

2015 Recruitment Annual Report

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

Overview and Outcomes

2015 was an important year for NOPD as it marked the first year since 2009 that NOPD began training more new officers than it lost through attrition. NOPD began four new classes in 2015, Class 172 in January, Class 173 in June, Class 174 in October, and Class 175 in December. Altogether these classes included 127 new recruits and 9 reinstatements.

NOPD was able to hire these new officers because it significantly expanded resources dedicated to recruitment and hiring. Specifically, in 2015 NOPD:

- **Expanded Background Unit.** In 2015 we built upon the progress made in 2014 when NOPD hired a contract background investigation firm by doubling the number of investigators assigned to this unit. The unit had only 4 investigators at the start of the year and had grown to 10 investigators by the end of the year. This allowed us to reduce the processing time for the average acceptable candidate by three weeks.
- **Launched Walk-In Testing.** Beginning in October 2015, NOPD partnered with Civil Service to offer walk-in testing to interested applicants. Now, applicants can test at their convenience five days a week rather than waiting for a scheduled testing appointment. This allows applicants to turn a step that had some recruits waiting for two months into one that can be accomplished on the same day that they submit their application.
- **Targeted Recruitment Efforts.** NOPD specifically targeted its recruitment efforts at colleges and military bases in 2015 in an effort to hire recent college graduates and former military officers. Specifically, NOPD made recruitment stops at military installations such as Jackson Barracks, Camp Shelby, Belle Chasse, Fort Polk, as well as colleges including University of Louisiana Lafayette, Southern University, SUNO, Alcorn State, LSU, UNO, and Dillard.
- **Launched New Interview Panel.** In March NOPD launched a new panel interview process that brings together HR experts from the private sector and NOPD officers to jointly evaluate recruits on their oral communication and problem solving skills. This new panel interview takes place before the candidate begins a background investigation and replaces a previous model in which a panel composed solely of officers evaluated candidates after the background investigation was completed.
- **Opened Application to Individuals Without College Credits.** In February, the Civil Service Commission approved a request by NOPD to remove the requirement that all

applicants possess at least 60 college credit hours. NOPD made this request to increase the pool of applicants that were eligible to enter our rigorous screening process. We've seen an immediate increase in applicants – 1500 individuals applied in the two months after the college credit requirement was removed.

NOPD received 4,581 total applications in 2015, more than any year in recent memory. The applicants were a diverse group: 56% of applicants are African-American, 35% are Caucasian, 7% are Hispanic, and 2% are composed of other ethnicities. A total of 31% of applicants were female and applications were received from 48 of the 50 U.S. States as well as Puerto Rico. NOPD background investigators completed 349 investigations of recruit, lateral or reinstatement candidates in 2015.

Recruiting Applicants with Needed Skills

NOPD continues to strive to hire individuals with both problem solving skills and fluency in foreign languages. NOPD is specifically targeting colleges in its recruitment efforts in order to attract as many recent graduates as possible. Additionally, NOPD instituted a new panel interview in 2015 that includes several scenario questions that evaluate applicants on their ability to use critical thinking and problem solving skills. NOPD also has a presence at key local community events attended by locals with foreign language skills and advertises locally on Spanish-language radio and through Vietnamese-language newspapers. Altogether, NOPD hired 4 Spanish speakers in 2015.

Recruitment Challenges

Recruitment challenges face police departments nationwide and NOPD experiences many of the same problems as its counterparts. While NOPD has received significant interest in employment – including an increase from 3,000 applications in 2014 to 4,500 in 2015 – many of these applicants did not follow up to begin the hiring process. Only 1,000 of the 4,500 applicants attended the entrance examination that is the first step for anyone interested in being hired as a police officer. NOPD has made testing easier for applicants, expanding from offering a handful of tests per month to offering on-demand testing five days a week. We hope that this will encourage more applicants to begin the hiring process.

NOPD also continues to struggle with processing a large number of clearly unacceptable candidates. Altogether, 17% of applicants who underwent background investigations in 2015 were disqualified shortly after an initial interview based upon statements given during that interview. NOPD has instituted an initial background questionnaire for all applicants to try and discourage those applicants who would be deemed ineligible from submitting an application.

Finally, it is becoming more important that NOPD operate a true national recruitment campaign. One third of 2015 applicants applied from outside Louisiana, including many from military bases in other states. As we receive more interest from throughout the country, we need to continue to offer an attractive job opportunity to qualified individuals from many different regions. In 2015, NOPD officers received three 5% raises, which make NOPD officers the highest paid municipal agency in

Louisiana. Our salaries are now competitive with many other cities nationwide. Additionally, NOPD is working to leverage the City's growing popularity as a tourist destination to further enhance interest in our department. We believe that the improvements we have made to the hiring process this year and our work to process applicants quicker will continue to yield more interest from applicants throughout the country.