



Subject: 2026 Hiring Freeze

1. Purpose

The 2026 County Budget includes a Hiring Freeze. The purpose of this policy is to maximize savings from position vacancies and to strategically fill vacant positions assigned to the most critical County government functions.

2. Responsibility

The Department of Administration will coordinate the policy, with direction from the County Executive.

3. Applicability

- Any position that is vacant as of or occurs after January 1, 2026 is subject to the hiring freeze.
- Some positions are exempt from this Hiring Freeze and those exemptions are described below.
- This policy also applies to Limited Term Employees.
- The previous policy where a Department had to obtain approval prior to making an employment offer, no longer applies.
- Existing requisitions that have been fully approved and are already under recruitment, may continue with that process.

4. Process

- **Prior to any requisition being entered into NEOGOV**, Departments should prepare the attached Hiring Freeze Appeal Form and submit it to administration@danecounty.gov. The Form must be signed and submitted by the Department head.
- When completing the form, Departments shall clearly state the reasons why the position should be filled immediately. **Be as specific as possible**. For example, describe the situation, the necessity of the function, or the nature of the emergency.
- For requests to hire an LTE, Departments are required to include budget information about the funding available. Budget information is not required for permanent positions.
- The Department of Administration will record the date the position becomes vacant and the date of the appeal. Decisions will be made within 16 weeks of the position becoming vacant or the appeal being received by the Department of Administration (whichever is greater). Any appeal that is outstanding after the 16-week period will be granted.
- Once approved, Departments may submit a requisition in NEOGOV. In the "Justification for Hire/Recruitment" Departments must note the date they received approval to proceed with a requisition.
- Approval to proceed with a hire is not granted until **all of the steps** in the process are complete (Freeze Appeal, County Executive Decision, Requisition/DOA Approval). If a Department has previously obtained parts of the process, but not the entirety of the process, then approval is not granted.
- This process applies to all positions. Even exempted positions should complete the hiring freeze appeal. When filling out the form for an exempted position, please indicate that the position is exempt from the hiring freeze.

5. Guidance

- Departments should expect a slower response to requisitions, as these requests will now require analysis of the position's role and how it compares with other higher priority openings.
- Departments are strongly encouraged to evaluate whether it is necessary to fill vacancies prior to the issuance of the 2027 Budget Guidelines.
- Departments do not need to wait 16 weeks prior to submitting an appeal.
- The date that position is vacant is not the same as the date a Department has notified the Department of Administration that a position will become vacant. For example, a department submits an Employee Action Form that position #12345 will be vacant as of February 1 on January 5. The 16-week period will begin on February 1, not January 5.

6. Exempt Positions

The Hiring Freeze does not apply to the following:

- Non-GPR supported positions. These include positions assigned to the Dane County Regional Airport, Dane County Waste and Renewables (Solid Waste), and other positions supported completely and directly by federal, state, or other external revenues.
- The Chief Deputy, Captain, Deputy IV, Deputy III, Deputy I-II, Security Support Specialist, and Jail Clerk positions assigned to the Sheriff's Office are exempt from the moratorium.
- Any Lieutenant, Sergeant, or Administrative Manager position in the Sheriff's Office that becomes vacant during 2026 must be held open for at least twelve (12) weeks from the date of the vacancy. Once the twelve (12) weeks has elapsed, the Department may proceed with the recruitment process without appeal.
- Certified Nursing Assistants and Registered Nurses assigned to the Badger Prairie Health Care Center are exempt from the moratorium.
- Child Protective Social Worker positions are exempt from the moratorium
- Public Safety Communicator and Communications Supervisor positions are exempt from the moratorium.

Procedures

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Action</u>
Requesting Department	1. Position Becomes vacant
Requesting Department Head	2. Department prepares the Freeze Appeal Form
Administration	3. Department Head submits the Freeze Appeal Form to the Department of Administration
Requesting Department	4. Department of Administration notes the date of the form was received and presents the information to the County Executive for a decision.
County Executive	5. The Department may prepare information related to the recruitment (developing position descriptions and class specs) and begin conversations with Employee Relations.
Administration	6. Reviews the appeal request and makes a decision on how to proceed.
Requesting Department	7. Communicates the decision of the County Executive back to the requesting Department and returns the Freeze Appeal Form
	8. Can submit a requisition in NEOGOV and continue with the hiring process as described in the APM: https://admin.danecounty.gov/documents/emprel/pdf/APM--Hiring-to-Fill-Positions--01.21.25-.pdf