


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: December 4, 2024

To: The Honorable Members of the Personnel, Audits and Hiring Committee

From: Grayce Liu, Interim General Manager
Personnel Department 

Subject: **COUNCIL FILE 24-1094 PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT'S REPORT BACK REGARDING WORK EXPERIENCE IN LIEU OF EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS / EXAMINATION QUALIFICATIONS / HIRING PROCESS**

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council note and file this report.

BACKGROUND

The City Council motion introduced by Councilmembers Eunisses Hernandez and Tim McOsker and seconded by Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martínez on September 13, 2024 instructed the Personnel Department to report back with recommendations to allow for work experience to be considered in lieu of meeting education requirements for City job and examination qualifications, and provide a review by the Department of any job titles used in the last five years in which educational requirements and experience have been modified for the purposes of examination qualifications.

DISCUSSION

Existing Hiring Experience Pathways

As part of our commitment to equitable hiring practices, the Personnel Department prioritizes hiring pathways that value experience alongside education. Several City classifications allow for a flexible approach where work experience may qualify an individual in lieu of formal education, ensuring that individuals who have developed expertise on the job are not excluded from opportunities within the City. For example, Management Aide, a paraprofessional training classification, was created with the primary purpose of eliminating educational barriers. It is a parallel classification to the Management Assistant professional classification and allows candidates to qualify through work experience, whereas the Management Assistant classification requires a bachelor's degree. In lieu of a bachelor's degree, candidates may use their work

experience from a non-professional job class such as Senior Administrative Clerk, Accounting Clerk, Secretary, and Transit Aide, to utilize Management Aide as a bridge class into professional job classes. Similar to Management Assistants, Management Aides with two years of experience will be able to apply for positions in the professional series such as Management Analyst, Personnel Analyst, and Administrative Analyst.

Programs Requiring No College Degree

In addition to bridge classes hiring pathways, the City has programs in place for civil service jobs with no minimum educational or work experience requirements. The Targeted Local Hire (TLH) program, created in February 2017, offers an entry-level pathway for individuals without formal education or experience requirements. This program emphasizes skill development on the job, enabling candidates to gain necessary experience while in the role. TLH candidates are initially hired as Office Trainees or Vocational Workers where they obtain six months of on-the-job training to prepare them for careers in various fields ranging from clerical, animal care, gardening, mechanical repair, to street services work. After completion of their six-month on-the-job (OJT) training, they will begin to serve a six-month probationary period. Once the OJT and probationary period are successfully completed, the employee is transitioned to full-time regular civil service employment, which may lead to positions that typically require a bachelor's degree. For example, an Office Trainee has a pathway to become a Chief Clerk or Executive Administrative Assistant, which provides qualifying experience for professional series exams such as Management Analyst.

Bridge to Jobs (BRIDGE) launched in March 2020, is another program available to individuals without a college degree who are interested in working for the City. BRIDGE differs from TLH in that it provides access to semi-skilled City roles, where candidates can qualify through one of several criteria, including a high school diploma, a G.E.D., an approved certification, or a passing score on the City's Aptitude test. Candidates hired through BRIDGE are appointed to a training classification and may be employed for a maximum of five years. All trainees hired through this program are exempt from civil service during this period and must successfully complete the OJT period in order to move forward to the applicable 'Assistant' classification. Similar to TLH, individuals in the 'Assistant' class will need to complete a civil service probationary period. Once the six-month probationary period is successfully completed, the candidate is transitioned to a full-time regular civil service employment. These programs ensure that applicants without traditional qualifications such as education or experience still have access to City jobs through structured and supported career pathways.

Specialized Classes with Education Requirements

For specialized classifications, formal education provides foundational knowledge that work experience alone cannot replicate. Positions in disciplines such as engineering, biology and urban planning demand a deep understanding of complex principles, technical methodologies, and legal frameworks that are essential to effective job performance. These competencies are often attained only through structured academic

training, which combines theoretical study with practical application, preparing candidates to meet the rigorous demands of their roles.

For example, the Water Biologist classification requires mastery of microbiological principles and techniques, such as the separation, preservation, identification, and quantification of microorganisms. These tasks demand specialized knowledge in microbiology, biochemistry, and environmental science that is typically acquired through higher education. Such expertise is critical to ensuring scientific accuracy, regulatory compliance, and public safety, particularly in managing water quality and safeguarding against public health risks.

Similarly, the City Planning Associate classification necessitates a comprehensive understanding of urban planning concepts, legal codes, and environmental regulations. Knowledge areas include the organization and elements of a General Plan, compliance with State guidelines and City Charter requirements, urban design principles, and the interpretation of zoning maps and architectural plans. Proficiency in applying complex frameworks like the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is essential for crafting policy, advising stakeholders, and implementing sustainable urban development practices. These skills are foundational to the work of City Planning Associates and cannot be fully developed through experience alone.

By requiring formal education, the City ensures that candidates for these roles possess the necessary depth of knowledge and critical thinking skills to perform their duties effectively. This standard safeguards the quality of service, public safety, and alignment with professional best practices. Balancing flexibility with the need for specialized competencies enables the City to maintain a highly qualified workforce capable of addressing the technical challenges inherent in these fields.

Apprenticeships

The Personnel Department has worked with key partners to create and develop apprenticeship programs as another viable hiring model. The Personnel Department has worked with City departments to identify classifications that require up to 5 years of experience, state certified training, and certification. These classifications include Building Operating Engineer, Electrician, Equipment Mechanic, Helicopter Mechanic, and Accountant. Modeled after BRIDGE's hiring framework, trainees in the Building Operating Engineer, Electrician and Equipment Mechanic apprenticeship programs will receive OJT while attending classroom instruction during the week. Once candidates have successfully completed training and classes, they will transition to the 'Assistant' classification and serve a six-month probationary period. Once the probationary period is completed, individuals will be transferred into the applicable targeted civil service classification in accordance with City Charter Section 1014¹.

¹ City Charter Section 1014 (a). "Reassignment Without Examination. In addition to and notwithstanding the provisions of Section 1015, the board may by its rules provide for status and seniority for civil service employees in classes other than those for which they were examined, where...an employee has completed a probationary period in the City service."

Building Operating Engineer, Electrician, and Equipment Mechanic have launched and are available to all City employees. Helicopter Mechanic and Accountant are still being developed in partnership with labor and the departments.

Examinations in the Past Five Years

From 2019 to 2023, the Personnel Department conducted examinations for 625 unique job classifications. Before the release of each job bulletin and exam administration, the Personnel Department, in collaboration with City departments and labor unions, reviews the minimum requirements to ensure they meet operational needs while promoting equitable access for each exam. In doing so, the Department ensures that pathways emphasizing experience or alternative qualifications, rather than formal education alone, remain integral to the hiring process. Oftentimes there are changes to the requirements and duties as a result of these requests by departments in order to increase the size of the candidate pool in order to fill vacancies. For example, the requirements have been broadened to include opportunities for outside candidates such as the recent Management Analyst exam.

The Personnel Department does not have a comprehensive list of all the changes that may have occurred over the past five years, but enclosed is a list of all job classifications with exams administered over the past five years, highlighting the range of classifications reviewed and assessed during this time. All 625 exam requirements were reviewed by the Personnel Department, City departments and labor partners before the exam was opened for filing to ensure that they meet the needs of the departments and provide the maximum number of qualified candidates.

Conclusion

The Personnel Department recognizes that educational requirements, particularly the need for a college degree, can pose significant challenges for some potential candidates and existing employees, especially those with limited resources. To address this, the Department has proactively implemented measures to incorporate work experience as a viable qualification in place of formal education wherever feasible. These measures have opened pathways to employment and career advancement within the City workforce for many without degrees.

The City offers opportunities through existing pathways where many classifications allow a flexible approach, enabling candidates to qualify based on relevant work experience. Programs such as the TLH Program provide on-the-job training for roles in fields like clerical work, animal care, gardening, mechanical repair, and street services. Similarly, the BRIDGE Program creates access to semi-skilled City roles by offering multiple qualification criteria, including high school diplomas, GEDs, certifications, or aptitude test scores.

Additionally, the City has introduced apprenticeship programs that blend on-the-job training with structured learning, enabling individuals with little to no formal education or

experience to transition into full-time civil service roles. Furthermore, the City routinely reviews and updates examination qualifications to expand candidate pools while meeting operational needs.

Through these efforts, the City continues to address the challenges associated with the high cost of obtaining a college degree, providing alternative avenues for individuals to access City employment and career development based on experience and training whenever feasible.

Attachment: Exams by Classification in Past Five Years