



FEBRUARY 2023

# Solving the Staffing Crisis

Saving City Government for New Yorkers



5BORO is a cutting-edge think tank that advances fiscally responsible, equitable and creative solutions to NYC's most challenging problems.

From ideation to implementation, we speak directly to policymakers by producing digestible research to push NYC forward.

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**Thank you to the many contributors who supported the development of this report.**

The following reports in particular helped inform 5BORO's research and recommendations

- City Comptroller Brad Lander: *Title Vacant, Addressing Critical Vacancies in NYC Government Agencies*, Dec. 6, 2022
- State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli: *Update on New York City Staffing Trends*, Nov. 14, 2022
- City Councilmembers Gale Brewer and Carmen De La Rosa: *Maintaining the City's Municipal Workforce*, Committee Report, Sept. 9, 2022

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# New York City government is facing a staffing crisis.

Municipal employees have resigned by the thousands, resulting in the City workforce **losing nearly 20,000 net employees** over the last two years.

# 20,000

employees lost from the City  
workforce since 2020

This staffing shortage has already had **wide-reaching impacts**, impeding the delivery and quality of services to New Yorkers and delaying the fulfillment of legal mandates and key commitments.

# This harms New Yorkers all over the city, with outsized effects on our most vulnerable residents.

Citywide vacancies are five times higher than at the start of 2020, with several agencies on the front lines serving low-income New Yorkers facing vacancy rates approaching or exceeding 20%.



32%

Dept. of Small Business Services



28.2%

Commission on Human Rights



22.7%

Dept. of Buildings



20%

Dept. of Social Services

Source: Title Vacant, Addressing Critical Vacancies in NYC Government Agencies. Dec. 6, 2022



Affordable housing development



Rental vouchers to families in shelters



Nutrition assistance for families



Addressing building safety conditions

The reduction in staff is stalling affordable housing development and delaying the delivery of rental vouchers to families living in shelters.

Low-income families are waiting to receive nutrition assistance to buy food and there are days-long delays to address emergency reports about safety conditions in buildings.

At the same time, the City faces a **challenging financial outlook and the possibility of a recession** — circumstances that demand fiscal restraint.

To help trim the budget, the City has cut more than **4,300 vacant positions** from City government.

But it still has about **23,000 vacant positions available to fill** that are already budgeted across City agencies.

We have developed a set of recommendations for City Hall to retain and recruit top talent to fill the most critical vacancies.

**23,000**

vacant positions are still budgeted across City agencies

These recommendations have been informed by in-depth analyses of a variety of sources — including city data, jobs reports, private-sector best practices, case studies from other governments, testimonials of recently departed City workers, interviews with former City Hall leaders and conversations with experts representing diverse fields and interests in New York City.

These recommendations can be deployed over a period of months to put the City on track to right-size its workforce. The **tentative contract agreement** Mayor Eric Adams recently reached with the City's largest labor union shows that City Hall is willing to shift its approach to workforce policies and be creative when it comes to supporting City employees.

If adopted, we believe our recommendations would build on this recent progress and have the ability to meaningfully improve the immediate hiring and retention of key City employees across government.

To address the broader structural issues challenging municipal staffing, the City must work with the State, labor unions, and other stakeholders to assess the complex civil service system and identify pathways to reform, including potential legislative changes.

These long-term actions, paired with our immediate recommendations, are critical for the City to **systemically modernize and more nimbly attract and retain the high-performers and committed public servants it needs** to thrive and deliver for New Yorkers for decades to come.

**1**

**Save money – keep city workers employed**

**2**

**Win the talent war – bring in the best and brightest**

**3**

**Modernize government – the world of work has changed**

# 1

## Save money – keep city workers employed

*Curb the departure of City employees  
with strategies focused on retention*



City government should implement a comprehensive retention strategy to slow attrition and keep high performing employees in their jobs.

Preventing brain drain, retaining institutional knowledge, and avoiding hiring costs saves the City money while also preventing disruptions in service.

TO RETAIN ITS EMPLOYEES,  
THE CITY SHOULD:

- Designate a Chief Retention Officer
- Facilitate annual reviews and exit interviews
- Proactively track and address staffing trends and performance
- Build morale and cultivate a mission-driven culture

High staff turnover comes at a cost and threatens the quality and efficiency of government service delivery.

A strategic approach to retention will help stop the disruption to critical City operations and services New Yorkers rely upon and save the City money that might otherwise go to identifying, hiring, and training new employees.

# Win the talent war – bring in the best and brightest

*Recruit the next generation of  
City workers to fill critical gaps*



City government should implement a comprehensive recruitment strategy to fill the most critical gaps and mitigate key service interruptions.

By bringing on a modern, diverse, and motivated workforce, the City can improve its operations and run more efficiently.

TO BRING IN TOP TALENT,  
THE CITY SHOULD:

- Designate a Chief Recruitment Officer
- Identify and prioritize offices with the greatest staffing needs
- Provide recruitment support for hard-to-recruit roles
- Market the City's mission-driven workplace
- Offer incentives for joining government
- Implement creative interim solutions to ease staffing burdens

Top performers are key to rightsizing the government and improving the delivery of essential services. By using data, prioritizing hard-to-recruit positions, and connecting City government to the most pressing issues that potential employees care about, we can bring on a motivated and productive workforce that will innovate and operate at the highest levels.

# 3

## Modernize government – the world of work has changed

*Update City employment policies  
to build a 21st-century workforce*



The City should be more competitive with the private sector when it comes to policies regarding personnel.

Government is notorious for bureaucracy and sluggishness, and it needs to be more nimble to attract top talent and provide the best and most efficient services possible.

TO MODERNIZE ITS WORKFORCE POLICIES, THE CITY SHOULD:

- Provide balanced hybrid flexibility
- Make applying easy
- Speed up the time it takes to hire
- Provide fair compensation and promotion opportunities

The City's staffing challenges can be addressed by a comprehensive effort to modernize government. Though there are deeper challenges that require longer-term, structural changes, the City still has near-term solutions at its disposal to tackle the immediate crisis.

Another major complaint in the hiring process is the length of time it takes to hire. Speeding up the process and providing more flexibility on salaries for top talent will help bring in high performers to fill critical positions.

## BACKGROUND

As the city recovers from a global pandemic and faces threats of looming recessionary conditions, **it is critical that the municipal workforce is adequately staffed** to prepare and protect the city and its residents.

New Yorkers need a resourced City government to ensure key services are delivered and to maintain the city's standing in the U.S. and global economy. City Hall must move quickly to address this crisis — and ensure our city remains an attractive place to grow a business, raise a family, and live for years to come.

Given the challenging fiscal outlook facing the city, we are not calling for every one of the **23,000 vacant roles** to be filled. The municipal workforce and City budget both **ballooned to record highs** in the lead up to the pandemic, necessitating measures to right-size the government. However, high turnover, like the rates experienced now, comes at a **large cost to the government** and threatens the **quality and efficiency** of service delivery. Even **fiscal watchdog groups** that stress the need for financial prudence have noted that recent staffing trends have led to service disruptions.

With this in mind, the most fiscally prudent means to rightsize our government involves both a strategic retention and recruitment strategy to stop the disruption of critical City operations and services New Yorkers rely upon.

To successfully do this, City agencies must conduct strategic workforce planning to assess the critical services and needs that require staffing, rather than filling each vacant role as it exists. By strategically recruiting high performers to fill essential positions and phasing out unnecessary roles, City Hall can balance the need for effective government and service delivery with fiscal restraint. But it will require key changes in the way City Hall approaches recruitment, retention, and workplace policies.

## CHALLENGES DRIVING THE STAFFING CRISIS

The City's loss of a net of 20,000 employees has been driven by attrition, low hiring, and workforce policies that have further exacerbated employment challenges.

A number of factors have brought the City to this point:

1

### Growing burnout amongst existing staff

Employees have described that as colleagues leave, more workload is created for the remaining staff. As the scope of employees' responsibilities becomes untenable, they are more likely to resign. One director with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development stated, "It's like a doom spiral that keeps feeding itself because the staff that are left, their jobs are getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger, which makes it less likely to retain those staff."

2

### Delaying promotions and raises for existing staff

Experienced and high-performing City staff have also faced challenges with promotions and raises. City Hall policies have limited salary increases for promotions, while further complicating promotions by adding new levels of bureaucratic reviews to the process and implementing opaque shadow policies.

This has driven out City employees seeking growth opportunities. As one former Office of Management and Budget employee stated, "One of the bigger impacts was the inability to promote people, while their coworkers were leaving [...] Each time someone left, there was a lot of institutional knowledge that went with them."

3

### Offering non-competitive salaries to new job candidates

As directed by internal City Hall guidance, agencies have been offering nearly all new hires the minimum salary on the pay scale displayed on a job posting. This means individuals with exceptional qualifications and education are still offered the lowest end of the range, further driving a wedge in compensation between the public and private sector, where wages already tend to be higher. As a data analyst at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development stated, “I am interviewing for jobs where I would make up to three times as much as my current salary.”

4

### Taking months to bring on new employees

Once candidates have been identified, it can take City agencies months to bring them on as staff. Public reports from City employees describe on-boarding lengths of up to nine months. These numbers trail the local government national average of 130 days between a candidate’s application and hire — a value that is already nearly four times longer than the private sector. Though systemic hurdles that require longer-term solutions are partly to blame, recently-added levels of bureaucratic approval have added further obstacles. The impact of the slow hiring times was described by a Department of Housing Preservation and Development employee: “The hiring process in the City takes so long that people [...] find a new job by the time you actually get approval to offer them a start date.”

“

*It’s like a doom spiral that keeps feeding itself because the staff that are left, their jobs are getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger, which makes it less likely to retain those staff.”*

“*The hiring process in the City takes so long that people [...] find a new job by the time you actually get approval to offer them a start date.*”

5

### **Requiring full-time in-person employment with no hybrid flexibility**

While a large share of the City workforce are frontline and essential employees who have been working in-person throughout the pandemic, many office roles were done remotely beginning in the spring of 2020. City Hall mandated a half-time return to office in May 2021, followed by a full-time return with no hybrid flexibility in September of that year. City staff have expressed support for remote work in **engagement surveys** and told **journalists** that the lack of hybrid flexibility is driving them to leave City service. "I would love a hybrid schedule. I'd much prefer that. I think it's much more humane. I think it would be much more productive," **a City worker told a reporter in June**. City Hall **committed to explore options** for remote flexibility in its February 2023 labor agreement with District Council 37, New York's largest public employee union.

6

### **Enacting hiring policies that stymie agencies' abilities to fill vacant positions**

During the pandemic, the City implemented a hiring freeze, a much-needed belt-tightening measure during a period of financial instability and reprioritization. This later shifted to a 3-for-1 policy of **hiring one new employee for every three vacancies**, which then lowered to a 2-for-1 policy. In November 2022, the City Budget Director ordered **agencies to cut 50%**, or about 4,700, of their non-uniform and non-teacher vacant roles as a part of the Mayor's Vacancy Reduction Initiative. This was in addition to a new directive that agencies must self-fund all new initiatives from their budgets though with the same bureaucratic review processes, putting further strain on City agencies and their ability to deliver services.

7

### Requiring navigation of confusing application processes and systems

As [one blogger describes it](#), obtaining a City job can be “largely impenetrable, poorly understood, incredibly confusing, and painful to navigate.” [Over 80%](#) of City jobs require passing a civil service exam. Interested applicants must apply to take exams, pay an application fee, take the exam, and [wait nine to 12 months](#) to be eligible to apply to jobs requiring that exam. The City offers over 400 kinds of civil service exams, and certain exams are only offered every few years. Ironically, staffing vacancies at the agency responsible for administering the exams have further [reduced the number of exams available](#). The City’s jobs website can also be inaccessible and difficult to navigate, with vacancies posted across two platforms, postings containing confusing government jargon, and no way to filter roles that require specific civil service exams.

8

### Leaving the door open for other sectors to claim mission-driven workers

The departure of significant numbers of City employees has diminished the sense of purpose and mission for those who remain. The City has not taken meaningful action to rebuild morale. Employees who came to City government to do mission-driven work are finding appealing career opportunities elsewhere. Flexibility and the offer of a higher salary caused a Human Resources Administration employee, who previously thought he would spend his entire career in government, [to accept a new job doing community outreach](#) at a nonprofit. The depletion of workers has also halted important projects in agencies such as the Department of Transportation. One employee [commented](#), “We got to the point where we couldn’t produce anything new. We were just keeping the lights on.” That employee left for the private sector.

“*We got to the point where we couldn’t produce anything new. We were just keeping the lights on.*”

# The Cost of the Staffing Crisis

New York City's staffing shortage is affecting the delivery of key services and legal mandates. The situation may become more dire — Mayor Eric Adams has warned that **additional service cuts may be coming** as the City struggles to respond to the arrival of migrants being transported to New York from the southern border.

Following are examples of service impacts related to City staffing shortages.

## Slowdown in affordable housing development

New York City is facing a housing affordability crisis. Half the city's renters spend **more than a third** of their income on rent, and a third spend more than 50% — demonstrating the critical need for new affordable housing. According to the 2022 Mayor's Management Report, the number of affordable housing units created or preserved by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) was **45% lower in 2022** compared to the prior year, a reduction attributed to staffing issues and construction costs. The staffing situation has become so dire that the HPD office that manages tax credits to develop low-income housing shrank from six active employees to one, requiring the agency to request a waiver from the City's Conflicts of Interest Board to **allow the program's former director to fill gaps** as a paid consultant.



45%

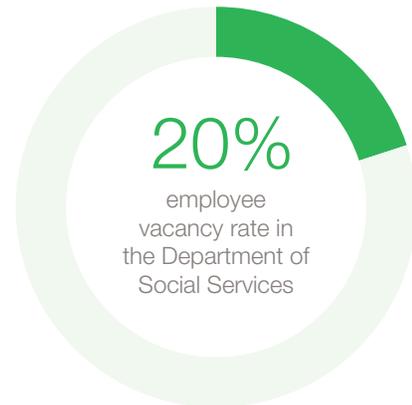
decline in the number of affordable housing units created or preserved in 2022

## Longer stays in shelters for homeless families

About 80% of homeless families find permanent homes through the use of rental assistance vouchers provided by the City. But it's a move that has become harder for families in shelters to make over the last year. The number of families who were able to move from shelters to permanent homes declined by over a quarter in 2022 from the previous year. Advocates and nonprofit service providers say reduced City staffing is a factor driving the delays in processing time for these vouchers, keeping children and families in shelters for longer periods. The Department of Social Services (DSS), whose responsibilities include facilitating the voucher programs, has an employee vacancy rate of 20%. Additional staffers have been added to process these vouchers.

# 27.6%

decline in number of families able to move from shelters to permanent homes in 2022



# \$140M

back payments owed to child care providers

## Threats to early childcare and education

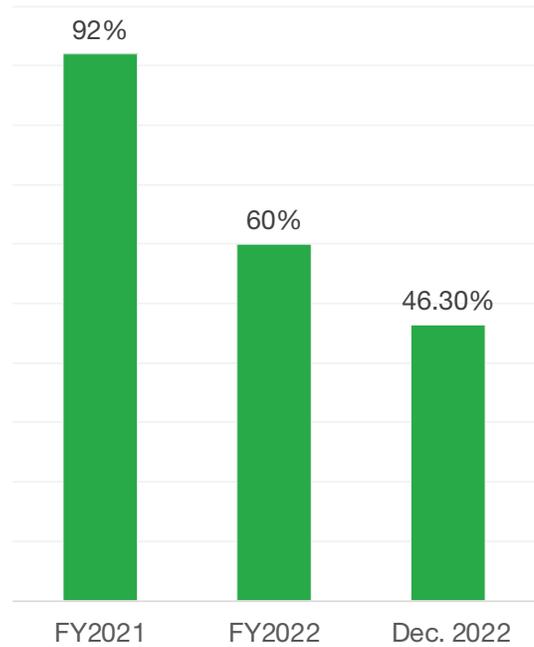
The Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) administers education and childcare services, including Pre-K for All, 3-K for All, and EarlyLearn, to more than 126,000 children under five. As of fall of 2022 approximately 45% of DECE roles were vacant. This contributed to delays in payments to childcare providers. DECE owed back payments totaling \$140 million in November 2022, resulting in childcare workers falling behind on rent and healthcare payments and in centers being forced to close. Though the Department of Education released an agreement to resolve its outstanding reimbursements, former DECE employees have expressed concerns about the ongoing quality and operations of the City's universal 3-K and pre-K programs due to critical losses in staff and institutional knowledge. In May, an agency tool used to flag issues at preschools crashed, and none of the remaining staff knew how to maintain the system. This year, it is anticipated that there will be at least a 50% decline in preschool site visits to evaluate programs and track key performance indicators with the tools used in past years.

## Delays in receiving food assistance

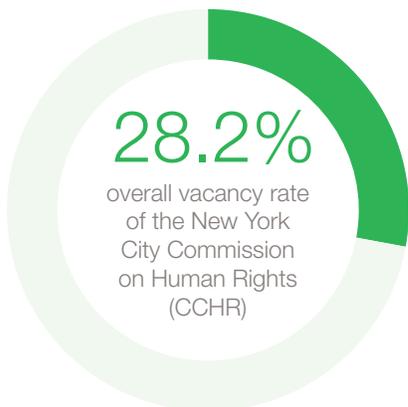
In 2021, over 1.6 million New York City residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase food. SNAP is administered by the City’s Human Resources Administration (HRA), which has **one vacancy for every five budgeted positions**. The agency is supposed to process SNAP applications within 30 days but was processing less than half of applications “promptly” as of December 2022. By comparison, 60% of food assistance applications were processed “promptly” during the 2022 fiscal year and 92% were administered without delay the previous year. The **2023 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report** cites “reduced staffing levels due to attrition and retirements” as one of the key reasons for delays. In December 2022, New York State denied a waiver filed by HRA requesting a temporary suspension in certain processing requirements, citing HRA’s lack of staffing in their explanation for the decision. A spokesperson for the State said: “[Our assistance] requires the city to take **proactive steps** to ensure they have adequate staff on-hand to process applications in a timely manner and in accordance with long-standing federal standards.” In January 2023, SNAP and cash assistance recipients filed a **class-action lawsuit** in Manhattan federal court arguing the City violated a federal law requiring benefits to be processed within 30 days. The lawsuit stated that **more than 28,000** applications for SNAP and cash assistance were overdue as of December 2022, and of those, nearly 6,000 dated back to September.



The City's HRA faces one vacancy for every five budgeted positions

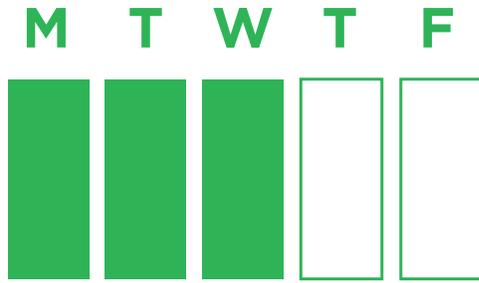


Percentage of applications for food assistance processed promptly



## Fewer resources to fight housing discrimination

The New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), which **enforces Human Rights Law** and fights discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation, has an **overall vacancy rate of 28.2%**. In April 2022, there were **zero staffers** working in the CCHR’s Source of Income Unit, which **launches investigations** on behalf of would-be-renters facing discrimination based on their use of a housing voucher and cracks down on illegal practices by brokers and building managers. Refusing to accept housing vouchers is New York’s **most common** form of housing discrimination.



it took three days longer to respond to emergency and non-emergency housing complaints in FY2022



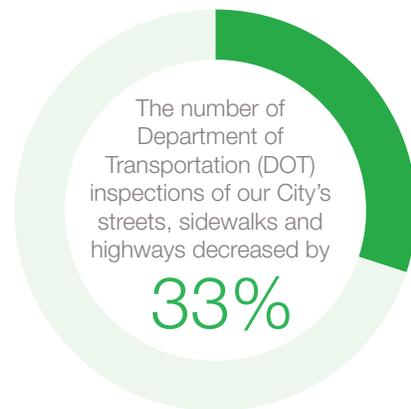
HPD is operating with only two-thirds of its full inspector force

### Slower inspections of potentially dangerous housing conditions

HPD responds to complaints from the public on **potential violations of health and safety standards in housing**, such as for lead or heat. HPD officials have stated that the agency is operating with only about **two-thirds of its full inspector force**. The 2022 Mayor’s Management Report states that in fiscal year 2022 it took three days longer to respond to emergency and non-emergency housing complaints compared to the previous year — delays that could have severe safety implications for the public. In April 2022, the HPD deputy commissioner stated that the agency was **short-staffed and unable to guarantee** it could meet potential fire safety requirements proposed by the City Council in response to a deadly apartment fire in the Bronx that killed 17 people.

### Risking pedestrian safety

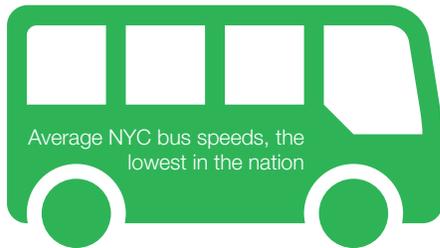
Street safety is a critical component of New York’s public health and safety. From July to October 2022, the number of Department of Transportation (DOT) inspections of our City’s streets, sidewalks and highways decreased by 33% from the year prior. The 2023 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report directly attributes this drop in inspections to a shortage of inspectors. The installation of timed signals designed to help pedestrians safely cross intersections also declined by 43% due to reduced staffing.



# 1,000,000+

New Yorkers rely on the bus daily to commute

# 8mph

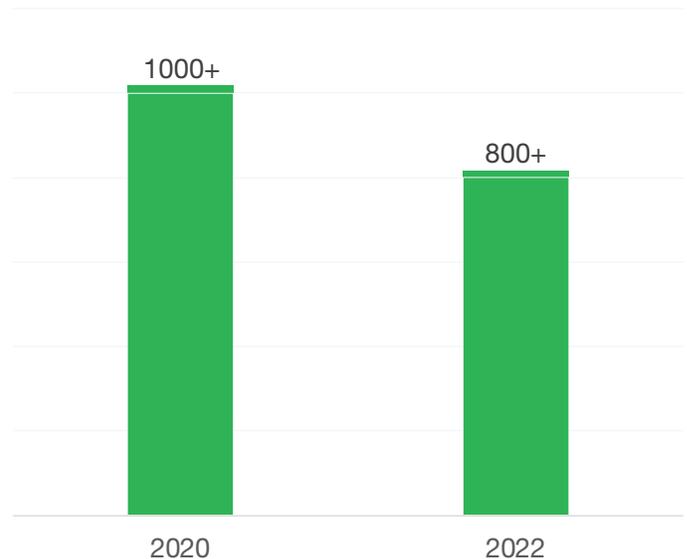


## Missed mandates to add bus lanes

The City's Department of Transportation (DOT) was mandated by local law to build 20 miles of bus lanes in 2022 and 30 miles in 2023. The agency **missed the 2022 target** and the 2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report shows that it installed **roughly half** the number of bus lane miles in the first four months of the 2023 fiscal year as compared to the same timeframe the prior year. DOT employees who requested anonymity **attributed** this drop in large part to staffing shortages, stating that DOT lacks sufficient levels of staff to both design and construct the bus lanes. The **2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report** did attribute the specified shortfall to the staffing shortage and other challenges. The creation of new bus lanes impacts over one million New Yorkers who rely on the bus daily to commute and are faced with average bus speeds of eight miles per hour, **the slowest in the nation**.

## Reduction in key legal reviews and services

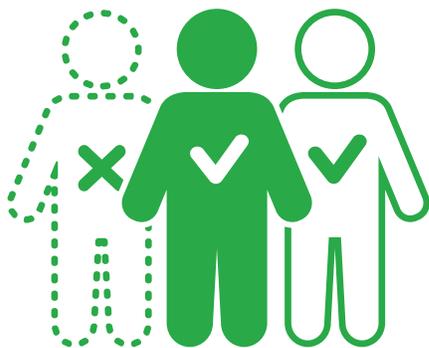
The Mayor's Chief Counsel announced in November 2022 that hundreds of legal positions were vacant across agencies and that "[t]he city has never needed lawyers more than it does today." The president of the union that represents City attorneys, the Civil Service Bar Association (CBSA), told the City Council that his union had "never suffered the mass exodus that we are currently experiencing." According to the union, its **membership has fallen by 22%** since 2020, from more than 1,000 attorneys to just over 800. This has wide-ranging impacts across the City, as these lawyers are tasked with myriad issues including **representing** abused children in Family Court to determine guardianship, **enforcing** summonses so that contractors follow building codes designed to keep people safe, and **charging** stores for violations like wage theft.



Membership in the Civil Service Bar Association has fallen by 22% since 2020

## Threats to integrity of agency operations

The Department of Investigation has oversight over more than 45 mayoral agencies and is charged with **performing** background checks on City employees, contractors, and day care workers as part of the hiring process. The average time to complete a background check increased **25%** during a four-month period in 2022 compared to the same period a year earlier. Backlogged background checks have remained a persistent problem, reaching a peak in July 2019 when there were **6,500** backlogged background cases. While the total number of backlogged cases declined in the following years, the 2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report states that there has been an increase in the time it takes to complete a background check and a decrease in the number of backlogged investigations closed due to staffing shortages. It is at the individual agencies' discretion to determine whether they will proceed with hiring pending the outcome of a background check, and these cases can present risks for agency operations. In 2019, a high-ranking Department of Education official was **arrested** for an alleged child sex crime. Though he had been employed for years, his background check was among the backlogged cases.



Chronic absenteeism has continued to be a problem amongst corrections officers at Rikers

# 25%

increase in the amount of time to complete a background check during a four-month period in 2022



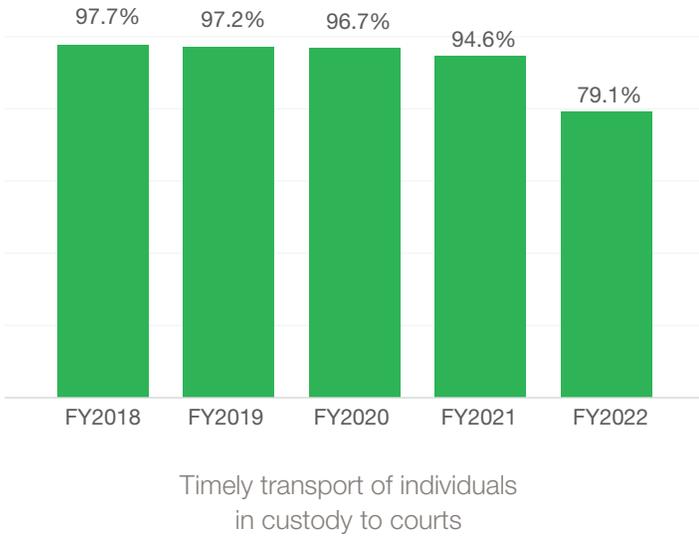
In 2019, a high-ranking Department of Education official was arrested and it was revealed his background check was never completed after years of employment

## Increased violence and health risks on Rikers Island

The 2022 Mayor's Management Report describes staffing issues at the Department of Correction (DOC) as a factor contributing to both **increased violence** within Rikers and the inability to provide those in custody with access to timely health services. However, DOC faces unique staffing challenges compared to other agencies. Rather than solely facing a high number of vacancies, **chronic absenteeism** has continued to be a problem amongst corrections officers at Rikers. Issues pertaining to the nature of staffing problems have been the **subject of litigation and investigations**.

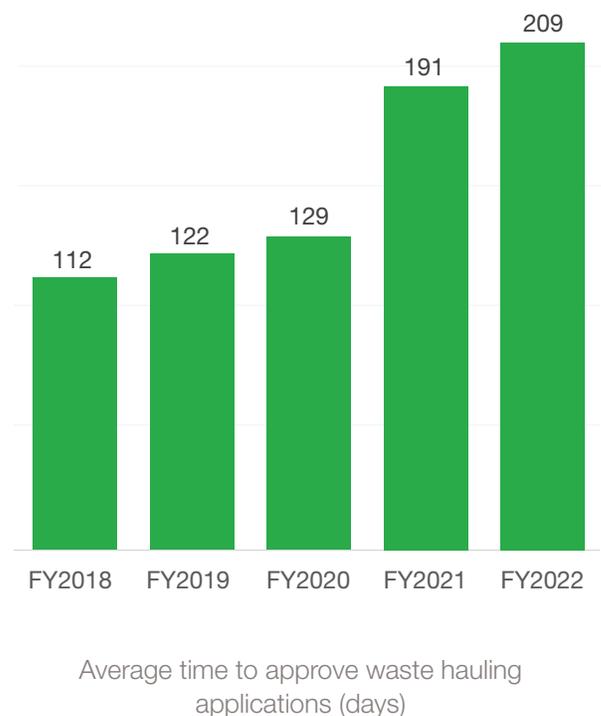
## Missed court dates for jailed individuals awaiting trial

The Department of Correction (DOC) managed a combined daily population of 5,600 people and processed 17,803 admissions across its seven facilities and jails in the 2022 fiscal year. According to the 2022 Mayor's Management Report, the timely transport of individuals in custody to courts was reduced by 16% from the prior year, which the report attributed to COVID-19 prevention measures and staffing reductions. One defense attorney stated that her client was not produced for five court dates over two months. People in custody have a constitutional right to a speedy trial and counsel, and delays as a result of DOC staff shortages could potentially extend the length of trial, leading to longer jail stays. The extension of even a day or more in jail can have a wide-ranging financial and emotional impact on an incarcerated individual, and as the time in jail mounts, there are financial consequences for the City as well.



## Mounting trash problems and slowdowns

The Business Integrity Commission (BIC) regulates the commercial waste industry and processes license and registration applications for commercial waste companies. According to the 2022 Mayor's Management Report in fiscal year 2022, the commission reported a 9% increase in the average time it took to process licenses and registration applications, citing its staffing shortage as a factor in the delays. These delays have occurred as complaints about trash have gone up from about 13,000 to nearly 18,000 in the first six months of 2022 and reported rat sightings have skyrocketed.



Just over  
**HALF**

of the letters DOHMH received were responded to within 14 days in the first four months of 2023, compared to 70% during the same period the previous year

### Delays in responsiveness to rodent complaints

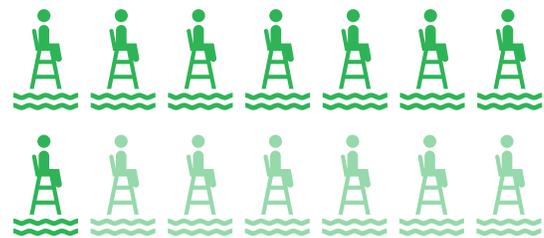
The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has been slower to respond to concerns from New Yorkers about rodents in part due to staffing shortages, according to the 2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. The agency responded within 14 days to just over half of the letters it received during the first four months of fiscal year 2023, compared to 70% during the same period the prior year. The longer response time was attributed to staffing shortages in the DOHMH Pest Control Services office and an increase in the number of complaints.

### Cancellation of swimming and fitness programs

The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) oversees 65 public pools and more than 14 miles of beaches. NYC Parks has faced challenges hiring sufficient numbers of lifeguards for its facilities, bringing on just 800 seasonal employees last summer, far short of the 1,400 that are typically hired. Lifeguard shortages across public pools and beaches last summer resulted in the cancellation of several swim programs, including swim lessons, senior swim, and lap swimming.

### Closure of sexual health clinics

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has restarted only five out of the City's eight sexual health clinics, due to staffing shortages. This clinic shortage comes at a time when there is a rise in sexually transmitted infections in NYC and Mayor Eric Adams is rolling out an initiative for the city to disburse free abortion pills.



NYC parks brought on just 800 seasonal employees last summer, far short of the 1,400 that are typically hired



Only five out of eight of the city's sexual health clinics are up and running

These examples are a mere snapshot of the impact staffing shortages in the City are having on service delivery.

However, they demonstrate the **scope of service impacts across a range of critical agencies** that are operating with far fewer staff than usual, interfering with their ability to carry out critical mission functions.

# Our Recommendations: A Closer Look

- 1 Save money – keep city workers employed**
- 2 Win the talent war – bring in the best and brightest**
- 3 Modernize government – the world of work has changed**

# 1

## Save money – keep City workers employed

### *Implement a Comprehensive Retention Strategy*

The City staffing shortage has been driven by attrition, rather than by strategic right-sizing of the workforce. Public servants are exiting City government in record numbers, signaling the need to rethink business as usual. High employee turnover comes at a high cost to the City. Recruiting, selecting, and training new staff can cost governments **16% to 200% of spending** on annual salaries. Retained employees not only save the City money, but **enable the City** to harness the institutional knowledge of veteran employees, reduce interruptions to City services, and reduce further turnover.

#### **Designate a Chief Retention Officer**

To address the upstream challenges driving the staffing crisis, the City should designate a centralized Chief Retention Officer to curb the mass departure of public servants. This individual would sit in City Hall, so they could oversee a comprehensive Citywide retention strategy, tailored to the circumstances of each agency, with the support of designees from the Deputy Mayors' offices and existing Human Resources teams at agencies. The Officer could implement a variety of measures, including the recommendations we propose below to improve retention and make City government a more

attractive workplace. This Officer would support managers dealing with staff burnout and low morale, as well as identify any other specific issues that may be motivating employees to leave. The Officer would also support Human Resources teams within City agencies to **implement remedial actions** for what can be complex cultural issues.

The private sector has long **recognized the value of retention management and analysis**. A science has emerged in this field, with more than 1,000 published research articles on employee turnover and retention to support Human Resources teams. The public sector is catching up, with more and more governments hiring for roles with responsibilities that include retention. For example, the Federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency **recently hired a Chief People Officer** to improve the employee experience and retain talent.

Mayor Adams has **embraced the development of new positions**, such as the Rat Czar and Director of the Public Realm, to help address the city's most urgent problems. The City's staffing crisis warrants a point-person to support agencies to deploy immediate mitigation strategies.

## Facilitate annual reviews and exit interviews

The Chief Retention Officer should develop annual surveys and exit interviews for Human Resources teams within City agencies to facilitate. Aggregating data collected from surveys and exit interviews, the Chief Retention Officer can deepen the City's understanding of why individuals may be departing from a particular unit, agency, or from City government as a whole, and develop both general and targeted strategies to address underlying issues. The Officer could anonymize and aggregate data on trends to share with office leadership, to provide transparent insights and identify and ameliorate issues before more talent is lost.

Annual 360-degree reviews and exit interviews are not standard practice across City agencies and offices, but are common methods to assess employee satisfaction and morale in the private sector. Rather than traditional top-down models, these reviews include [feedback](#) from anyone an employee has worked with and include appraisals from direct reports. 360-appraisals can provide [clear guidance on expectations](#) and hold both employees and those in leadership positions to account. In addition to providing insight about performance, properly executed 360-appraisals can [improve culture, leadership,](#)

[satisfaction, and commitment to the job](#). These appraisals must be done by [adhering to best practices](#) that include active and ongoing follow-through by all parties, with an end goal of identifying systemic issues that may impact retention and supporting professional development for the employee receiving an appraisal.

Once an employee has made the decision to leave City service, an [exit interview](#) is an opportunity to learn more about what led an individual to want to leave, and in the right circumstances can offer an opportunity to try to convince a valued employee to stay. Councilmember Shaun Abreu [introduced legislation](#) requiring exit interviews for municipal employees. Under the proposed legislation, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services would work alongside the Commission on Human Rights to [write the final written exit survey](#) and [deliver a report](#) on their findings to the Commission.

## Proactively track and address staffing trends and performance

The City should follow the private sector's lead and take a data-forward approach to identify and address unique staffing issues. The Chief Retention Officer should work closely with the Mayor's Office of Operations, [which has an existing system](#) in place to track agency metrics, to identify divisions and agencies with upticks in departures or other metrics that suggest impending staffing issues. This can help catch problems early, allowing the Chief Retention Officer to deploy targeted measures and support to managers to retain high-performing employees. This data-driven approach prevents service interruptions driven by staffing reductions before they become a significant problem and is a low-cost, fiscally responsible way to help retain talent.

The private sector has [experience taking data-driven approaches](#) to track turnover rates across business units and identify patterns that warrant attention. While employees leave jobs for a variety of reasons, trends do exist and can illuminate internal staffing challenges before they snowball. For example, [Harrah's Entertainment tracks employee turnover](#) by location, division, whether it was voluntary, and nearly 30 other specific subcategories to inform its internal policies.

## Build morale and cultivate a mission-driven culture

The Chief Retention Officer should support managers and agency leadership to build team culture, cultivate a mission-driven environment, and improve internal communications.

The Chief Retention Officer can facilitate optional management trainings and workshops designed to help managers build a workplace environment that motivates employees. This can include supporting managers to think through and deploy measures to actively involve employees and to [foster an environment](#) of employee empowerment, information sharing and professional growth. For example, the federal government [regularly surveys employees](#) to assess policies, practices and procedures in a federal agency and allow managers to use the data to improve workplace conditions.

The Chief Retention Officer can also create programs to motivate employees and help connect their work to the larger vision of the organization. For example, many private sector companies use strategies such as [CEO lunches to increase employee engagement](#). Opportunities to connect with commissioners and high-level agency staff is just one means to instill a deeper sense of purpose in employees. Other potential strategies to build mission and culture include advancing interagency camaraderie through programs that connect employees across offices, so staff feel connected to the entire workforce and the City's overall mission.

# 2

## Win the talent war – bring in the best and brightest

### *Deploy a Strategic Recruitment Plan*

Vacancies are reaching a point of crisis as the City faces challenges bringing on tomorrow’s municipal workforce. State and local governments have struggled to attract talent to public service in recent years: nationwide, applications to these roles **declined by 32%** per job from 2019 to 2021. Further adding to the challenge, municipal talent recruitment has typically been highly passive, which further limits the pool of potential candidates in comparison to the active recruitment done by the private sector.

In order to maintain quality in City services and to meet Mayor Adams’ ambitious long-term economic goals, the City must rethink its approach to recruitment. The City is in need of a proactive strategy to bring more attention to critical vacancies and ensure key functions are adequately staffed.

#### **Designate a Chief Recruitment Officer**

The City should designate a Chief Recruitment Officer, either through internal promotion or via new hire, to develop and implement a strategy to bring in new talent, including overseeing the other recruitment recommendations in this report. Like the Chief Retention Officer, this individual should sit in City Hall to have a Citywide perspective on hiring needs across all agencies. Though it is not feasible for this

individual to actively recruit for the 23,000 current vacancies in City government, the Officer should work closely with Deputy Mayors, Commissioners, the DCAS Office of Citywide Recruitment, and designees from Human Resources teams at agencies to identify priority vacancies and bring in new talent that is representative of the diversity of our city. A Chief Recruitment Officer should also develop a plan to prioritize hiring in-demand workers with high levels of digital literacy so we can modernize the workforce.

Recruiters are common in the private sector. In comparison, the City, which has twice the number of employees as Apple or Google, does not have any robust centralized active recruitment beyond general partnerships with academic and community institutions via the DCAS Office of Citywide Recruitment. Other government agencies have also been making more active recruitment efforts. For example, in 2022 **Boston named a Chief People Officer** to make Boston a more competitive employer and deploy new incentives to attract and retain employees.

## Identify offices with the greatest staffing needs

The Chief Recruitment Officer should coordinate with agencies to identify hard-to-recruit roles and provide targeted support to divisions facing the greatest needs. The Performance Management team at the Mayor's Office of Operations already **collects data that tracks the quality and delivery** of key services across all City agencies. The Chief Recruitment Officer should work in close coordination with this team to proactively track when agencies have marked declines in service quality. The Officer should then flag any concerning trends for agency leadership and partner with managers to develop a staffing and workforce plan to fill the gap. If departures are identified but no significant impact is found on agency functions or service delivery, those positions can remain unfilled.

One potential strategy to fill critical staffing gaps is adding those positions to the list of roles that the City maintains that are deemed **hard-to-recruit**. New employees filling roles on this list are exempt from meeting residency requirements, which dictate that non-uniformed civil servants must reside in or move to the five boroughs shortly after starting employment. Some City offices have experience utilizing this list to fill critical gaps: the City recently **added a number of attorney roles to the hard-to-recruit list** following staffing shortages. Though we are supportive of residency requirements, this list may be better leveraged to tackle other major barriers to hiring in these priority roles.

## Provide recruitment support and reduce barriers for hard-to-recruit roles

To rethink how it approaches filling critical roles, the City should provide agencies with additional support for roles on the hard-to-recruit list. Led by the Chief Recruitment Officer, this could entail prioritizing certain roles for active recruitment. City Hall has already recognized the need for active recruitment, working with labor unions to **create a \$70 million fund** for salary adjustments for hard-to-recruit positions and to

**host hiring halls** to promote its vacancies and provide on-the-spot interviews. Expanding these efforts to better target and attract in-demand employees to hard-to-recruit roles has the potential to provide even greater returns. This could be especially useful in underrepresented communities in an effort to diversify the municipal workforce.

Municipal talent recruitment has typically been highly passive. Jobs are posted to a government portal with the expectation that candidates will apply. However, according to HR Cloud, **73% of candidates** are passive job seekers, meaning they are not seeking employment but would be open to the right opportunity. Accessing the pool of passive job-seekers requires proactive searching that the City currently does not perform in a systematic way. Private sector recruiters **cold call, e-mail, and network** to compete for the best candidates. Though it requires resources, this methodology has a high return on investment. A study found **1 in every 72** recruited candidates is hired, compared to **1 in every 152** candidates who apply on their own.

Potential active recruitment strategies could include contracting with recruiting firms specifically for those roles, a strategy other government agencies have used successfully. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation mines resumes on third-party recruiter websites to fill roles. Recruitment strategies could also include better utilization of social media as a tool, as the City of San Antonio in Texas does with its live **"Chat with a Recruiter"** events on Facebook that allow potential candidates to pose questions.

Other strategies include expanding the capacity of the DCAS Office of Citywide Recruitment to connect hiring managers and Human Resources teams with job fairs at relevant schools and programs. Where appropriate, the City could also work with unions and agencies to reconsider qualifications and reprioritize the scheduling of civil service exams for in-demand roles.

Hiring strong leaders with a track record of success in other jurisdictions may also help attract traditionally hard-to-recruit talent. Established public sector innovators like the former president of the MTA's NYC Transit, **Andy Byford**, are not only poised to benefit the agency they lead, but can also attract a new cohort of fresh talent. Rather than solely relying on existing City personnel to identify impactful leaders nationally and internationally, the City could also follow the lead of agencies like the National Institutes of Health that **tap outside experts to help source and recruit candidates**.

### Market the City's mission-driven workplace

New York City should leverage the sense of purpose many employees seek from their work by running a compelling marketing campaign. The campaign could highlight and celebrate the work of current City employees to put a human face on government, allowing potential hires to envision themselves in government roles. The City should also re-frame its excellent benefits package for a new audience, highlighting perks that are not often found in other sectors.

Many individuals do not think of local government jobs when pursuing careers, even though titles and functions can be similar across sectors. An Accenture survey found that nearly half of those who are or have been employed in the public sector **say it is an attractive place to work**, compared to only 20% of those with no experience in government. Government work often has a negative reputation, with many **viewing it as a dead-end job** riddled with bureaucracy.

At the same time, there is growing demand for mission-driven careers. Many millennial and Gen Z employees **increasingly value a sense of purpose** in their work, stating that **mission may be more important** than a paycheck. They are **motivated by societal issues like climate change** and are willing to volunteer, contact elected officials, and engage in mission-driven activism on personal time. Yet **this has not translated to**

civically-minded individuals recognizing local government as a pathway to large-scale societal change. Curiosity about mission-driven work and a desire for workplace stability can also potentially prompt workers to shift from the private to the public sector, especially in the face of private sector layoffs, which have recently hit the tech and media sectors.

Cities and states acknowledging this trend have engaged in robust marketing efforts to emphasize purpose within their outward-facing brands. Denver **ran ads reading, "Be a part of the city you love"** online, on public transit, at movie theaters, and on billboards — resulting in a 10% increase in job applicants. Minneapolis launched the tagline **"Serving Communities. Building Careers,"** while San Francisco urged candidates to **"Choose Purpose"** after market research found that a more meaningful job might motivate someone to leave a higher paying one. To attract employees seeking to do transformative work, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission **re-branded as an innovative technology company** rather than a transportation agency. **Eighty-six percent of Human Resources professionals** acknowledge that recruiting is becoming more like marketing, demonstrating the need for the City to take more active measures in this space.



# 10% increase

Denver's "Be a part of the city you love" campaign resulted in a 10% increase in job applicants.

Source: [denvergov.org](http://denvergov.org)

The City should better publicize its benefits, as well as reframe how it describes them. The City offers a scholarship program for City workers to obtain graduate degrees in areas ranging from law to computer science. Employer-supported educational opportunities have broad appeal, with 94% of employees reporting that they would stay longer at their jobs if they were offered. Benefits have been a consistent selling point for public service recruitment over the years. However, with the rise of job hopping among millennials and people's priorities shifting to immediate financial concerns such as student loan debt, the government needs to re-frame its benefits offerings to address these trends. For example, instead of focusing on a retirement package and pensions that reward long tenure, City government should instead center its premium health insurance and student loan forgiveness in campaigns to recruit workers and effectively compete with the private sector

### Offer incentives for joining government

City government should get creative when considering incentives for hard-to-recruit roles. The Chief Recruitment Officer could coordinate internal surveys and focus groups to determine the most effective tools to incentivize the most critical roles, and work with agencies and labor unions to identify pathways to add incentives to increase employment.

Many governments are doing this already, following the lead of the private sector in recent years by offering one-time financial incentives, like signing bonuses, for new hires. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the City Council approved hiring incentives of \$3,000 for Police Academy roles, \$2,000 for 911 operators, and created a total pool of \$500,000 in incentive payments for critical roles such as electricians.

Other employers have been creative with the types of incentives they offer. In Washington, D.C., Mayor Bowser is offering housing stipends to qualified police department applicants. Montefiore St. Luke's Cornwall, a not-for-profit

community hospital, is allowing employees to transfer their unused vacation days to pay off their student debt, at no additional expense to the employer. Surveys conducted by Johnson County, Kansas found that employees wanted more choice in how they received raises, resulting in policies allowing them in the form of paid time off, a contribution to the deferred compensation program, or a lump sum.

Financial incentives in New York City may be limited by existing regulations and union agreements, however the City's first major labor agreement under the Adams administration demonstrates a step in the right direction. The tentative agreement with District Council 37 includes the establishment of a trust fund to help members with child care needs as well as compounded wage increases of 16.21% over the five-year contract. This shows the City's appetite and ability to creatively respond to recent staffing challenges. To further improve hiring and retention citywide, the City should build on this progress to address roles that fall outside of this union and provide further incentives for in-demand new hires.

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# \$500K

size of the pool of hiring incentives created by Tulsa, Oklahoma to fill critical roles

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### Implement creative interim solutions to ease staffing burdens

The City has already made some strides in examining roadblocks to hiring and rolling out new programs and policies to ease these burdens. City government should continue expanding existing efforts to fill additional critical roles. The Chief Recruitment Officer could

support specific agencies in the rollout of these policies.

For example, NYC Parks has embraced innovative measures to address its recent lifeguard shortage. The test to become a lifeguard was considered a major obstacle and was **subsequently reformed** to ease testing difficulty. Aspiring lifeguards who come close to passing the test are now offered free swim classes to help them pass the test when taking it a second time. Those with less swim competency **may now be eligible to oversee** much smaller, shallower pools. Learning from NYC Parks' action plan on lifeguards, the Chief Recruitment Officer could work with City agencies and labor unions to identify pathways to new employment.

The City has also taken innovative measures to address the shortage of lawyers in City government, creating a **Legal Fellows program** to allow early career attorneys at law firms to work for the City for one year on a pro-bono basis while they continue to be paid by their private employer. The City should also make efforts to roll out a similar program for the tech sector. This could entail partnering with tech companies, so their employees have the opportunity to support the City part-time or full-time as fellows to modernize technology systems and the City's cybersecurity infrastructure. This could be especially impactful, given the rapid pace of technological changes and the fact that the City team that works on **cybersecurity has a vacancy rate of 36%**.

Though many solutions to ease barriers to employment in City government are immediately implementable, others may require further assessment and negotiation. Where appropriate, the City should work closely with agencies and labor unions over the long-term to reevaluate the exams, skills and other requirements currently mandated for certain critical positions.

# Modernize government – the world of work has changed

## *Update City Employment Policies*

The City is in need of a significant overhaul to its internal workforce policies so that it can be more competitive with the private sector. Existing and prospective employees have detailed bureaucratic challenges throughout every step of the employee life cycle. These include a confusing civil servant qualification process, a difficult-to-navigate application system, a slow hiring process, a work environment that is inflexible to hybrid work, and a series of barriers to compensate and promote high-performing employees.

### **Provide balanced hybrid flexibility**

The City should offer eligible employees the ability to work from home one to two days per week, balancing the expectations of a modern workforce with the need to facilitate in-person collaboration and support business district economies. The City can utilize remote flexibility as a tool to boost morale, retention, and recruitment. This practice could potentially even achieve cost savings for the City. Under its recent [tentative labor agreement](#), the City committed to explore flexible work options for some City workers, with the goal of launching a pilot program by June 2023. The City should roll out the program on or ahead of the deadline, following best practices to optimize productivity and collaboration.

Many New Yorkers, including many City employees, were allowed to work from home for the first time during the pandemic, introducing a level of workplace flexibility across industries that had not existed previously. In 2021, City Hall mandated a full-time return to office, bucking broader trends. A July 2022 survey across local governments nationally found [58% of employees spent five days](#) and 28% spent two to three days working remotely, with a vast majority reporting high satisfaction. Other agencies and offices in New York City government have provided remote flexibility, with the [City Council](#), [MTA](#), [Public Advocate's Office](#), and [Queens Borough President's Office](#) providing at least one day of remote work for eligible employees.

At the same time, there are valid concerns about hybrid work. In-person work tends to [increase collaboration and communication](#) in the workplace. A large portion of the City workforce, like [uniformed and public-facing employees](#), are not able to perform their work duties remotely. Many of these roles are disproportionately filled by people of color, driving concerns about equitable workplace policies. Implementing a hybrid work policy would likely require negotiations and discussions with labor unions. On a macro scale, many New Yorkers running or working in restaurants and shops serving business districts have been [severely impacted](#)

by the increase in remote work. Seeking to support beleaguered business districts, Mayor Adams [encouraged private-sector employees to return to the office](#) last summer. At the same time he doubled-down on the City's requirement that all its employees show up in person for work, stating he wanted City employees to "[lead by example](#)."

However, the City's recent "New" New York report acknowledges that "hybrid work is here to stay" and City Hall may be reconsidering its prior policies. A national study found that [hybrid work reduced attrition rates by 35%](#) and improved self-reported satisfaction scores for engineers, marketing and finance employees. There is also a growing demand for remote jobs. The share of fully remote roles posted on LinkedIn climbed from 1% pre-pandemic to 14% as of December 2022. According to LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky, "[What's fascinating is north of 50%](#) of all job applications on a daily basis on LinkedIn go to that 14% of remote jobs."

In addition, depending upon how the City chose to structure a flexible work schedule, a hybrid option could boost the City's bottom line. Based on rough projections involving square footage and overhead estimates, if the majority of the [28% of likely-eligible City workers](#) were to adopt a hybrid work schedule, this could potentially save the City millions per year. The savings would be driven by a need for less office space and reduced overhead costs due to a smaller office footprint. [Other states](#) that have allowed for hybrid work, for example, have reduced office space and realized real savings.

Some managers in the City government may be concerned about the productivity of remote employees. The Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the period during which City employees were fully remote [demonstrates a mixed picture](#) in terms of agencies meeting critical performance indicators, and some key government partners have expressed frustration

with government responsiveness from that time. At the same time, it is not clear what level of interruptions to agency functions were a direct result of remote work, given that the City was in an unparalleled time of crisis and forced to quickly adapt to new remote practices. Concerns about remote work could be mitigated by [strengthening how remote employees operate](#).

A field study by Harvard Business School indicates that hybrid may be the '[best of both worlds](#)' offering the cross-pollination of ideas provided by onsite work and the work-life balance provided by remote. To provide employees with the flexibility they seek while ameliorating the concerns around remote work, the City should pilot a one to two day a week remote workplace for all eligible City workers.

### **Make applying easy**

The City should overhaul the hiring process. The existing jobs portal and civil service exam process are confusing, which may discourage potential candidates from submitting applications altogether. The City should clarify the process to qualify for titles and apply to roles, make the jobs website easier to navigate, link between the separate Mayor's Office and City agency jobs websites, and ensure vacancies are posted on popular sites jobseekers use to find roles. With targeted measures, the City can streamline the hiring process and end practices that deter the best talent from pursuing government service.

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# 92%

of potential candidates drop out of submitting job applications due in part to frustrating or complicated application processes, according to an audit of Fortune 500 companies

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According to an audit of Fortune 500 companies, [92% of potential candidates drop out](#) of submitting job applications, due in part to frustrating or complicated application processes. Candidates applying to City jobs likely face even greater challenges, due to the complex nature of civil service. The City should ease the application process by revamping its main jobs site to provide clear instructions and information in an easily digestible format, such as graphics or a short video. In San Bernardino County, California, the county government jobs website [features a video on how to apply for jobs](#), provides a phone number and e-mail for interested candidates to ask questions, and includes a [comprehensive and easy-to-read guide](#) to completing job applications that provides an overview of everything to expect in the process.

The City should also provide agencies with a template and guidelines to standardize the job descriptions posted online. Many of the posts do not describe the hiring agency or its mission, contain confusing government jargon, and bury civil service exam requirements in the text. There is also no clear way to filter jobs in a way that shows whether any specific competitive exams are required. The City should also meet people where they are in their job search by cross-posting positions on third-party job sites, an effort that can be scaled with limited staff by leveraging automation to match potential candidates with applicable City positions.

### **Speed up the time it takes to hire**

The City should streamline the length of its hiring process. In the many months that it can take for applicants to receive final approval, they may accept other offers, resulting in City government losing talent it may have spent time and resources to interview and vet. The City should overhaul the approvals process, removing unnecessary steps and developing a data-driven strategy to accelerate the time-to-hire.

Both applicants and agencies are subject to an onerous, months-long process between candidate selection and onboarding. A contingently selected candidate must go through multiple levels of approval, including [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) approval for all roles](#) and [Mayor Adams' approval for several roles](#). Though some oversight is necessary to maintain integrity in public hiring, some steps can add more costs than benefits. Employees have shared that these steps can slow down the process or put a halt on the hiring altogether. An anonymous former employee told a news outlet of cases where OMB denied a hiring request due to [changing internal policies on hiring](#) that were not communicated to agencies, wasting the agencies' time and further delaying hiring (though a City Hall spokesperson [disputed all claims](#) about City departments being unaware of hiring policies).

To optimize the hiring process, the City should evaluate the necessity of each step and address the bottlenecks in the process. Potential tools include adding a counter to the internal system agencies use to submit candidates for hire, providing a live tally of the number of days it takes to complete each stage of the approval process. This tactic informed data-driven strategies that [successfully shortened hiring times](#) for the state of Missouri. For roles on the hard-to-recruit list, the City could follow the federal government's lead of [implementing direct hiring authority](#), which speeds up and removes obstacles to hiring approvals.

While job applicants wait to learn whether their hiring is approved, there should be consistent communication between agencies and the selected candidate. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently [established regular touch points](#) with candidates, so that they are updated with time estimates and know that a human is processing their application.

## Provide fair compensation and promotion opportunities

In order to hire the most qualified staff, the City should give managers more flexibility to offer higher wages to top talent. The City will continue to lose job candidates with in-demand skills to the private sector if it offers experienced and qualified candidates only the lowest end of an advertised payscale. The City should also remove barriers to internal promotions. Recognizing employees' contributions helps retain employees with a track record of success, improves morale, and demonstrates the possibility of professional growth in City government.

A 2019 memo from City Hall to all City agencies directed that all new employees covered by a union bargaining agreement should be paid the “new hire” minimum, and employees with more than two years of City service should be paid only a slightly higher minimum. Any additional pay above the minimum would require approval from OMB and the Office of Labor Relations. This rule has been enforced to greater lengths and expanded to more cases in the years since, applying to both new hires and internal promotions. According to reports by City employees, this has resulted in a de facto requirement to offer all new hires the minimum salary from the pay scale displayed on a job posting as well as the inability to promote qualified employees. Speaking to this practice, one employee stated, “They are shooting themselves in the foot.”

City Hall has recently taken a step in the right direction, demonstrating it recognizes the importance of correcting this issue. It committed under a February 2023 labor agreement to offer eligible existing employees a minor salary increase and one-time bonus, as well as to set aside salary funds for new hires in hard-to-recruit roles. Though these steps are promising, they need to be rolled out expeditiously and strategically and are not sufficient on their own to retain and recruit top talent. They must be meaningfully expanded upon to build the modern, optimized workforce New Yorkers deserve. This includes easing barriers to growth opportunities for deserving employees and granting hiring managers flexibility in the salaries they can offer new hires, alongside the other recommendations we have presented in this report.

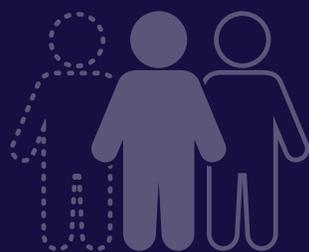
## CONCLUSION

# City government faces a severe staffing shortage undermining its ability to deliver critical services to New Yorkers.

Nearly 8% of roles across City agencies are vacant, but they are far higher in some of the agencies providing mission-critical services to some of the city's most vulnerable residents. The reduction in the workforce has stalled affordable housing projects and delayed moves from shelter to permanent housing. Low-income families are waiting for nutrition assistance to buy groceries and inspections of potentially dangerous housing conditions are taking longer than usual.

These and many other documented service interruptions have been directly tied to staffing shortages and the true impact is likely far greater than what has been reported. At the same time, New York City faces looming economic uncertainties that demand a fiscally disciplined approach to this staffing crisis.

We offer a comprehensive plan for talent retention, recruitment, and internal workforce policies so that we may rightsize the government. The municipal staffing shortage has reached a crisis point. The City must resolve it quickly to ensure New York has a strong recovery and thrives for generations to come.





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