Recruitment

The Recruitment Unit will annually report its recruiting activities and outcomes, including the number of applicants, interviewees, and selectees, and the extent to which the Recruitment Unit has been able to recruit applicants with needed skills, such as problem-solving abilities or fluency in Spanish or Vietnamese, and a discussion of any challenges to recruiting highly qualified applicants. [Consent Decree ¶244]

Overview and Outcomes

It was a watershed year for NOPD's recruitment efforts. NOPD launched an aggressive new recruitment campaign, challenging individuals to "get behind the badge." This effort used targeted social media ads, a newly designed website (www.joinnopd.org), and community meetings to reach out to individuals who had not been targeted by previous recruitment campaigns. NOPD assigned officers to specific local universities/colleges and to each police district so that they could build relationships within the community. To ensure that those interested in becoming an officer could be processed quickly, NOPD also committed to improving and streamlining the applicant selection process. Applicants can now submit complete applications online and view available test dates on the Civil Service web site. Once they have applied, they can attend one of NOPD's "One Stop" events and take all their pre-background clearance tests (including multiple choice, writing, and agility tests) in a single day. Finally, NOPD invested more resources in our application investigation division so that the Department could process background investigations more quickly and effectively.

NOPD's campaign yielded a remarkable response from the community – almost 3,000 people applied to become an officer in 2014. The application pool was notably diverse, including 52% African-American, 5% Hispanic, and 1.5% Asian-American applicants. Although applicants came predominantly from the New Orleans region, NOPD also received applications from 44 different states. NOPD saw significant success in reforming the applicant selection process, reducing the average time that it takes an applicant to go from from application to hire by more than three months. NOPD did this despite adding additional requirements to the process, most notably the institution of an Oral Review Board. Altogether, NOPD received 2,995 applications, completed 241 background investigations, interviewed 241 applicants, and ultimately hired 61 recruits in 2014.

Recruiting Applicants with Needed Skills

Recruiting individuals with problem-solving skills and fluency in foreign languages remains a high priority for NOPD. The applicant selection process is designed to ensure that all recruits hired by NOPD have superior problem solving skills. Applicants must past a multiple-choice test that evaluates cognitive ability along with reasoning and judgment. The Oral Review Board, instituted for the first time in 2014, evaluates how well applicants think on their feet and presents them with problem-solving scenarios. In 2015, NOPD is using lessons learned during the initial

implementation of the review board in 2014 to further improve this structured interview and include even more scenario-based questions that require problem solving skills.

In 2014, NOPD hired five recruits with fluency in a foreign language (8% of all hires). These recruits are fluent in a variety of languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, French, and Russian. Furthermore, in 2015 the Department is currently processing applications from many more recruits with foreign language fluency, and NOPD has revised the structured interview so that recruits are specifically asked about their fluency in foreign languages before they begin their background investigation. NOPD intends to continue recruiting from all segments of the community in the hopes of increasing the number of recruits with foreign language fluency even further in 2015. Efforts underway include placing advertisements in local Hispanic radio and Vietnamese newspapers.

Recruitment Challenges

The recruitment challenges facing law enforcement agencies in the modern era are well-documented, and NOPD is not immune from these pressures. Many applicants have criminal backgrounds, histories of narcotics usage, and poor or sporadic employment records that make them unsuitable for a career in law enforcement. Although technology allows NOPD to reach more individuals interested in law enforcement careers than ever before, those same applicants also can easily apply to other police departments. As a result, competition between police departments for the most highly qualified applicants can be fierce.

However, NOPD is taking steps to address these challenges. In 2015, NOPD officers are receiving a 5% pay raise, which makes NOPD the best compensated municipal police department in the state. In June 2014, NOPD asked the Civil Service Commission to revise the application criteria related to prior drug use, in order to bring NOPD's hiring standards in line with those of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Finally, in 2015 NOPD has eliminated the requirement that applicants have 60 college credit hours before they can apply to NOPD. Now NOPD is able to evaluate all candidates on their merits and ensure that the Department hires the best candidates available, rather than automatically disqualifying those without 60 credit hours. NOPD is confident that it is poised to build upon the success of the 2014 recruitment campaign and recruit even more highly qualified and diverse candidates in the future.