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SPECIAL AWARDS ISSUE



KHRA Recognizes the City of Salina

Last year, the Kansas Human Relations Association recognized the City of Winfield and their Human Relations Commission for their active involvement in community affairs and their proactive practices in promoting a diverse and enlightened community.

This year, special recognition goes to the City of Salina for initiating and sustaining a Second Review Process pertaining to city hiring and personnel practices.

The objective of the Second Review Process is to support diversity in the city's workforce, which has long been mostly white. For instance, as recently as 1994, only 2.95% of the city's classified employees were minorities. The objective was not only to diversify the city's workforce but to restore trust and foster the participation of minority communities in the local system of government. For many years, various minority groups had expressed concerns to members of the city's Human Relations Commission that the City was not pursuing its Affirmative Action goals.

The Affirmative Action requirements of the City are set out in Chapter 13 of the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Ordinance. The ordinance charges the City of Salina and its administration with affirmative action in selection standards, recruiting and advertising, affirmative management, evaluation, training for upward mobility, and reporting. Among other requirements of the ordinance, it established an Affirmative Action evaluation committee, composed of City Management, Human Relations, Human Resources, and others designated by the City Manager.

Another requirement of the Affirmative Action Ordinance is a report to the Board of Commissioners on the status of the Affirmative Action program. The report of the Affirmative Action Committee is made annually to the Board of Commissioners. However, some members of the minority and disability advocacy communities had a long-held distrust of the system. As a result, the City Manager saw the need for a new direction.

The Deputy City Manager of the City of Salina, at the direction of the City Manager, initiated a "Second Review Process" in 2003. The City Management Team has kept this process in place and improved it. The City of Salina has improved the hiring of minorities and restored trust in the City of Salina and its hiring process. The Kansas Human Relations Association would like to submit Salina's Second Review Process for a Municipal Excellence Award.

The City of Salina advertises job openings, and anyone interested can come to the Human Resources department to pick up an application, access the application via the city's website, or call and have one mailed to them. As with most city application

forms, there is an optional demographic sheet that is included with the employee application. However, the applicant has the option of not completing this sheet.

The "Second Review Process" employment procedure for the City of Salina provides for a second review of minority applicants. The city's goal is to increase the number of minority applicants who receive interviews, thereby increasing the number of minority city employees in a community that is 87% white.

There are four reasons for other cities to replicate this project: (1) The cost of this project is free. The only cost to the city is time and effort, and it represents an innovative tool to better manage municipal resources; (2) The project reaps significant rewards in regaining the trust of the minority community and diversifying our workforce. City management believes that a diverse workforce brings with it a better understanding of its citizens; (3) Although there are no statistics to measure it, this program assists in keeping younger citizens from moving out of our mostly rural community to a larger city, such as Kansas City; and (4) it increases understanding and tolerance, thereby making a better quality of life for all Salinans.

The "Second Review Process" has two phases, set in place in the hope of increasing minority employment. A synopsis of the process is set out below for this summary:

(1) The interview process provides for a second review of all minority applicants to determine if they should receive an interview based on their qualifications. Applications of minorities not initially chosen for an interview are reviewed by the Human Resources Director and the Deputy City Manager. The qualifications included in these applications are then compared to those initially chosen for an interview.

(2) The second phase is set out in greater detail in the application. However, once the department manager reviews and submits the applicants whom he/she is interested in interviewing, the Human Resource Director begins the second phase of the process. If the percent of minorities to be interviewed is less than the total applicant pool percent, then a qualifications review of the minority applicants is completed, and, if the minimum qualifications are met, the department head is then asked to include in his/her interviews additional minorities who are qualified.

The specific goal of this process is to increase the number of minority applicants who receive interviews, thereby increasing the number of minorities hired.

The process has proven a success, as the number of minorities receiving interviews increased from 11.19% in 1993 to a new high of 16.90% in 2005. The previous high was 16.80% in 2004.