

**JEFFERY S. BURGH**  
**AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

COUNTY OF VENTURA  
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVE.  
VENTURA, CA 93009-1540



**ASSISTANT**  
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KATHLEEN O'KEEFE

March 28, 2023

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, California 93009

**SUBJECT: Receive and File the Report on Human Resources Policies and Complaint Investigation Procedures**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive and file the enclosed audit report.

**FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:** None.

**DISCUSSION:**

On March 22, 2022, in response to the resignation of the prior County Executive Officer, your Board moved to approve the review of current Human Resources (HR) policies, processes, and reporting mechanisms involving the Employee Complaint Resolution process (used by employees who believe they have experienced events involving discrimination or harassment) and whistleblower protections to determine if such policies and processes need to be refined. Your Board further authorized the Auditor-Controller to audit the controls in place, to oversee such policy and process review, and to contract with an independent consultant for the review.

The Auditor-Controller's Office requested audit proposals from seven (7) independent firms and received two (2) proposals. The Auditor-Controller selected the firm of Ford & Harrison LLP (FordHarrison), a labor and employment law firm with a national practice, to conduct the audit. Since 1978, FordHarrison has worked with many of the nation's government and private employers to reduce the risks associated with employee claims and ensure compliance with federal, state, and local employment laws and regulations.

The audit scope was divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 – Review HR policies and procedures related to the Employee Complaint Resolution Process and whistleblower protections as requested by your Board.
- Phase 2 – Review HR practices related to the County Executive Office (CEO) (e.g., hiring and promotions of CEO staff, and reclassifications of CEO positions).

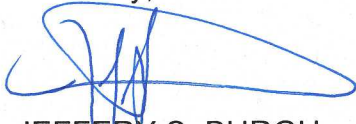
Phase 1 of the audit has been completed and is attached as Exhibit 1. FordHarrison concluded that, overall, the County could benefit from a comprehensive review of its employee policies and implementation of standard operating procedures in its investigations and resource trainings. The report contains 61 recommendations: 1 related to required compliance and 60 related to best practices.

CEO-HR management provided written responses that have been incorporated into the audit report. Although CEO-HR management disagreed with some recommendations, CEO-HR management agreed, in general, to implement actions to address the audit recommendations. For example, CEO-HR will engage a firm that is an expert in public sector practices to conduct a comprehensive review of the County's employment policies and will incorporate specific changes recommended by the firm, mindful of the recommendations made by FordHarrison and upon review by County Counsel. Management action follow-up scheduled for March 31, 2024.

In accordance with County Administrative Policy No. Chapter VII(A)-6, *County Auditing*, the CEO will evaluate HR's progress on completing corrective action. The CEO will provide the results to the Auditor-Controller for scheduling a potential follow-up audit.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office and County Counsel. If you have any questions, please call me at (805) 654-3151.

Sincerely,



JEFFERY S. BURGH  
Auditor-Controller

Exhibit 1 – Audit Report: Phase I – Review of Current HR Policies and Complaint Investigation Procedures

cc: Sevet Johnson, Psy.D., County Executive Officer  
Shawn Atin, Assistant County Executive Officer/Human Resources Director  
Tiffany North, County Counsel