

Typical City, Town or County Manager/Administrator Search Options, Process and Timeline

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Note: This report is based on experiences assisting approximately 40 Florida Cities and Counties between 2012 and 2018 with either permanent or interim CAO placements.

Part 1: Discussion of Five Search Options

There are four basic options for a search:

1. Retain a Search Firm
2. Perform the search in-house by City or County staff
3. Receive assistance from the FCCMA Senior Advisor Program in collaboration with City or County staff.
4. Receive placement assistance from Florida Association of Counties (FAC) – Counties only.
5. Do not recruit for a City or County Manager and appoint internal candidate.

1. Retain a Search Firm – This option provides the most comprehensive approach to the placement as the search firm spends a good deal of time in the process working with elected officials to obtain key information about attributes, knowledge, skills and abilities. In addition, a search firm would also identify current issues, organizational culture and define expectations of a successful candidate by elected officials. A search firm is better equipped than any of the other options to recruit qualified individuals who can be informed about the community and organization and encourage them to apply for the City or County Manager position. The search firm also is responsible for developing the compensation, benefit package and determining all conditions of employment such as residency. Having an outside and independent resource to facilitate this process is beneficial. A

¹ The Senior Advisor Program was previously known as the Range Rider Program. The program title changed in September 2014. Appreciation to Mark Durbin, Dick Kelton, Senior Advisors Emeritus and Paul Sharon former Senior Advisor for sharing interview and profile examples.

search firm will work with the local jurisdiction to prepare a detailed position profile that provides applicants with a good sense of what the agency is looking for. The search firm works with the elected officials to narrow down candidates for further consideration and interview, as appropriate. A search firm also performs background checks for finalists. The firms facilitate the interview process and help, as required in negotiating terms of employment with the successful candidates. In some cases, firms offer to re-do a search if the candidate they recommend does not work out for the agency. The cost of a search firm ranges from \$16,500 to \$21,500 with a not to exceed expense cost of about \$7,500 for search firm travel, printing and full background checks. Some firms quote an “all- inclusive cost” which ranges from \$18,000 to \$27,000. Additional work outside the scope of the contract is usually billed out at about \$140-\$220 and hour. These costs do not include the cost to the agency for finalist candidates for travel and lodging to participate in interviews. These are usual and customary costs to the City and can average \$1,200 for out of state candidates and lesser amount for in-state candidates.

2. Perform the search in-house – Under this option staff handles all steps in a search in-house. The degree to which these steps are accomplished depends on the comfort level of staff working directly with elected officials on a sensitive personnel matter. The cost of background checks for finalists, if not done in-house, is added and can amount to \$800 to \$1,500 a candidate for a comprehensive background review including professional credentials, financial, criminal, media, social media, current and past employers, etc. The cost of travel for candidates for interviews must also be added.

3. Senior Advisor Assistance to a Local Jurisdiction – If there is a vacancy in the position or a new position is created, placement assistance to local jurisdictions for a permanent or interim local government administrator. For permanent CAO placement assistance, the Senior Advisor Program generally can aid cities, towns or villages under 20,000 population and counties under 75,000 population. The Executive Director of FCCMA in consultation with the Senior Advisor Coordinator may offer jurisdictions having population in excess of these limits’ assistance based on a case-by-case review. The level of Senior Advisor support depends on the availability of volunteer Senior Advisor resources. For assistance to jurisdictions finding an Interim CAO, there is no population limitation. Also, the Senior Advisor Program works with jurisdictions of any size to discuss and outline the search process with elected officials.

Because this is a service provided by volunteers, assistance is based on availability of Senior Advisors near the community and the workload of the program with other projects and activities. Our priority is service to ICMA and FCCMA members with placement work being a secondary activity of the Senior Advisor Program. Presently, there are eight Senior Advisors in Florida, all of

whom are experienced former city or county managers. Not all areas of the state are covered for placement services, which may require on-site assistance. The Florida Senior Advisor Coordinator with the Executive Director of FCCMA will evaluate a request for services requested by the local jurisdiction and determine if services by the Senior Advisor Program can be provided with the volunteer resources available. The goal is to provide the best possible services to the local jurisdiction. All Senior Advisors have Florida City or County Manager/Administrator experience.

Senior Advisor assistance to a jurisdiction for an interim CAO is also subject to the availability of a volunteer Senior Advisor.

When the Senior Advisor Program provides placement assistance for a permanent CAO, we follow a basic procedure and guidelines for services that may, depending on local needs, include some or all of these activities:

- a. Outlining to elected officials the placement process based on ICMA guidelines.
- b. Assists the governing body determine qualifications, compensation and position requirements. However, given the fact the Senior Advisor Program is a voluntary program, we cannot match the detail that a search firm can provide this phase of a placement.
- c. Assistance to local staff with position advertisements.
- d. Reviewing and recommending semi-finalist candidates based on position standards established by the governing body. The governing body shall select finalists for interviews.
- e. Helping the jurisdiction during the interview phase of the placement process.

There is no cost to the community for these services. In cases where the governing board feels it is necessary or beneficial for a Senior Advisor(s) to be present in the community requiring an overnight stay and commuting is not practical, the community is requested to cover hotel and incidental meal costs for the Senior Advisor. This is typically during the interview process.

*Please note that background searches on candidates for permanent or interim CAO positions are **not** included in Senior Advisor placement services and should be conducted through qualified individuals or firms retained by the agency. The Senior Advisor Program does not have the expertise to perform this work. In addition, the Senior Advisor Program will **not** be involved with employment agreement discussions between the agency and the selected candidate.*

The cost of such background searches and selection of individuals or firms to perform background searches is borne by the City Town or County. In addition, the cost of travel and lodging for interview candidates is also borne by the City

Town or County.

4. *Receive Assistance from Florida Association of Counties (FAC)* – This is a fee-based service for Counties only from FAC that includes assistance on preparing the position advertisement and profile and review of candidates. Information about this program is available by contacting Virginia "Ginger" Delegal - Executive Director of the Florida Association of Counties at: <http://www.fl-counties.com> or by phone at 850-922-4300

5. *Do not recruit for a City Town or County Manager and appoint an internal candidate.* – This option should be considered if the governing body feels an internal candidate for the position should be appointed.

Part 2: Timeline and Steps for a Typical Manager Search

This is a timeline and steps for a typical city, county or town manager search and is based on lessons learned from past placement projects of the FCCMA Senior Advisor Program and discussions with search firms.

Step One: Develop the position profile and advertisement. This involves active participation with elected officials to determine the position requirements as to experience, education and residency as appropriate. In many cases an existing job description and code or charter provisions are helpful resources. In addition, the elected officials should be actively involved in determining the knowledge, skills and abilities that are important for the position. This includes defining attributes and personal style that is of interest to the elected body. In addition, applicants should have relevant public sector or military senior management experience and be members of ICMA, FCCMA and/or their local state city management association. I feel a profile is important, as it is a core document that describes the community, organization and offers key information to a prospective applicant. It is the face of the community during the search process and presents an opportunity to showcase the community as well as disclose specific issues or concerns of the community or organizational needs. The profile should be reviewed and approved officially by the elected body. This part of the process takes about 30-45 days and includes preparing the final advertisement. An important component of this phase is determining the compensation and benefits to be offered. Adherence to Florida Records Law is essential. We recommend something like this be included on all job information (profile and advertisement): *Florida Law requires that all resumes and application materials received by the City or County for this position becomes a matter of public record upon receipt by the City or County.* (Please see skills and attributes that other jurisdictions have used in city,

town or county manager searches. This is attached as an exhibit including a list of desirable components of a recruitment profile).

Step Two: Application processes. This is optimally 60 days but can be compressed to 30-45 days if necessary. This is the period where applicants submit their interest, resumes, application documents to the agency. It is important, in our view, to require that the applicant submit a signed agency employment application with their resume and cover letter. If the agency has a consent form for background reviews, a signed copy should be included in required documents submitted by the applicant. Usually, an employment application contains assurances and warrants that the information on the application is accurate. Also, the employment application contains a standardized format that is easy to review. Resumes come in a variety of formats and designs making comparative review difficult. Also, we have seen cases where a completed employment application revealed discrepancies on the resume that warranted follow-up review. Please see the note on adherence to Florida open records laws in Step 1 above.

Step Three: Resume/Application Review Process: This can usually be completed by a search firm or the Senior Advisors within 15 days following the close of the application period. The search firm should be able to provide the local jurisdiction with their interview recommendations within this time period. The process using Senior Advisors is a bit different. At the conclusion of this period, if the Senior Advisors are involved in the search, they will submit their recommendations for 10-12 semi-finalists. In accordance with the Florida open meetings laws, the Senior Advisors may not discuss the qualifications of the applicants privately among themselves. Any discussion must be in the form of a public meeting. Generally, when the Senior Advisors determine the 10-12 semi-finalists, this is done by a conference call that is a noticed public meeting and open to the public. The governing body has the responsibility of selecting the finalists for interviews. This should be done at a public meeting. In the event a member of the governing body feels a candidate not on the Senior Advisor semi-finalists should be considered, the entire governing body at the finalist review meeting should consider the individual. We recommend that 5-7 finalists be selected for interviews. Some agencies choose to do preliminary interviews of semi-final candidates by video or phone. However, the final candidates should be invited for face-to-face interviews. The assigned Senior Advisor can assist the governing body select finalists for interview. A preliminary background review of all semi-finalists should be completed before a preliminary interview. The cost of such a preliminary review is about \$400 each while the full background review is about \$1,800. As noted in Step 4, we recommend a full background check on all finalists. The Senior Advisor Program does not perform background reviews. Some search firms offer preliminary and full background reviews as a service.

Step Four: Interviews. Search firms provide full assistance to the agency during the interview process. The Senior Advisor Program can assist the agency at this step of the process by providing interview questions and guidance on facilitating the process, as needed. The governing body should decide on whether it plans to reimburse travel expenses for applicants. This needs to be communicated to all applicants being considered for interviews. We recommend that the agency reimburse travel expenses as a usual and customary expense of placement. Generally, airfare, car rental, hotel and incidentals for an out of state applicant will run approximately \$1,500-1,800, with the bulk cost being airfare. In state applicants should be offered hotel accommodations, incidentals and car mileage based on the current IRS rate. The agency or a qualified firm should perform a full background review of the top two candidates. Typically, background review includes work history, reference checks, education verification, social media and media review; possible site visits to the candidate's current community, credit checks and legal or litigation review. A full report on the candidate should be provided to the hiring agency before a final hiring decision is made. The cost of a full background review is about \$1,800. A search firm typically provides background reviews as a component of their services. As noted above, if Senior Advisors are used for the search process, the local jurisdiction is responsible for performing background reviews or contracting for this service.

Step 5: Negotiation of Employment Terms and start date. This work is typically done directly by the agency. The Senior Advisor Program does not help in this area of the placement. If a search firm is retained, the firm typically assists in negotiations with the finalist(s).

Part 3: Resources:

International City/City Management Association's (ICMA) Professional Local Government Management: This information is located at the ICMA website and contains excellent information about the benefits of hiring a professionally trained CAO, the duties of an appointed Manager or Administrator, Ethical Conduct and how to hire a professional Manager or Administrator. This is an excellent starting point for elected officials and agency staff.

http://icma.org/en/icma/about/overview/hiring_manager

International City/City Management Association's (ICMA) Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator: The handbook lays out a good process for what is perhaps one of the most significant responsibilities of elected officials including:

-- Resources available to assist in the process conducting the recruitment

- Reviewing applications
- Identifying and interviewing finalists
- Negotiating compensation

Exhibits in the ICMA handbook also present resources and publications available, suggested interview questions, and a summary checklist and timetable.

The handbook is available at no cost here and is recommended reading by staff and the governing body. It is an excellent guide to the search process.

<https://icma.org/recruitmentguidelines>

Senior Advisor Program from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA): Here are links to information about the national and Florida Senior Advisor Program.

http://icma.org/en/icma/members/benefits/senior_advisor_program

<http://fccma.org/senior-advisors/>

The flyer about the Florida Senior Advisor Program may be downloaded from the bottom of the page link above.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments:

1. Recruitment Profile Checklist including attributes and traits deemed appropriate and beneficial by other agencies during their recruitment of a city, county or town manager.
2. Summary of Job Advertisement Options and Approximate Cost

Attachment 1: Key items recommended for a City/Town or County Manager/Administrator Profile

1. Description of the community that includes a history, location, population and key features of the community. This is an important way to put a face on the community and point out the attributes and benefits of living there. Include distance to major population centers, airports, Disney etc. If there are specific and special venues in the community, include a description of them.
2. Description of the local government. Include also information on the size of staff, form of government (i.e. council-manager form), organization chart, budget synopsis, etc. Include a list of governmental services provided directly and a list of services that the agency contracts for either via private contractor or intergovernmental agreement or municipal services that are provided directly by another governmental agency. (Examples could include library, fire and rescue services.)
3. Duties and functions of the City, Town or County Manager (from the Charter, Code or governing board policy)
4. Challenges, Issues and Opportunities – Here a short list of issues facing the agency over the next two years would be very helpful. Try to be descriptive in one or two sentences for each issue. Include any fiscal, major legal or collective bargaining issues that are pending.
5. Requirements for the City, Town or County Manager – Education and experience required. Education and experience desirable. In addition, applicants should have relevant public sector or military senior management experience and be members of ICMA, FCCMA and/or their local state city management association.
6. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Here a list of essential skills and attributes followed by important skills and attributes is helpful. (See next page for examples taken from other profiles)
7. Compensation – The profile should disclose a salary range and summary of expected benefits, if possible. Some jurisdictions leave this as something like: *“the City or County of X offers a competitive starting salary based on qualifications and experience.”* If the agency participates in FRS offer deferred compensation or other pension program, this may be considered as a compensation area to include.
8. Residency – If there is a residency requirement, it should be disclosed as well as when it is effective.

9. Application and selection process – Include the summary of the process including the deadline to submit the application and/or resume and how the documents should be submitted. Most jurisdictions require electronic submission of .PDF documents. The instructions should be clear as to whom the resumes should be submitted to. Also, because applications become a matter of public record when submitted, the profile and advertisement should clearly state this. Also, the process should disclose that applicants would be subject to a background screening. I recommend that the agency require applicants to submit a completed, signed agency employment application, especially if signature on the form serves as authorization for background screening. Finalists should also sign a release for background checks at an appropriate time.
10. Other documents that should be made available either as exhibits to the profile or as links to documents posted on the agency website:
 - a. City, Town or County Charter
 - b. Agency Budget
 - c. Agency employment application (hopefully, in a fillable .PDF form)
 - d. Key planning or community description documents
 - e. Capital improvement schedule
 - f. Organization chart
 - g. Summary of governmental services provided (this can also be incorporated into the body of the position profile)

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS OF A CITY/COUNTY MANAGER

1. Consensus builder
2. Decisive; good judgment
3. Excellent communicator to public, employees, Commissioners
4. Honest, ethical, moral
5. Willing to work whatever hours are needed
6. Outstanding leadership skills
7. Keeps composure at all times
8. Sensitive to others' needs and positions
9. Keeps current on County projects
10. Willing to be innovative
11. Available
12. Timely executes Commission policy
13. Treats everyone with respect; even-handed
14. Cooperates with other governments
15. Recruits and retains competent staff
16. Decentralized management style, but holds people accountable
17. Believes in strategic planning
18. Ambassador for the City/County
19. Outgoing, confident, positive, proactive, approachable
20. Good listening skills
21. Demands accountability, and willing to be held accountable

Source: Florida Senior Advisors

Presented on the next page is another list of attributes taken from ICMA advertisements.

Position Profile Trait Examples

Actual samples extracted from recent ads in ICMA Newsletter

“...demonstrated leadership capabilities...”
“...fiscal acumen...”
“...excellent communication& interpersonal skills...”
“...employee/citizen relations (skills)...”
“...labor & contract negotiations (skills)...”
“...technical knowledge of municipal operations...”
“...financial & budget preparation (skills)...”
“...bondable...”
“...progressive, proactive, community-oriented leader...”
“...community & economic development (skills)...”
“...community-oriented problem solving...”
“... (experience) achieving community consensus around critical issues...”
“...integration of technology into municipal operations...”
“...establishing strategic goals & priorities...”
“...customer service orientation...”
“...strong interpersonal skills...”
“...facilitating a community vision & implementing action plans...”
“...strong commitment to customer-focused government...”
“...redevelopment, economic development & financial management experience...”
“...strong interpersonal & consensus building skills...”
“... (commitment to) team/participative management...”
“... (experience in) personnel management...”
“... (experience in) intergovernmental relations...”
“... (experience in) utility management...”
“...considerable community involvement & working with volunteers...”
“...knowledge of new technology...”
“...skills/knowledge involving (*state*) laws...”
“...understanding of public financing...”
“...grant writing (skills)...”
“...conservative fiscal management...”
“...infrastructure replacement & development (experience)...”
“...human resources development...”
“...strategic & long-range planning...”
“...knowledge of principles & management of city government...”
“...capacity to address problems in proactive manner...”

Source: Florida Senior Advisors

Attachment 2: City and County Manager/Administrator Advertisement Options

Host Organization website (no charge)

Twitter (no charge)

Facebook (no charge)

Florida City/County Management Association FCCMA (no charge) <http://fccma.org/jobs/>

Florida League of Cities (FLC) (no charge)
<https://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/resources/open-local-government-positions>

International City/County Management Association (ICMA), (Fee-Based) includes the ICMA Newsletter, Job Opportunities Bulletin and the ICMA Career Network
<https://icma.org/job-posts>

National Association of Counties (NACO), (Fee Based)
<https://www.naco.org/resources/hire-quality-staff>

Florida Association of Counties, (Fee Based) <https://www.fl-counties.com/government-jobs>

Employ Florida website, which includes Americas Job Exchange, and US Job (no charge)
<https://www.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

The following are other fee-based sites:

National League of Cities - <https://jobsonline.nlc.org/jobs/>

Careers in Government: <http://www.careersingovernment.com>

Strategic Government Resources – Online Job Board:
https://www.governmentresource.com/SGR_Job_Board_Subscription

Government Jobs Web Site: <https://employer.governmentjobs.com/#/home>

GovtJobs.com Web Site: <http://www.govtjobs.com/>

GovJob.net Web Site: <https://www.govtjobs.com>

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