

POLICY REVIEW:

Portland Police Bureau must obtain and analyze data to ensure equity in the hiring process

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PORTLAND
CITY AUDITOR
**Independent
Police Review**



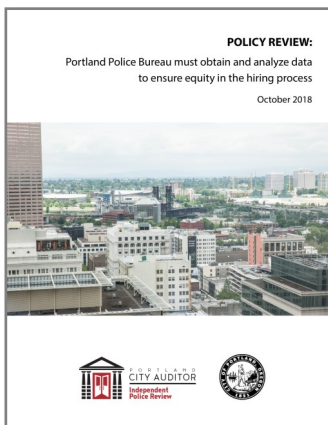
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Policy Review

Portland Police Bureau must collect and analyze data to ensure equity in the hiring process

Summary

In a time of heightened discussion regarding relations between police and communities of color, having a Police Bureau that mirrors the demographics of the community it serves is a goal for which most every law enforcement agency across the country strives.

In Portland, increasing diversity within the Police Bureau is a priority, and is included in its Five-Year Racial Equity Plan. This plan devotes significant attention to the recruitment and hiring of candidates of color, with the goal of bringing the number of women and minorities in its ranks in line with the other City Bureaus.

Hiring new police officers is a long, rigorous process that involves multiple steps—including a full background check, a physical aptitude test, oral and written interviews, and a full psychological analysis. This can take approximately six to nine months and is intended to ensure a candidate is physically and mentally prepared for the tremendous power and responsibility of being an officer.

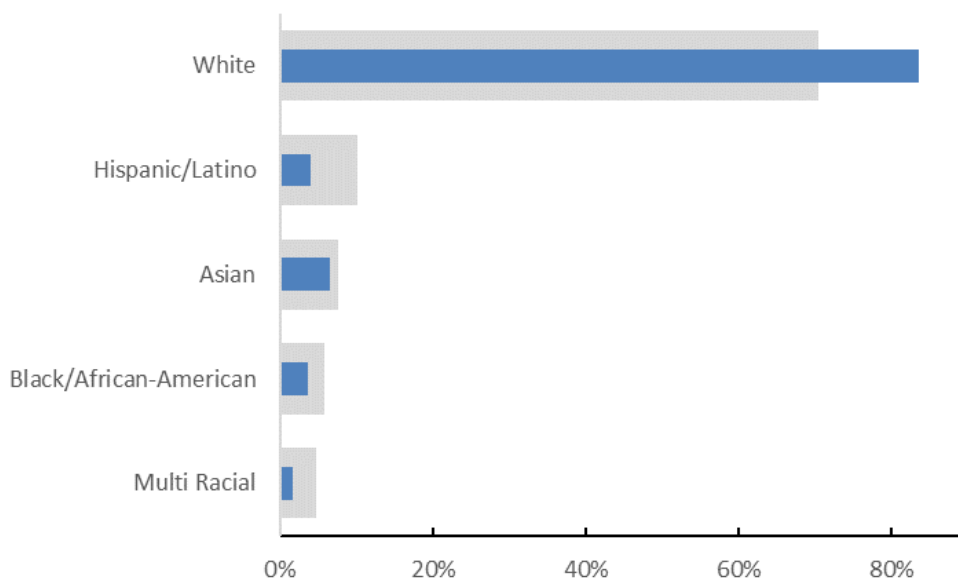
This review found that the Police Bureau was unable to identify barriers to successful completion of the hiring process by individual applicants because it could not access demographic data controlled by the Bureau of Human Resources. Without that information, the Police Bureau is less likely to achieve its goal of a diverse workforce.

Independent Police Review (IPR) recommends the Police Bureau and the Bureau of Human Resources improve communication and collaborate to share data. IPR also recommends the Police Bureau create or obtain a database that allows the Personnel Division to comprehensively track and review candidate progress, allowing the Police Bureau to identify barriers to equity. Additionally, we recommend the Police Bureau survey applicants after the hiring process to identify other possible barriers.

Officer demographics do not reflect the community they police

The Police Bureau has struggled for years to fill vacant positions and recently increased resources devoted to background investigations to bring officers onboard in a more timely manner. Yet as this work has been done, the demographic makeup of the Police Bureau still does not reflect the diversity of the city. From 2008 to 2018, the Police Bureau hired 379 officers. Of these hires, 77 percent (292) were white, and 16 percent (62) were female. White officers are over-represented compared to the population while all other categories are under-represented.

Sworn officers compared to **Portland population** at the beginning of 2018



In 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission published *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement*. The report focuses on equity in the areas of recruitment, hiring, and retention and says that a police department with varied races, genders, religion and background is “critical” for community trust and organizational reform. The report also identifies significant barriers and recommends best practices.

Some barriers identified include the length and cost of the hiring process, the lack of trust between communities of color and police, and inadequately tailored entrance exams that may have the unintended consequence of excluding qualified individuals from underrepresented populations.

IPR began a policy review of the Police Bureau's Personnel Division to identify barriers to diversity in the hiring process, intending to use the federal report to inform our findings. However, after reviewing the systems in place, IPR found that the Police Bureau does not track enough data to identify where in its hiring process such barriers exist.

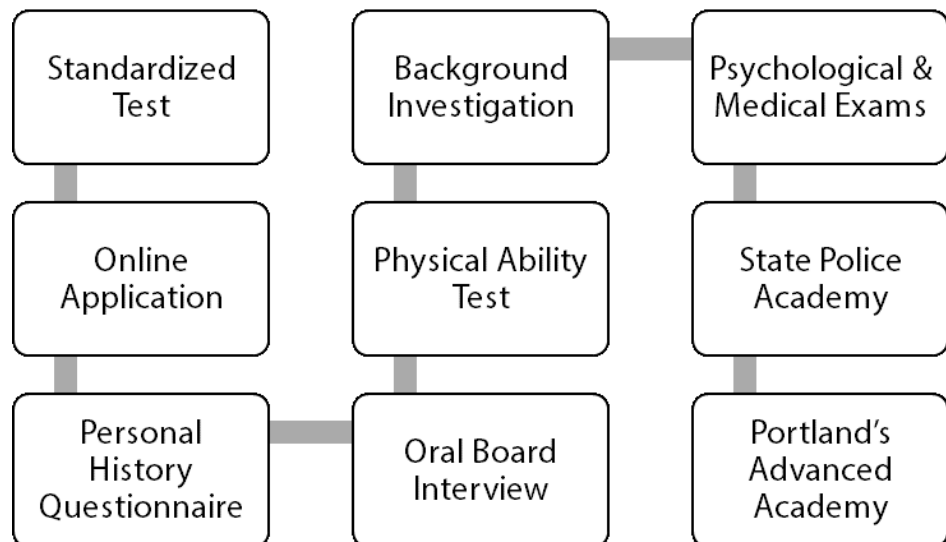
The Police Bureau has a rigorous hiring process

Hiring for the Police Bureau is a large undertaking. In 2017, 2,376 people applied to become an officer, and the Bureau hired 83 of them.

While the Police Bureau has taken steps to streamline the application process, it still takes approximately six to nine months to become a Portland officer. The hiring process is managed by the Police Bureau's Personnel Division which is staffed by a mix of officers, non-sworn staff and representatives from the Bureau of Human Resources.

To apply, candidates must meet minimum qualifications (age of 21 or older with high school diploma or GED) plus have an associate's degree or equivalent college hours; or two years' experience in the military or other law-enforcement-related field. Candidates must first take a test via the National Testing Network and then apply through the City's website.

Applicants then go through a series of interviews, a physical aptitude test and a full background investigation, which includes completing a 34-page personal history questionnaire.



Applicants can be disqualified for many reasons, including having used marijuana in the last year; not demonstrating enough life experience with races outside their own; untruthfulness or omissions; or a demonstrated history of poor judgment.

Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement states that: “[r]esearch and experience have revealed that at every stage of the hiring process, barriers exist that impede the selection of officers reflecting the diversity of the community they seek to serve.” The report notes that many of the steps used to screen applicants, including physical ability and cognitive tests, examinations, and background checks, have been shown to have a disproportionate impact on underrepresented populations. The length, complexity, and costs associated with the hiring process can also serve as a deterrent.

Documentation Required from Applicants	
Driver’s License	Social Security Card
Certified Birth Certificate and birth certificates of spouse and children	College Diploma and Sealed Certified Copies of Transcripts
Performance Evaluations from all employers for the past 10 years	Marriage Certificate and/or Divorce Decree
Federal and State Tax Returns of the past 4 years	DMV Driving Records and Traffic Accident Reports
Color photos of tattoos	All Civil Court actions and Police Reports

Applicants shared similar concerns during this policy review. One applicant identified the time and cost of obtaining transcripts and other official documentation as a hurdle in completing the process. Another applicant, a first generation American, mentioned that the background documents asked for email addresses for elderly family members living abroad who did not have computers.

The Bureau has invested significant resources in recruitment, hiring a dedicated senior recruitment program manager, and working to bring in applicants from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City and other criminal justice programs with diverse graduate pools.

The Bureau also hired more background investigators in 2016 and 2017 to stem the loss of applicants to agencies who could make a job offer sooner. Currently, the Bureau has 15 background investigators, who check in weekly with applicants to provide updates. Personnel Division managers say this helps retain candidates who feel Portland remains interested in them, despite the time it takes to complete the full process.

The Bureau's Personnel Division also implemented a monthly workshop, held at the same time as the physical aptitude test, at the training facility in Northeast Portland. This provides a space for prospective applicants to ask questions, speak one-on-one with officers, and get specific guidance on completing the personal history statement.

Along with general best practices, *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement* recommends police agencies examine how a physical aptitude test may inadvertently screen out female candidates or how background checks can negatively affect minority candidates.

However, the Police Bureau does not have any systems in place to accurately analyze its hiring process to identify and address significant barriers.

Better communication needed within the Police Bureau and with the City's Bureau of Human Resources

The Personnel Division is led by a civilian Bureau of Human Resources employee, who reports to the Director of Human Resources, not the police chief. Two Police Bureau employees, a lieutenant and a sergeant, report to the Personnel Manager.

Despite a blended structure of Police Bureau and Human Resources employees in Personnel, staff identified a lack of communication between Human Resources and the Police Bureau, particularly around sharing demographic information, as a key impediment to tracking and analyzing barriers to diversity in hiring.

Staff said demographic data from the online application—which is administered by Human Resources—is the best way to track each applicant from the start. Yet Police Bureau staff say Human Resources has denied requests to access this data, citing possible legal concerns. A lieutenant said:

“I don't want [the data] so that I can disqualify women and people of color at a disproportionate rate. I want it, so I can identify if there are unintended consequences of something in our hiring process.”

Police staff cited another example where Human Resources contracted with an outside firm, paying \$8,000 to create recruitment postcards sent to residents in Portland's most diverse neighborhoods. Each postcard contained a different targeted message with a different website link to each. The purpose was to track how many applications resulted from each postcard to identify which messages resonated.

The outside consulting firm was to analyze the response rate. However, Human Resources declined to provide the company any demographic information, meaning a City employee had to hand-input data instead. Personnel Division staff was frustrated by the inefficiency and lack of foresight.

Police Bureau employees said it appears that once Human Resources denies a request, nothing is done by the head of the Personnel Division, who works for Human Resources, to find an alternate solution.

Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement also recommends engaging other stakeholders to increase equity. Currently, the Personnel Division has no standing meetings with the Police Bureau's Equity and Diversity Program. The Equity and Diversity Program is tasked with the implementation of the Police Bureau's Racial Equity Plan, and is intended to be subject matter experts in helping different divisions within the Police Bureau hit their equity goals.



New officers with Chief Outlaw in February 2018.
@PortlandPolice on Instagram

A Police Bureau employee identified a need for an open discussion with Human Resources to get the Police Bureau the demographic data it needs. The employee said:

“We need everybody at the table to move with a sense of urgency... I feel like we don't have a foundation.”

Examples of such cooperation exist. Other City bureaus work with Human Resources on an ad hoc

basis to obtain demographic and hiring pool data. The Bureau of Transportation's Equity Manager works with a Human Resources representative to track the demographics of candidates for each job, and then updates hiring managers if further outreach or marketing may be needed to attract a more diverse applicant pool.

Better data tracking is needed to ensure an equitable hiring process

Without metrics, the Police Bureau has no way to assess what equity initiatives are working—or which ones are not.

In their joint report, the Department of Justice and Equal Opportunity Employment Commission stressed the need for using data to track trends and act on that information:

“Law enforcement agencies that have seen success in attracting a diverse workforce have generally paid particular attention to specific trends within their agencies that disproportionately affect applicants who are racial minorities, women, or from other underrepresented populations during the hiring process. Once cognizant of these barriers, these agencies have taken steps to proactively address the problem and ensure that criteria, standards, and benchmarks are job related and consistent with law enforcement needs.”

The Police Bureau recognizes a need for this: creating and maintaining a database to track hiring and recruitment trends is a year-one goal in its five-year Equity Plan. The Police Bureau reports that work is “in progress” to create a database to track recruitment and hiring. However, the Police Bureau’s 2018-2019 budget does not include any funding for the database.

Currently, data are kept by different Personnel Division staff in different locations and formats. A relatively new staff member said he was “disillusioned” by the lack of data and tracking in the Personnel Division when he arrived. Since that time, he created a spreadsheet that includes data on applicants collected from the National Testing Network’s standardized exam and the Bureau’s Personal History Questionnaire. However, this information must be hand-culled and keyed in by a staff member.

A supervisor in the Personnel Division also tracked demographic information on a separate spreadsheet based on demographic information provided when applicants are sent for a background investigation. This disparity demonstrates that the Personnel Division needs a comprehensive and complete method of data collection and analysis to ensure the information it has is consistent and accurate.

A dedicated database would further ensure that processes aren't changed or lost when staff in the Personnel Division change. Like other Police Bureau divisions, sworn members (in this case the lieutenant and sergeant) have their assignments rotated frequently, meaning initiatives begun by one lieutenant may be abandoned with the arrival of new leadership. For example, the most recent lieutenant was in Personnel for 20 months before being reassigned. During this review, a new lieutenant and sergeant were brought into the Personnel Division.



*Basic Academy graduates in June 2018.
@PortlandPolice on Instagram*

Personnel Division and Police Bureau Equity staff agreed the best solution would be a database that pulls demographic information directly from the online application. Personnel Division leadership estimate that it will take at least two years to gather enough data to identify trends and then begin the process of revising hiring and recruitment procedures to remove equity barriers. That means if started now, the Police Bureau would not have reliable data to analyze until 2021 at the earliest.

Recommendations

The Police Bureau has made strides in improving the efficiency of its hiring process, but additional steps remain to bring the City in line with national best practices for increasing diversity. To achieve these goals, IPR recommends the Police Bureau:

1. Engage with Bureau of Human Resources management and the Police Bureau's Equity and Diversity Program to discuss how applicant data can be provided to bureaus to meet racial equity goals and mandates;
2. Purchase or create a database capable of tracking candidates throughout the hiring process;
3. Create a data-informed review process to regularly review steps of the hiring process through an equity lens; and
4. Survey applicants to identify potential equity-related barriers.

RESPONSE TO THE POLICY REVIEW



CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



Bureau of Police

Ted Wheeler, Mayor

Danielle M. Outlaw, Chief of Police

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Integrity • Compassion • Accountability • Respect • Excellence • Service

September 27, 2018

Mr. Constantin Severe
IPR Director
1221 SW 4th Ave., Rm. 310
Portland, OR 97204

Re: Response to IPR Recommendations on *Equity in Police Hiring*

Dear Director Severe,

The Police Bureau agrees with the recommendations of the Auditor's policy review, *Equity in Police Hiring*. We agree that there is a need for an effective method of collecting data throughout the hiring process. That data should be used to inform frequent meaningful conversations about equity in hiring within Police Bureau divisions including the Equity Team. Those conversations should include the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) as it is responsible for recruitment announcements and testing. Applicants should be surveyed during the hiring process to identify potential equity related barriers.

Part of the Police Bureau's 2016-2021 Equity Plan includes strategies to promote focused recruiting and hiring of a more diverse inclusive, and equitable workforce. Our recruiting plan was developed to align with the Equity Plan, and includes specific efforts to recruit and hire new employees from diverse backgrounds. These include a Women's Public Safety Fair at the Training Division scheduled for March 30, 2019 and recruiting efforts already underway at colleges and universities such as John Jay College and the University of Southern Mississippi with diverse student bodies and strong Criminal Justice programs. The Police Bureau has also hosted the community at open-houses at each of the precincts and the Training Division.

Over the last few years the Police Bureau has made advances in data collection and analysis in several areas not related to hiring. Those good methods should prove helpful as the bureau applies them through an equity lens, particularly when recruiting and hiring police officers. Information about barriers should be identified, and those barriers removed whenever possible in order to achieve a more diverse pool of applicants who are eventually hired.

Collecting data and retrieving useful information from it can take time. As that process improves the Police Bureau has already begun a series of initiatives to recruit and hire a diverse, highly qualified pool of applicants and seek ways of removing barriers to candidates. In the summer of 2018 the Police Bureau welcomed six college interns from the southern and eastern United States. Each of them spent thirty days with the Portland Police learning about all aspects of job. This front row seat experience, all at no cost to the students, allowed them to see themselves as

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members of the Portland Police bureau and as members of the community it serves. This diverse group of interns shared their experience in real time with their fellow students and visited with Portland recruiters at job fairs in their own neighborhoods this fall. They were able to share their stories with a diverse group of interested college students, which generated tremendous interest in our plans for internships in 2019.

The Personnel Division has scheduled the first ever applicant pool event for later this fall with plans for repeated events quarterly. Interested applicants will have the opportunity to take a walking tour of Portland neighborhoods with Portland Police officers. They will meet community members who will share their own stories and expectations of Portland Police officers. These walking tours will help applicants understand the dynamics of serving as an officer in Portland, emphasize our mission and goals, and highlight timely subjects which have an impact on the livability of our city: homelessness, mental illness, gun violence, gentrification. The community will have a voice in the application process it has never had before.

The Police Bureau is looking for ways to improve its hiring process to make it even more equitable. For example, we hope to offer our oral interview in locations around the country in order to reach a more diverse group of applicants and to remove the barrier created by the expense of having to travel to Portland for a short oral interview. The Personnel Division is reexamining the physical abilities test to be sure it closely matches state requirements and does not place unreasonable expectations on applicants. Unlike other departments in Oregon, the Portland physical abilities test will continue to be offered free of charge.

The Police Bureau will continue recruiting efforts at regional community and four-year colleges, but will remain engaged in existing programs that offer personal non-enforcement contact with the community. Recruiting should be natural and organic. Every moment of the working day of each Portland Police officer should be an opportunity for recruitment. Officers engagement within the community should display the love they have for their profession and dedication they have to everyone they serve in a way that is so attractive it draws people in.

The Police Bureau welcomes the recommendations from the Auditor's office. The ability to gather and use data to achieve greater equity in hiring is a goal everyone should share. The Police Bureau aspires to be a leader among police departments in the 21st Century and can only do so by seeking input from a wide variety of sources. The Police Bureau must be more inclusive and engaged in its day-to-day interactions in the community. It must strive for excellence and continue to build trust in the community; then it will be a more effective partner in helping make Portland the city we all wish it to be and establish itself as an organization that inspires people from all walks of life to join.



Danielle M. Outlaw
Chief of Police
Portland Police Bureau

DMO/jb/klm