



State of California

Government Operations Agency (GovOps)

Category: Cross-Boundary Collaboration & Partnerships

Project Title: Work for California Hiring & Recruiting Campaign

Timeline: January 17 through March 31, 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. Initially focused on attracting recently displaced employees from the technology sector, the campaign also advertised other job opportunities across the State.

The W4CA campaign brought together nearly two dozen departments across nine agencies in a groundbreaking collaboration. W4CA team members engaged in the following activities:

Creating Awareness through Coordinated Communications

The campaign aimed to convey to California residents that the state government is not just a collection of departments but a single entity—the State of California. The campaign unified under the message "Work for California."

Building Interest with Targeted Outreach

To enhance the candidate experience, the campaign adopted modern recruitment tactics. Instead of relying solely on the CalCareers website and waiting for applications, W4CA focused on reaching out to eligible candidates and promoting opportunities they might align with their interests.. Using new tools like social media paid advertising and targeted email messaging, W4CA tested new methods to build interest.

Having a Conversation at Recruiting Events

A key part of the W4CA campaign was organized recruiting fairs to facilitate conversations between potential applicants and State staff, creating opportunities for interaction and engagement.

Measuring Impact

W4CA served as a pilot to test new methods and evaluate their effectiveness. The campaign's objectives were:

Objective 1: Increase Applications to State Jobs

A primary objective was to attract more applications for state jobs across all participating departments.

Objective 2: Reduce High Vacancy at W4CA Participating Departments

A focus campaign was identifying and hiring qualified candidates. Considerable effort was dedicated to providing resources and education to private sector candidates about the civil service hiring process.

Objective 3: Reduce Application-to-Hire Timeframe

Departments joining the W4CA campaign committed to prioritizing hiring, and to streamlining the process for candidates as much as possible within the established rules and policies set forth by CalHR and the State Personnel Board.

Idea: An Opportunity to Innovate

The Work for California (W4CA) hiring and recruitment campaign was a short-term pilot aimed at attracting new talent into State service and improving recruitment and hiring practices statewide. Although it initially targeted recently displaced employees from the technology sector, the campaign advertised a wide range of employment opportunities across the State. W4CA was defined by a guiding purpose to innovate and test new ideas in an effort to test recruitment ideas to bring more talent into State service.

The campaign ran from January through March 2023 and featured a high level of engagement by staff to recruit new talent. 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 job advertisement has declined from 59 in 2019 to 22 in 2022. To ensure the continuous growth and renewal of our workforce, we need to be reached recruit new audiences to join State service.

2. Reduce high vacancy rates at participating departments

Many departments are experiencing high vacancy rates due to an aging workforce and fierce competition for talent in the private and other government sectors. Since 2016, the statewide vacancy rate gradually increased from 13.5% to 20.9% in 2022. The inability to fill key roles has a significant impact on the State's ability to fulfill its mission and poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of our communities.

3. Reduce application-to-hire timeframe

The State application and hiring process has become a significant issue for candidates, hiring managers, and HR personnel even when the State does make hires. Some roles take more than four months to fill, highlighting the urgent need to streamline internal processes.

Cross-Cutting Collaboration and Partnership

Underlying all three objectives was the core goal of groundbreaking collaboration among State agencies to drive innovation in the hiring and recruitment landscape of State service. The effort was led by the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), Department of Human Resources (CalHR), Department of Technology (CDT), and Office of Data and Innovation (ODI), and worked in partnership with 19 other departments across nine agencies to test the efficacy of its activities across multiple sectors of California's Executive Branch.

A full list of participating departments in the W4CA campaign include:

- California Conservation Corps (Natural Resources Agency)
- Department of General Services (GovOps)
- Department of Motor Vehicles (Transportation Agency)
- Department of Public Health (Health and Human Services Agency)
- Department of Social Services (Health and Human Services Agency)
- Department of Technology (GovOps)
- Department of Transportation (Transportation Agency)
- California Military Department
- Department of Cannabis Control (Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency)
- Department of Consumer Affairs (Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency)
- Department of Finance
- Department of Health Care Services (Health and Human Services Agency)
- Department of Industrial Relations (Labor and Workforce Development Agency)
- Department of Justice
- Department of Parks and Recreation (Natural Resources Agency)
- Employment Development Department (Labor and Workforce Development Agency)
- Franchise Tax Board (GovOps)
- Office of Cradle-to-Career (GovOps)

Some high-level numbers of the activities of W4CA outreach:

Number of Staff Representatives	69
Lunch & Learns to share best practices	6
Number of coordinated social media posts	410
Number of recruiting emails sent to the W4CA interest pool	39

Implementation: Increasing Awareness and Improving the Candidate Experience

Awareness

User research interviews helped to map out the candidate journey and organize the W4CA team to target key points in a candidate’s hiring journey for improvement. In an innovative pivot from the passive “post and pray” approach used by State hiring teams, the W4CA team adopted talent acquisition strategies commonly employed by the private sector.

The launch of WorkForCalifornia.ca.gov included a dozen promotional videos, and a video from Governor Gavin Newsom. Coordinated social media posts across agencies and departments resulted in over 5.4 million interactions. This spurred led to earned media across multiple channels, including television and radio, reaching an estimated additional audience of 7 million+.

Driving Engagement Virtually and In-Person

To streamline outreach efforts, the W4CA team created a simple online interest form that asked potential candidates their areas of experience and interest, and collected their contact information. The submitted forms were routed to the applicable partner department(s) for outreach, including tailored emails. 8,495 individuals submitted W4CA interest forms, and an impressive 75% of them (6,339 individuals)) went on to submit at least one application in the CalCareers portal.

Multiple virtual, statewide job fairs were held and drew 1,791 attendees. Additionally, an in-person job fair was held in Oakland specifically targeting individuals affected by the target potential candidates affected by the Bay Area-based tech sector layoffs, which drew more than 400 attendees.

Guiding the Application Process

To support candidates navigating the CalCareers application process, W4CA held 12 State hiring seminars. These seminars not only provided crucial information to address pain points identified during user interviews, but also showcased the human side of the talent teams working behind the scenes in the State.

Measuring the Impact of W4CA

The W4CA campaign tested whether enhanced and proactive engagement could improve the State’s recruiting and hiring practices. The campaigns three objectives served as impact measures and provided insights to inform future pilot campaigns.

Objective 1: Increase Applications to State Jobs

A primary objective of the W4CA campaign was to increase applications to state jobs for all participating departments. To measure impact on this objective, the performance of the 21 departments involved in the W4CA campaign was analyzed and compared to the previous year. The analysis revealed an increase in the overall number of applications compared to the previous year.

	2022	2023
Number of Positions Posted on CalCareers	6,463	7,263

Number of Applications	164,892	195,943
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Some W4CA departments experienced a significant growth in the number of applications received per job posting. For instance, the Department of Technology saw an average increase of 17 applications within the same time frame per compared to the previous year. However, it is important to note that aside from the W4CA campaign, the increase in applications may be influenced by a number of unaccounted external factors.

Objective 2: Reduce High Vacancy at W4CA Participating Departments

Ultimately, the W4CA campaign was finding and hiring qualified candidates to address high vacancy rates. Comparing the same time frame of January through April in 2022 against 2023, we analyzed the number of hires as a measure of effectiveness of the W4CA campaign.

Change in Vacancy Rate from January - March 2023	-0.4%
Total Number of Hires To-Date	1,584

Navigating the State hiring process is unfamiliar to many and continues to be a source of focus to improve hiring generally. 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

To participate in the W4CA campaign, departments were initially required to commit to prioritizing hiring and making efforts to streamline the candidate selection process within the established rules and policies established by CalHR and the State Personnel Board. The ultimate objective of W4CA tested our ability to fulfill this requirement by measuring the time it took to navigate the entire hiring process.

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

At this point in time and with more data still coming in, it is not clear to what extent W4CA activities impacted hiring and recruiting statewide. However, it is clear that continued analysis and effort is needed both at the operational and policy level to improve hiring and recruiting practices statewide.

Next Steps & Final Recommendations

Work for California represents the initial phase of a broader initiative to improve statewide hiring and recruiting practices. Cross-agency collaborations and a focus on the candidate experience are core elements to future innovations and improvements.

The following recommendations will help California continue to improve its practices.

Recommendation 1 – Make It Easy To Recruit.

To transform the state’s hiring and recruiting practices, it is important to focus on creating a positive first impression and build upon that foundation. CalHR and department recruitment teams should continue exploring the use of an interest form or other tools provided by hiring platforms to recruit qualified candidates.

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 serve as the first of many hiring campaigns, with each campaign prioritizing collaboration and continuously seeking 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 departments’ area of work.

Recommendation 3 – Executive leadership is critical.

Sustained improvements to the State’s hiring and recruiting practices require active involvement from CalHR and department and program leadership. Executive leadership must play a critical role in driving these enhancements to ensure their successful implementation and long-term impact.