



Office of the President

Toni Preckwinkle

President, Cook County Board of Commissioners

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TONI PRECKWINKLE

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To: Honorable John P. Daley
Chairman, Finance Committee

From: Lanetta Haynes Turner
*Chief of Staff
Office of the President*

CC: Kanako Ishida Musselwhite,
*Interim Budget Director
Department of Budget & Management Services*

Date: August 23, 2023

Re: Request for Information from FY2023 Mid-Year Budget Hearing

Question 1:

1. In regard to the BRITE Program, it was mentioned the goal is to conduct a total of 14 assessments and give a minimum of \$500k in grants to eligible businesses:
 - A. How will the businesses be chosen, who is conducting assessments, and which County regions will be given priority?
 - B. Have any businesses applied for this program to date?
 - C. Is there a higher rate of applicants in certain communities?
 - D. What type of outreach is being done and in what parts of the County?
 - E. When will this be distributed?

Response 1:

- A. How will the businesses be chosen, who is conducting assessments, and which County regions will be given priority?

The Board of Commissioners has allocated \$10 million in ARPA for the Businesses Reducing Impact on the Environment (BRITE) program, a free pollution prevention technical assessment program that helps businesses reduce their environmental impact while creating a healthier environment for their employees, customers, and community. Assessed businesses may also be eligible for grant funding for projects recommended during their assessments that will move them towards solutions that save money, reduce impact on the environment and modernize operations.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be located within suburban Cook County, IL
- Must have no more than 500 full-time employees
- Must be a dry cleaner, auto body shop or auto repair shop, metal finisher, or food and beverage manufacturer
- Must have been in operation prior to January 1, 2020
- Must have experienced negative economic impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated by proof of revenue loss
- To receive grant support, must agree and demonstrate that grants will be used to improve business practices that have been identified through the pollution prevention technical assessment

Businesses interested in the BRITE program can sign up for an assessment at www.cookcountyil.gov/BRITE in either English, Spanish, or Korean. Businesses that meet the eligibility criteria evaluated by BRITE Program staff and selected to participate in an assessment. Assessments are currently conducted by our in-house Environmental Engineers who partner with contractors, non-profit organizations, such as the IL Green Business Association, and utility energy efficiency programs for pollution prevention best practices and research. The BRITE Program was announced on August 17, but has been in its pilot phase since December 2022. During the pilot phase, outreach was conducted to businesses within Suburban Cook County municipalities with Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) scores of .60 and higher.

B. Have any businesses applied for this program to date?

16 eligible businesses have applied, eight assessments have been completed, and an additional eight assessments have been scheduled. Several businesses that applied were ineligible due to the type of business or location outside of Suburban Cook County.

C. Is there a higher rate of applicants in certain communities?

Given the fact that the application has been open for less than one week, it is too soon to tell if there is a higher rate of applicants from certain communities. The pilot businesses assessed to date are in Alsip, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Cicero, Dolton, Franklin Park, Melrose Park and Skokie.

D. What type of outreach is being done and in what parts of the County?

During the pilot phase, Cook County focused outreach to business associations that cover the business types the BRITE Program targets (i.e. IL Dry Cleaning association). We also focused our outreach to businesses in municipalities with SVI scores of .60 or higher. Now that the program is officially launched, Cook County intends to conduct outreach with more associations, utility energy efficiency programs (i.e. Com Ed), and non-profit organizations.

E. When will this be distributed?

It is our target to disburse \$500k in grants grant in FY 23. We plan on obligating a total of \$6 million by the ARPA obligation deadline (12/31/24). The size of each grant per business will vary based on cost of projects and need. The timing will vary depending on when assessments are finished and when businesses apply. It will be done on a rolling basis throughout the next several years. Due to the changing climate and increased environmental rules and regulations on small businesses, the need for pollution prevention technical assessments have been in demand. These technical assessments, along with their recommendations, can be costly to small business owners, many who have been struggling because of the pandemic. As a result, DES plans to make the BRITE Program a permanent addition to the department to assist these businesses after the ARPA program has ended.

Question 2:

In regard to the County Auditor FY2023 goal #1:

- A. While the goal is to expand the Audit Coverage, this has been stalled due to unfilled positions. How is your Office ensuring these positions are filled and how long will it take?

Response 2

- A. While the goal is to expand the Audit Coverage, this has been stalled due to unfilled positions. How is your Office ensuring these positions are filled and how long will it take?

The Bureau of Human Resources (“BHR”) is not aware of the County Auditor’s FY2023 goal #1, nor is BHR aware of any staffing delays in the department. The BHR Workforce Strategy team, which leads the day-to-day hiring processes and activities associated with the recruitment lifecycle for positions in the Offices under the President (“OUP”), works collaboratively with the County Auditor to fill vacancies within the department. BHR successfully partnered with the County Auditor to fill four (4) vacant positions with candidates who are scheduled to begin working in late August. Additionally, BHR is supporting the County Auditor to facilitate interviews for two (2) additional vacant positions and is sourcing candidates to fill five (5) other positions that are currently posted for hire. BHR currently maintains an average hiring cycle (recruiting and onboarding) time of 90 days per position.

Question 3:

Under the hiring status of various departments, many have vacancies and have experienced challenges recruiting individuals. If these vacancies aren’t filled by the end of FY23, what challenges will this bring? Is there a backup plan in case this happens?:

- A. What percentage of qualified individuals have rejected employment offer?
- B. How long after an interview is a job offer made? How long does it take candidates to accept the offer?
- C. Are people in other departments willing to be trained to move to the departments with higher vacancies?
- D. Are we currently working with outside staffing agencies to help fill these vacancies?

Response 3:

The hiring process to fill any vacant position within a department is driven by Hiring Managers through the submission of a Request to Hire (RTH) to address hiring needs based on established priorities for their departments.

As of Q4 2022, the offer acceptance rate was 92%, which is above the national average of 81%. Additionally, the average hiring cycle (recruiting and onboarding) time is 90 days per position - well below the public sector average of 119 days. Candidates who are extended offers of employment are afforded five (5) days in which to notify BHR of their decision regarding the offer received.

BHR supports the hiring needs of departments by implementing broad advertising and marketing initiatives that promote Cook County employment opportunities and programming and attract and retain talent and position Cook County as an employer of choice.

BHR's partnership with Deloitte for recruiting efforts concluded in May and all hiring activities transitioned to the internal BHR hiring team. BHR works with staffing agencies, as necessary, to address staffing needs. BHR continues to increase its capacity to support the County's increased hiring volume. Specifically, BHR is actively rebuilding the hiring team to increase recruiting capacity, ensuring proper alignment, and addressing service gaps.

Pursuant to the County Employment Plan, department heads may make recommendations of Interim and Temporary Assignments to provide short-term and long-term coverage for vacant positions within units and work locations in their reporting structure to address operational and other business-related needs.