

Human Resources Officer

Loudoun County, VA

(Population 312,000)

If you are seasoned, achievement-oriented public sector human resources professional and seeking a progressive and supportive working environment, this job is for you. Loudoun County is a hidden treasure and a remarkable success story.

In 1960, Loudoun County had a population of approximately 20,000, virtually unchanged for 100 years. Then things began to change. Dulles International Airport opened in the County's southeast corner and the people and businesses began to come. By 2000 its population had grown to 170,000 and was slightly over 312,000 in 2010 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Even in the face of rapid growth, its infrastructure has remained excellent. Its schools, for example, are all first rate. In fact, all of its high schools are ranked in the top 5% in the Country. But that is not all. 58% of the adult population has at least a Bachelor's degree. Its per capita income is one of the highest in the country. Unemployment is only 4.8%. The eastern third of the County is suburban while the western two thirds is rural with small towns, agriculture, wineries, horse farms and 160,000 acres of well preserved open space. The County is committed to this development pattern as clearly identified in its comprehensive plan. The Blue Ridge Mountains are nearby. 25 miles in the other direction is Washington, DC. 46% of Loudoun's working residents work in the County, 10% in Washington, and the remaining 44% work primarily in Northern Virginia. Further, unlike Arlington, Fairfax and many of the other counties in the metro area, land is still available for firms to build to suit. Recreational and cultural activities abound.

All in all, the County is known for its beautiful scenery, rich history, a healthy diversity of expanding business opportunities, comfortable neighborhoods, and high quality public services. In others words, it is a great place, even in the current economic downturn, to live and work with ample recreation activities nearby.

GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHICS AND CLIMATE

Loudoun County covers 521 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the Potomac River and Maryland; on the south by Prince William and Fauquier Counties; and on the west by the watershed of the Blue Ridge Mountains; and on the east by Fairfax County. The Bull Run Mountains and Catoclin Mountain cross the county.

With a population of 312,000, the county has slightly over 100,000 housing units, and slightly more females than males. Approximately 30% of the population is under the age of 18; 65% between 18 and 65; the remaining 5% are 65 and older. The three primary racial groups in the county are White (73%); Asian (12%); and African American (8%). Approximately 25% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. The latest reported median family income is \$131,700.

The County has all four seasons. During the winter months, the high temperatures average in the mid to low 40's with an average low around 25° F. Summer temperatures have average highs in the mid 80's and average lows in the low 60's. Annual average rainfall is approximately 41 inches.

THE GOVERNMENT

Loudoun County is governed by a nine-member Board of Supervisors under Virginia's Traditional Form of Government. The Chairman is elected at large while the other Supervisors represent eight geographic districts. All nine members serve four year terms and are elected at the same time. The next election will be held later this year.

The Board appoints a County Administrator to oversee the county's day-to-day operations and various other boards and commissions. The present County Administrator joined Loudoun in December 2009. The previous County Administrator served in that capacity for eighteen (18) years. Other elected Constitutional Officers include the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Commissioner of the Revenue, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, and Treasurer.

The County currently has an operating budget of just over \$1.2 billion. Of that, \$792 million is allocated to the school system, \$387 million for the general government, \$167 million for debt service (the portion for schools is \$118 million) and \$25 million for the other items. The Board also adopted an amended Capital Improvement Program (CIP) totaling about \$1.01 billion for FY 2011-FY 2016. The school portion of the CIP totals \$422.9 million, including plans for funding four elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools, as well as renovations to two elementary schools and one high school.

While Loudoun has been affected by the slowing of the national economy, and has faced major fiscal challenges, the government has not altered its commitment to sustaining a high quality of life and not just viable, but thriving communities. As a result, Loudoun has consistently received high marks from respondents to countywide surveys. County residents report being very pleased with their quality of life, the caliber of county services, and the value they receive for their tax dollars. Another key indicator reflecting the County's commitment to excellence is its AAA bond ratings, which have been consistently reaffirmed by the three bond rating agencies.

Loudoun County is also among the most technologically advanced county governments in the nation as revealed in a survey conducted by the Center for Digital Government. Loudoun ranked first in the nation among county governments in its population category for the innovative use of technology to deliver services to citizens.

THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

The Human Resources Office is a division of the Department of Management and Financial Services (MFS) and is headed by the Human Resources Officer (HRO). Its primary functions are recruiting, hiring, training, employee relations, employee benefits, risk management, position analysis, policy development and human resources information systems. Overall, it provides human resources services to some 3,000 regular full-time and part-time staff and another 5,000 temporary and seasonal employees. Its budget is \$5.3 million but it also oversees a benefits budget of \$35 million. It does not provide support to the county's school system.

Although the HRO reports to the Director of MFS, the individual also serves as an advisor to the County Administrator as he and his immediate staff work to take the Loudoun County organization to the next level. The County Administrator is particularly interested in improving the county's leadership and management.

THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Human Resources function in Loudoun County has been well run and does not suffer from major issues. The staff is talented, hardworking and capable. Recruitment actions are processed relatively quickly and grievances are not backlogged. The first challenge is, as with almost every other jurisdiction in the country, the increasing cost of employee benefits. With revenues being largely flat, these costs need to be mitigated to the degree possible. The second issue is employee compensation. One of its aspects is that employees did not receive cost of living or merit raises in FY10 or FY11. One is budgeted for FY12 (which began on July 1st) and that should mitigate that concern somewhat. The other aspect is the county had a compensation study completed in 2010 and is currently analyzing the data. The third challenge is to analyze and make recommendations regarding a pay for performance program. As part of that effort, the performance management system will need to be reviewed and reassessed. A fourth challenge is to insure county HR policies are up to date, effective and followed. The County grew very quickly and as is often the case, some administrative infrastructure did not always keep pace. The staff, while capable, is also lean so places may exist where the policies are outdated or need improvement for other reasons. An additional challenge will be to continue to improve the training function to ensure it meets the needs of the organization, especially in the areas of management and leadership development. The final challenge will be to implement a new human resources information system (HRIS) to support the organization

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Briefly stated, Loudoun County is seeking a seasoned professional with knowledge and experience in all aspects of public sector human resources management (specifically, recruitment, compensation, employee relations, benefits, policy development, training and risk management). The individual will be strong but also open, approachable and diplomatic with excellent communications and people skills. She/he will have a warm, friendly and pleasant personality and be an integral part of the finance and management team (which also includes accounting and finance). The HRO will recognize that the HR office's primary purpose is support the departments in carrying out their mission. The individual will also realize that at times a department will not have (or will not want) to follow the rules and the HRO will need to intervene. That intervention will need to be done amicably and in a way that the department director understands why the rule must be followed, that following the rule is really in the best interests of the county and the department. The director may not be completely happy but at least he/she will not be upset with the messenger. In other words, the department head will understand the human resources function is not inhibiting his/her ability to get the job done, but rather is there to protect the director and the county. The HRO will be achievement oriented with a can do attitude and understand the importance of accountability in both the human resources function and the government as a whole. In addition the HRO needs to be a skilled manager with the ability to effectively manage seasoned HR professionals and inspire staff to achieve performance excellence. Ideally the candidate will have experience working with a diverse workforce.

The ideal candidate will have a Master's degree in human resources, business or public administration, or related field and ten (10) years of progressively more responsible experience in human resources, personnel management or a related area or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Prefer five (5) years or more supervisory experience with exempt staff. SPHR and/or IPMA-CP certification is highly desirable.

COMPENSATION

The salary range is \$78,598 to \$129,687 and benefits are excellent. The County participates in the Virginia Retirement System's --defined benefit plan.

THE PRIOR DIRECTOR / INTERNAL CANDIDATES

The prior director was respected, well liked and very successful. She left for another position which was closer to her family. Once finalists are selected, she will be available to discuss the position with them. The county does not anticipate having any internal candidates.

RESIDENCY

Residency in Loudoun County is strongly preferred, but not mandatory.

CONFIDENTIALITY

No candidate names will be released without the candidate's permission.

HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your resume to <mailto:Recruit27@cb-asso.com> by August 12, 2011. Applications after that date will be considered but we do intend to move quickly so do not delay if you are interested. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

THE PROCESS

Applicants will be screened between August 13th and September 19th. Initial interviews will be held on September 22nd and final interviews on October 12th with a selection made shortly thereafter. Ideally, the next Human Resources Officer will start in November 2011. Successful candidate will undergo a criminal and credit background check and DMV record check.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Loudoun County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of its workforce. It encourages minorities, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities to apply.