



OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No:

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager
Originator: Mike Dorman, Director of Engineering

SUBJECT:

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT STAFFING PLAN

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct the General Manager to shift staffing from the current Supplemental Engineering Services model toward a direct hiring model to support the existing Capital Improvement Program execution, and implement the plan over four years through the normal budget process.

BACKGROUND

Since 2002, Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) has used Professional Service Agreements for supplemental staffing to meet workload demands of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and small projects funded through both capital and operating budgets. Over the last five years, supplemental staffing has grown from 20 to 53 positions as planned in prior agreements. The existing supplemental staffing contracts are nearing their expiration. In order to prepare for the solicitation of new supplemental staffing contracts, staff roles and responsibilities were updated, and project staffing requirements were reviewed for the next 10 years. This analysis confirmed the long-term need for the current total staffing levels, which includes direct OC San staff members and supplemental contract staffing, to deliver necessary projects for the next 10-years. Supplemental staff will be required in construction management and certain technical disciplines to support increased construction activity over the next five years at a minimum.

This staffing plan analysis completes the FY2025-2026 General Manager's Work Plan Goal to create a CIP staffing plan by December 31, 2025, to minimize Supplemental Engineering Services, improve succession planning, and streamline the project delivery process.

The existing Supplemental Engineering Services contract (May 2022 - May 2027) will expire in May 2027. A request for proposal will be sent out late October 2025 to allow a one-year overlap with the existing contract to provide a smooth transition between contracts. The estimated supplemental staffing levels in the request for proposal will reflect the direction from the Board of Directors regarding direct versus SES staffing levels.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- Cultivate a highly qualified, well-trained, and diverse workforce
- Promote employee job satisfaction
- Plan for and execute succession, minimizing vacant position times

PROBLEM

The supplemental staffing contracts have served OC San well over the past 23 years and have helped OC San meet the full secondary consent decree and execute many successful projects. In recent years, the number of supplemental staffing has increased to meet growing project execution needs. Supplemental staffing now accounts for over 40% of the Engineering Department's project delivery workforce. In the Construction Division, supplemental staffing represents almost 47% of the workforce, a particularly high ratio compared to OC San staff. Retaining supplemental staffing has sometimes been a challenge, leading to project staffing gaps and the loss of valuable project knowledge.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Fill required project delivery staffing requirements by shifting long-term support positions from contract staffing to OC San full-time positions to gradually decrease supplemental staff over the next four years. The plan adds four new Supervisors, two new Planning Division Engineers to better control the current workload, and 33 positions to directly replace supplemental project delivery staff. The positions include:

- Division 740 - Planning: Add one Senior Engineer to serve as technical lead for collections asset management and one Engineer to support plant maintenance projects.
- Division 750 - Project Management Office: Add one Engineering Supervisor to support project oversight. Distribute CIP and small projects evenly across three Supervisors, rather than separating them into a Project Management Group and a Small Project Delivery Group. Add three Engineers and one Associate Engineer.
- Division 760 - Design: Establish a Commissioning/Shutdown Group by adding one Engineering Supervisor, one Senior Engineer, one Engineer, and one Associate Engineer to provide dedicated support for commissioning and shutdown coordination. Add one civil/mechanical collections Engineer, one electrical Engineer, one Associate electrical Engineer, and one Associate Instrumental & Control Engineer. In the Process Controls Integration Group, add one Principal IT Analyst, one Senior IT Analyst, and one IT Analyst III to provide secure and reliable control systems for collections and plant facilities, and oversight of the fiber optic system.
- Division 770 - Construction Management: Add one Engineering Supervisor, eight resident Engineers (two Senior Engineers and six Engineers) and one Planner/Scheduler. For inspections, add one civil/mechanical Inspection Supervisor, eight civil/mechanical Inspectors (two Senior Construction Inspectors and six Construction Inspectors), and two electrical/Instrumental & Control Engineer Inspectors.

Shifting to OC San's in-house staffing will reduce turnover, preserve expertise, improve project continuity, strengthen succession planning, support the transfer of institutional knowledge, and

enhance project oversight by creating a more balanced staff-to-supervisor ratio.

TIMING CONCERNS

With the growing CIP workload, the staff-to-supervisor ratio will increase, making it more difficult to provide effective project oversight. Staffing levels are expected to rise over the next five years to match project workload.

RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION

OC San will continue using supplemental staffing to deliver specialty technical support and provide for short-term capacity in support of CIP and small projects. Some engineering groups will continue to have high staff-to-supervisor ratios, making it difficult to provide adequate project oversight.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

N/A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

N/A

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This staffing plan is expected to save approximately \$950,000 annually.

ATTACHMENT

The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OC San website (www.ocsan.gov) with the complete agenda package:

- Engineering Department 2025 Staffing Plan
- Presentation

MD:lb