

2017 Recruitment Annual Report

The Recruitment and Application Investigations 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

The NOPD began three new classes in 2017: Class 180 began with 31 recruits in June; Class 181 began with 26 recruits in August; and Class 182 began with 40 recruits in December. These new hires enabled NOPD to beat attrition for the second straight year, hiring 95 officers while losing 78 in 2017.

NOPD received 7,450 applications in 2017, which is about a 33% increase over 5,596 received in 2016. Applications came from all 50 U.S. States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, thus creating a diverse applicant pool to include 26.65% of applicants who indicated multilingual status; 24.65% self-reporting military enlistment; and 68.9% reported some college attendance. 524 panel interviews of applicants and 550 background investigations of applicants were completed in 2017, of which 486 were for the police recruit position.

In 2017, NOPD expanded efforts to hire officers with residence outside of Louisiana. NOPD held two to three out-of-town bundled testing events every month to allow applicants to fly in and complete their initial application stages within three days. In addition to the bundled test sessions that were held locally, a recruitment team traveled to Houston, Dallas, Lancaster, and Killeen, Texas to recruit officers. Coupled with the Texas initiative, additional recruitment was held in Hattiesburg, Jackson and Gulfport, Mississippi. As a result of these efforts and our national marketing campaign, NOPD experienced a significant growth in applications from non-residents of Louisiana. In 2017, more than half of all applications came from outside the state.

NOPD also put enhanced resources into processing both local and out-of-town applicants. At the request of NOPD, Civil Service continued to host expanded entrance testing hours to include nights and weekends. Civil Service testing for the Police Recruit position is available Monday-Friday on a walk-in basis and on Wednesday evening and Saturday morning, by appointment. In close collaboration with the Monitoring Team, Civil Service and our partners at Louisiana Tech, NOPD also completed work on a new entrance exam, which was deployed in April 2017. NOPD also hired a dedicated Recruitment and Applicant Investigation Administrator who serves as a civilian recruitment director and requested the City's approval for four additional civilian background investigators. All of these positions were approved and NOPD is currently interviewing candidates.

Recruiting Applicants with Needed Skills

A balanced workforce that is representative of the community continues to be a priority for the NOPD. In 2016 NOPD launched its first ever certified interpreter program, which provides an additional 5% pay to NOPD officers who are certified as fluent in Spanish or Vietnamese and are willing to serve as interpreters for the department. This has given the department a new tool for recruiting individuals with foreign language skills, and NOPD was able to hire more applicants fluent in a foreign language than in any previous year in recent memory, including officers fluent in Vietnamese and Spanish.

NOPD has also continued to focus its in-person recruitment efforts on local post-secondary institutions to attract applicants with critical thinking and problem solving skills. NOPD visited 19 different colleges and universities in 2017, including Nicholls State University, Xavier University, Louisiana State University, University of New Orleans, Southern University at New Orleans, Delgado Community College, Nunez Community College, Southeastern Louisiana University and Dillard University. The department covered 26 career fairs, community fairs and private visits across Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. It should be noted that there were 313 self-reported indications that applicants learned of the police recruit position through an encounter with a recruiter and/or from attendance to a career fair.

Recruitment Challenges

Police departments faced unique recruitment challenges in 2017 as a result of the tragic events that took place in Baton Rouge and Dallas last summer. While application numbers stayed strong year-round, NOPD did hear from applicants already in the hiring process that their families had expressed concern about these events. It is possible that these events impacted the decisions of applicants to withdraw from our hiring process or not apply at all.

Additionally, NOPD's push to continue expanding its out of state recruitment efforts comes with its own difficulties. Out of state applicants have lower testing attendance rates than local applicants due to the cost of traveling to New Orleans. Additionally, out of state applicants take more processing time before hire since they must schedule trips to New Orleans and many of their background documents must be requested from agencies in other states. As a result, out of state applicants are hired slower and at a lower rate per application than local applicants.

Finally, NOPD continues to have enduring problems with applicants showing up for initial testing. In 2017, Civil Service offered walk-in testing five days a week and for several months also offered Saturday weeknight testing for applicants. Despite these efforts, more than 70% of applicants in 2017 never showed up for a test. Increasing the conversion rate from applicant to test taker will continue to be a stated objective in 2018. This indicates that a large number of the applicants NOPD is attracting are not seriously interested in pursuing a policing career.