprised of the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), the Department of Human Resources (CalHR), the Department of Technology (CDT), the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI), and 18¹ other departments.

- California Conservation Corps (CCC)
- California Military Department (CMD)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Department of General Services (DGS)
- Department of Cannabis Control (DCC)
- Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks)
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)
- Employment Development Department (EDD)
- Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- Department of Finance (DOF)
- Franchise Tax Board (FTB)
- Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
- Office of Cradle-to-Career (C2C)
- Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Department of Industrial Relations (DIR)

Together, the Work for California campaign participants actively collaborated and innovated the hiring and recruitment landscape of State service.

¹ The California Natural Resources Agency participated in Work for California for the first half of the campaign.

Building a Campaign

Work for California was a collaborative effort that combined the activities of department staff under a single banner. All activities focused on a single idea:

How can we improve the candidate experience when considering state opportunities?

By empathizing with potential candidates and understanding the complexity of the State’s examination and application process, Work for California team members began to learn to tailor our practices to better meet residents’ needs.

Creating Awareness through Coordinated Communications

To California residents, state government is not a collection of departments but is one entity: the State of California. The campaign built this understanding into its brand, unifying around a single message: “Work for California.” From there, we sought to share the benefits of working for the state through specific job opportunities.

The driving force of all communications was social media. Using both free and paid channels, the departments amplified each other’s messages and told a story of public service and impact. Special guest videos from Governor Gavin Newsom and from agency secretary’s and department directors added high-profile visibility to the Work for California campaign and helped get the word out to new audiences.

Method	Platforms	Measurement	Total
Free Social Media	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Twitter	Overall Posts	141
		Impressions	106,798
Paid Advertisements (\$30K total spend)	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn	Impressions	4,711,632
		Clicks	43,023

Building Interest with Targeted Outreach

A key part to improving the candidate experience was the adoption of modern recruitment tactics. Rather than simply posting on the CalCareers website and waiting for applications to come in, Work for California focused on outreach to find eligible candidates and promote opportunities they might be interested in.

One prominent outreach method was to leverage resources at the Employment Development Department (EDD) and their job centers located across California. By distributing the Work for California opportunities directly to job centers, we were able to bring opportunities to potential applicants who were actively seeking a new job.

In addition, Work for California started a new way to share opportunities by creating an interest form for people who are curious for about state jobs. The Work for California interest form was very simple and collected basic information on a potential applicant's field of expertise and job interests. In effect, the interest form became an entry point for staff to contact potential applicants about opportunities tailored to their interests.

What began as a simple mechanism to identify potential candidates became a major focal point to make recruiting easier. By the end of the Work for California campaign, more than 8,000 people signed up stating their interest to learn more about state jobs!

	January	February (1/30 - 2/10)	February (2/13 - 2/24)	March (2/27 - 3/10)	March (3/13 - 3/25)
Number in the Interest Pool	532	1,696	3,022	7,778	8,495

Having a Conversation at Recruiting Events

A key part of the Work for California campaign was hosting several recruiting fairs to have conversations between potential applicants and State staff. Critically, each of our events was structured to cover a few key elements:

- The ability to talk to a human resources representative and an “ambassador” who works in the department and can share details about the work culture and the day-to-day experience of specific jobs,
- Guidance on and tips to navigate the civil service application and hiring process, and
- Details on how to determine eligibility for specific roles.

In total, Work for California hosted six events. Each was well attended and was well received by both candidates and staff members.

Activity	Number of Attendees
February 23 Oakland In-Person Event	400+
5 Virtual Fairs	1,791

Additional details on campaign activities are available in Appendix B.

Improving the Candidate Experience

The guiding principle for the Work for California campaign was how we can improve the candidate experience when exploring and applying for State jobs. To do this, we broke up the different steps in the candidate journey and looked for ways to measure and learn what our residents are telling us about the process.

AWARENESS

The very first stage of the candidate journey is when a potential applicant becomes aware of State opportunities.



Activities

Promotional Videos State leaders doing their part, including the Governor	12 videos total
Media Attention Broadcast opportunities via traditional media	5 earned radio, tv, and newspaper stories with estimated reach of 7+ million
Social media Coordinate posts to amplify our message	5,447,433 total impressions on users

CONSIDERATION

Potential candidates have heard a little about the organization, but would like to learn more.



Activities

Interest Form A way to get contact info and learn field of interest and expertise	8,495 total interest forms collected
Emails Tailored messages to on opportunities of interest	39 total messages sent to the Interest Pool
Website Analytics Tracking engagement and click throughs	60,621 sessions to the Work for California page

 **INTEREST**

Potential candidates choose the State as a place they would work and seek to narrow in on specific jobs.



Activities

In-Person Recruiting Fair Event held in Oakland, CA to recruit for State jobs	More than 400 attendees to in-person job fair
Virtual Fairs More accessible to a wider audience	1,791 attendees to virtual jobs
Seminars on State Employment Classes to give instruction on State hiring practices	12 seminars providing guidance on how to get a State job

 **APPLICATION**

Candidate applies to specific opportunities.



Activities

Active CalCareers Accounts Conversion of people in the interest pool to active in the State's hiring portal.	3,669 candidates who either created or actively used their CalCareers accounts
CalCareers Applications Candidates who found a job and applied	6,339 applications from candidates that also completed an interest form
Hires The final number that matters the most	1,584 people hired so far, with more being hired every day from W4CA jobs posted!

Measuring the Impact of W4CA

The Work for California campaign tested whether elevated engagement could improve the State’s hiring and recruiting outcomes. The three objectives of the Work for California campaign serve as our impact measures to inform future activities.

Objective 1: Increase Applications to State Jobs

The prevailing culture for advertising State jobs in most every department is to post an opening on CalCareers, the State’s job portal. Creating a culture shift from relying on active job seekers to find opportunities, also called “post & pray,” to a culture of targeted recruitment was a central theme to the entire campaign.

Number of Applications

The first impact measure compared the total number of applications submitted to positions posted on CalCareers. Looking at the 21 departments who participated in the Work for California campaign, the number of applications did raise substantially when compared to the previous year.

Total number of Job Postings and Applications for Participating Departments

	2022	2023
Number of Positions Posted on CalCareers	6,463	7,263
Number of Applications	164,892	195,943

Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023.

An important factor that influences the number of applications is due to variations in department practices and the level of maturity of recruiting operations or community networks engaged. While overall there appears to be some increase in applications, the experience of individual departments varied widely. For example, the Department of Technology saw an average of 17 more applications per job posting this year in the same time frame, when compared to the previous year.

However, it must be said that in addition to Work for California, the increase of applications may be due to a number of external factors unaccounted for.

Objective 2: Reduce High Vacancy at W4CA Participating Departments

Ultimately, the Work for California campaign was about finding and then hiring qualified candidates. Navigating the State hiring process is unfamiliar to many and continues to be a source of focus to improve hiring generally. To help participating departments hire, Work for California team members spent significant effort on providing resources and education to candidates about the civil service hiring process.

Number of Positions Filled

Overall, the numbers show that the Work for California campaign contributed to recruiting qualified candidates and for prioritizing hiring decisions within the campaign timeframe.

	2023
Number of Positions Posted on CalCareers	7,263
Total Number of Hires To-Date	1,605

Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023 and primarily reflects merit hires. Due to the length of the hiring process, the overall hiring numbers will continue to change for positions posted during the W4CA campaign timeline.

It is important to note that these numbers represent a snapshot in time, and will continue to increase as time goes on. Unfortunately, with a hiring process that can take longer than four months for some positions, this measure will be incomplete for some time.

Objective 3: Reduce Application-to-Hire Timeframe

An initial requirement for departments to join the Work for California campaign was a promise to prioritize hiring, and to streamline the process for candidates as much as possible, within the established rules and policies set forth by CalHR and the State Personnel Board.

Average Time from Application Posting to Job Start Date

Tracking the hiring process from end-to-end is a key indicator of each department's capacity and ability to prioritize hiring. But more importantly, how long it takes to hear from staff and ultimately get hired deeply influences the overall experience.

	2022	2023
Average Time-To-Hire in Days	83	83
Department with the Biggest Improvement	129	85

Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023 and primarily reflects merit hires. Due to the length of the hiring process, the overall hiring numbers will continue to change for positions posted during the W4CA campaign timeline.

At this point in time and with more data still coming in, it is not clear to what extent Work for California campaign activities impacted hiring and recruiting statewide. However, it is clear that improving the State's hiring and recruiting practices is a long-term effort that will ultimately require policy reviews and technology investments. Even so, there is much that individual departments can do to improve internal processes.

Next Steps & Final Recommendations

Work for California represents the initial phase of a broader effort to improve statewide hiring and recruiting practices. To continue the growth and momentum necessary statewide, the following are a series recommendations State leaders should consider.

Recommendation 1 – Make It Easy To Recruit.

The dominant practice across the State is to post job opportunities on CalCareers and let the candidates come to us. This default thinking prioritizes those who are already in the system and diminishes the overall candidate experience. Additionally, this process does not reach passive candidates who may have interest in working for State government but are unaware of existing opportunities.

To change our hiring and recruiting practices, we need to focus on the very first impression we give to potential candidates and grow from there. The Work for California interest pool was one type of innovation that made it easy to recruit. By creating a pool of more than 9,000 potential applicants who simply wanted to learn more about State opportunities, we were able to focus our efforts to recruit this small group of people.

Going forward, CalHR and department recruitment teams should continue to explore the use of an interest form or leverage other tools provided by hiring platforms to recruit qualified candidates into state roles.

Recommendation 2 – We need regular hiring campaigns, and more often.

Broad-based hiring campaigns across departments benefit everyone involved. Working collaboratively, staff can amplify each other's messages and leverage their networks. These campaigns are especially important for small departments who lack the resources or capacity to conduct regular recruiting fairs and benefit tremendously by leveraging shared resources. Amplifying the work of multiple State departments simultaneously also provides potential candidates with

varying government industry employment options such as healthcare, technology, and public safety.

Work for California should only be the first of many hiring campaigns. Each campaign should prioritize collaboration and learning ways to improve the overall candidate experience. In time, domain specific campaigns should emerge especially at the agency level which has a natural alignment with their department area of work.

Recommendation 3 – Executive leadership is critical.

When it comes to hiring, the lesson is clear: hiring must be everyone’s priority. Ongoing improvements to the State’s hiring and recruiting practices are not limited to CalHR and must include department and program leadership to be truly successful.

In addition, the following tactical recommendations are intended to help improve hiring and recruiting practices at the operational level.

How can people make the candidate experience better?

- **Recruiting Is More than HR:** Program staff need to be included in recruiting efforts to share their experiences working for the department and making an impact.
- **Engage Department Communication Staff:** Communication teams are a critical element to support a hiring campaign via social media and traditional media sources.
- **Create More Spaces to Share Best Practices:** Leverage ongoing forums for information sharing. CalHR’s recruiter roundtable is a good start. With increased meeting frequency, there may be opportunities for enhanced coordination across departments.

How can process make the candidate experience better?

- **One Voice, One Image:** Work for California branding and materials should be re-used and updated for future campaigns. Future campaigns should also consider anchoring messaging around events or notable holidays, like Public Service Recognition Week which occurs annually the second week in May.
- **Conduct Regular Social Media Training:** Social media was the engine for Work for California and needs to be a standard tool for all departments. The State should lead a social media kick off meeting to walk everyone through tools, templates, and how to best leverage each other.
- **Measure, Measure, Measure:** Use data to focus future campaigns on most common vacancies, and drive improvements to the hiring and recruitment process within departments.

How can technology make the candidate experience better?

- **Create A Shared Event Calendar:** CalHR should create a calendar of campaigns and events to be hosted on the Work for California landing page. Further, the State should coordinate with national and other hiring events where possible.
- **Leverage Existing System:** The State's hiring systems have much untapped functionality. CalHR should provide regular trainings on how to better use the Examination and Certification Online System (ECOS) to staff.
- **Make It Easy to Collaborate:** Create a directory of recruitment teams to share potential candidates. When a highly talented candidate goes through the process but isn't hired, we should be redirecting them to new opportunities. We want to keep good talent in the network!!

Appendix A: Thank You

A special thank you to all of the people who made Work for California possible!

Executive Sponsorship

Secretary Amy Tong, Government Operations Agency (GovOps)
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Appendix B: Dashboard of Statistics

Dates of the W4CA Campaign	January 17 – March 31
Number of Participating Departments	21
Number of Staff Representatives	69
Lunch & Learn Meetings	6
Recruiting Events	6
Attendance to In-person Fair 2/23	400+
Total Virtual Fair Attendance (5 total)	1,791
State promotional videos (incl. from Gov)	12
Coordinated W4CA Social Media Posts	410
Social Media Impressions (Free)	735,801
Earned Media Coverage (Impressions)	7 million+
Number of People in the W4CA Interest Pool	8,495
Total # of CalCareers Accounts linked to W4CA	3,699
Total Job Applications	6,339

Note: Due to the length of the hiring process, all figures only represent a point-in-time estimate and are subject to change. Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023.

	January – March 2022				January – March 2023			
Department	Job Postings	Applications	Average Applications	Hires Made	Job Postings	Applications	Average Applications	Hires Made
C2C	-	-	-	-	6	82	13.67	4
CalTrans	1,524	33,372	21.9	550	1,622	35,466	21.87	333
CCC	63	1,673	26.56	19	64	1,847	28.86	11
CDT	76	1,521	20.01	24	74	2,742	37.05	23
CMD	28	498	17.79	14	41	822	20.05	11
DCA	339	9,872	29.12	76	374	10,854	29.02	55
DCC	58	2,056	35.45	19	46	1,943	42	12
DGS	359	7,996	22.27	121	433	15,387	35.54	84
DHCS	453	11,082	24.46	206	455	15,065	33.11	149
DIR	302	6,191	20.5	44	342	6,787	19.85	1111
DMV	746	36,933	49.51	200	859	35,673	41.53	154
DOF	20	364	18.2	11	13	302	23.23	8
DOJ	337	7,380	21.9	240	396	10,284	26	49
DPH	527	9,350	17.74	149	633	12,520	19.78	106
DSS	481	9,544	19.84	235	491	14,749	30.04	128
EDD	388	10,292	26.53	165	478	11,945	24.99	191
FTB	223	6,260	28.07	147	256	7,839	30.62	86
Parks	447	9,173	20.52	51	553	8,512	15.39	90

Note: Figures provided by CalHR on May 12, 2023 and primarily reflects merit hires. Due to the length of the hiring process, the overall hiring numbers will continue to change for positions posted during the W4CA campaign timeline.

Department	Total FTE for FY 2022-23	Number of FTE Recruiters	What do you use as your Recruiting Website?	Do you pay for LinkedIn?	Do you use paid advertising to recruit?
C2C	16	0	Other	Free	Yes
CCC	426	1	CalCareers	Free	Yes
DCA	3,437	0	CalCareers	Free	No
DCC	626	3	CalCareers	Paid	Yes
DGS	4,104	4	CalCareers	Paid	No
DHCS	4,129	3	CalCareers	Paid	Yes
DIR	3,463	4	CalCareers	Paid	Yes
DOF	475	4	Other	Paid	No
DOJ	4,741	6	CalCareers	Paid	Yes
DMV	8,398	4	CalCareers	Paid	No
DSS	5,214	1	Other	Paid	No
CalTrans	20,492	9	CalCareers	Paid	Yes
CDPH	4,340	5	Other	Paid	No
CDT	1,025	1	Other	Paid	No
CMD	945	6	Other	Free	No
EDD	9,237	1	CalCareers	Paid	No
FTB	6,200	2	Other	Free	No
Parks	2,744	6	Other	Free	Yes