

**2021 NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Innovative State Human Resource
Management Program Award
*Program Nomination***

Program Title: New Jersey Civil Service Commission Public Employment Fairs and Information Sessions

State: New Jersey

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**New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC)
Public Employment Fairs and Information Sessions**

Program Summary

In early 2019, at the direction of New Jersey's Governor Philip D. Murphy, each agency was instructed to come up with a program that would coordinate services and programs among all the State departments and agencies. CSC met this challenge by developing a program with a commitment to customer service and addressing the needs of the civil service workforce, by promoting diversity and inclusion, and using innovative recruitment and retention initiatives that showcased the benefits of government employment.

In undertaking the Governor's directive, the CSC intensified and developed additional outreach activities to promote civil service employment opportunities by providing informational sessions at unemployment centers (County One-Stop Career Centers), colleges, and universities, etc.

In order to have a more focused and comprehensive strategy for this effort, the CSC determined that the most effective means for delivering recruitment and job opportunity services was through the design and execution of a series of regional job fairs that would connect all public state agencies and departments in centralized locations throughout the state. These job fairs addressed two major issues, 1) connecting agencies and departments with diverse, qualified candidates, and 2) assisting job candidates in identifying fields of employment and in many cases obtaining employment in state government.

The CSC established the hashtag **#CSCWorksForYou** in furtherance of our mission of advancing New Jersey government with fair and efficient human resources responsive to the needs of the Civil Service workforce.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in conjunction with the Office of Strategic Communications, launched a series of regional public employment job fairs aimed at attracting a qualified and diverse pool of individuals to employment in state government. New Jersey governmental agencies and departments were invited to participate in the public employment job fairs.

During the job fairs, participating agencies and departments provided organizational orientations and employment information, i.e., focus of services offered, types of positions available for recruitment purposes, listings of current vacancies, etc. In some cases, on-site interviews were conducted. During each job fair, candidates were offered workshop sessions with content including how to write an effective resume; panel discussions with agencies and departments; and the civil service job application process.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The inaugural employment fair was held on Thursday, November 14, 2019 and was attended by over 600 employment candidates. Fourteen agencies and departments were represented at this initial event. The January 15, 2020 job fair was attended by over 1500 employment candidates and 24 agencies and departments were represented at the event. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, these job fairs were held virtually throughout 2020.

In 2021 the information sessions were continued in a virtual format due to in-person restrictions associated with the COVID pandemic. Since the program was moved to a virtual format, over 1600 prospective job seekers were provided information about employment state and local government job opportunities.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

The program was created to serve as a resource and to facilitate access to government sector employment opportunities for job candidates. Traditionally, candidates for employment in state government rarely speak with hiring representatives on a face to face basis, unless called in for an interview. Usually, a candidates' contact is through paper or electronic communications. Also, through interacting with governmental hiring authorities and job seekers, it was noted that there was sometimes an informational gap or a disconnect between job opportunities available and the requirements for those positions, and job applicants' expectations for meeting the requirements for the vacancies.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

The program is not new per se as there is evidence of career-type fairs being offered across many sectors, most noticeably in higher education organizations to facilitate graduates' options for employment. This program is unique/creative in its focus for singularly directing job candidates to state government employment opportunities.

The participation of governmental hiring authorities has positively impacted job applicants' experience with the state employment application process by: 1) supplementing the existing hiring and application process by providing prescreening of applicants, and in some cases on-site interviews; 2) providing personal communication and information on inquiries to applicants that is not available through the standard application processes.

In providing this opportunity, the numerous job categories, position titles, and benefits of state employment are highlighted.

5. What was the program's start-up costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

Primary costs associated with the event:¹

- 1) Venue/Location: The budget for this event may vary but a general allotment of \$1,000 would be needed. **Note** - For our event, the space was donated at no cost.
- 2) Supplies: Promotional materials and giveaways such as pens and magnets (optional), \$1,000; Printing costs for agendas, flyers, signage, etc. \$500 - \$1000. **Note** - In our case these were produced "in-house" for a cost-saving.

6. What are the program's operational costs?²

To date, the job fair series has had very minimal costs due to all the locations used for 2019 and the beginning of 2020 were donated at no cost. The first two public employment job fairs CSC partnered with the New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (DMAVA). The event space donated was at two (2) of DMAVA's armory locations. The remaining in-person events that were scheduled for 2019- 2020 were hosted by local community colleges and these venues have been donated at no cost. At all the locations utilized in addition to space, our partners have provided tables, chairs, materials, and set-up for the events. We needed three fulltime staff employees to plan and execute logistics such as researching locations, drafting invitations and promotional materials, and keeping track of the RSVP's. On the day of the event, we had about 5-7 fulltime employees assisting with signing in job seekers/ vendors on site and making sure that the event operated in a timely fashion. All 2021 job fairs are currently being held virtually at no cost.

7. How is this program funded?

¹ In 2021, there were no costs associated with the transition to virtual events. All marketing and meeting platforms were electronically based.

² There were no costs associated with the virtual programming of these events.

This initiative is funded by the office of the Chair/CEO of the CSC. To date, the planning committee has been fortunate to have public agency partners to offset the cost of the venue for the public employment job fairs.

In addition, we partnered with The International Public Management Association for Human Resources-New Jersey (IPMA-HR-NJ) to cover the cost of light refreshments for our agency representatives.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

As a result of an online review of job fairs being offered, we found that agency hosted employment programs were specific in focus, for example we found job fairs promoting areas like seasonal employment, veteran's recruitment, etc. Although we cannot say that programs like ours are not available nationally, the availability of job fairs like ours was not apparent.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?

There was no indication of any similar programs in other states that were like our program in terms of being connected with all the state departments/agencies at one singular event. A statewide departmental job fair to promote all existing vacancies and to provide procedural information for future employment opportunities within state government is a new initiative from our perspective.

What differentiates the CSC's public employment fair from other job fairs is the broad scope of positions available and agencies and departments represented. The opportunity for all interested candidates to obtain access to hiring authorities regardless of the candidates' employment background or educational level, the potential for onsite interviews, and face-to-face interactions specific to organizational job openings make CSC's public employment fairs more unique when compared to others.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Survey measurement tools were created to evaluate the success of our public employment job fairs. Feedback was solicited from job candidates attending the job fairs as well as agency and department representatives attending the job fairs. Summary data from job candidate respondents completing assessments from the November 2019 and January 2020 job fairs and the 2021 virtual information sessions expressed strong levels of satisfaction regarding: 1) the event being beneficial to them and a good use of their time; 2) the helpfulness of the agency representatives.

Similarly, the agency representatives attending the job fairs provided positive feedback. Generally, 90% or more of vendor surveys indicated that the event was good or very good.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

After the committee held a de-briefing from the first public employment job fair, adjustments were made to the check-in process for the event, set-up requirements for the agency representatives, staffing adjustments for the agency representatives, and staffing adjustments for the CSC logistical operations for the event. We have also made provisions to host more people.

For the virtual job information programs, diverse outreach to various stakeholders and organizations was expanded. Connections were established with Veteran's organizations, Hispanic/Latino groups/agencies, LGBTQ+ communities, Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Unemployment Centers, etc. Presentations were also developed for Spanish speaking audiences in both video and printed formats.