



County Council

Meeting Date: April 8, 2025
Submitted by: Jessica P. Ngai, Director of Human Resources
Subject: CAO Recruitment & Selection Process

BACKGROUND:

As of April 1, 2025, the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for Middlesex County is vacant following the retirement of the County's CAO.

In light of the CAO vacancy, the Warden has requested staff to provide a report, for Council consideration, outlining recruitment options to effectively fill the position. This report will specifically consider two options:

- External executive search firm, or
- Internal recruitment process facilitated by the Human Resources Department.

Regardless of the option selected, the CAO Recruitment Committee will be composed of members of County Council, and County Council would retain all decision-making authority at all stages in the recruitment process.

The Warden has emphasized the importance of ensuring a thorough and competitive search for a highly qualified candidate, with a focus on attracting top-tier leadership to guide the County in achieving its strategic objectives.

ANALYSIS:

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is a critical leadership role responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the County and its services. The CAO plays an essential role in executing the strategic direction of Middlesex County Council, overseeing the implementation of policies and programs, and ensuring the County is well-positioned to meet the needs of its residents.

Given the significance of the CAO position, it is vital that the recruitment process is thorough, efficient, and results in the selection of a candidate who aligns with the values and strategic objectives of Middlesex County. It is prudent to facilitate the transition to a

new CAO as expeditiously as possible to ensure continued effective administration and leadership.

Option 1: External Executive Search Firm

There are several prominent executive search firms with extensive experience in recruiting for municipal government leadership positions. Some of the leading firms that may be considered include:

1. Ravenhill Group Inc.
2. Waterhouse Executive Search^{1*}
3. Boyden¹
4. Legacy Partners
5. Odgers Berndtson

The service fees for executive search consultants typically range from 20% to 35% of the candidate's first-year total salary. This fee structure varies depending on the firm's reputation, the executive level of the role, and the complexity of the recruitment search.

Considerations of Engaging an External Search Firm:

- External firms bring specialized knowledge and experience in recruiting top-level executives, ensuring a professional and efficient process that aligns with best practices.
- These firms have an extensive network and can identify and recruit candidates who may not be actively seeking new opportunities by leveraging referrals, direct outreach, and utilizing a database of candidates from previous executive-level recruitments.
- The firm will manage the entire recruitment process from start to finish, including candidate identification, interviews, and final negotiations, ensuring a streamlined experience for the County.
- Many executive search firms offer a guarantee to provide a successful candidate within a specified timeframe, typically within sixteen (16) weeks of the initial consultation meeting, and ensure that the candidate remains in the role for a designated period, usually one to two years.
- The cost of engaging an external executive search firm can be substantial, particularly when factoring in the recruitment fees, advertising costs, and any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the search firm.

¹ Waterhouse Executive Search and Boyden are part of the OECM group purchasing organization, which has pre-established agreements and service fees for recruitment and staffing services.

Option 2: Internal Recruitment Process

The CAO recruitment process can be facilitated internally through the Human Resources Department, with the external job advertisement set to begin immediately following direction from the CAO Hiring Committee. To attract high-caliber candidates, the job posting would be shared across a variety of national media outlets and professional associations, specifically targeting executive-level candidates in both the public and private sectors. This strategy will maximize the reach to a diverse pool of top candidates, while also providing flexibility in selecting the most appropriate platforms based on the candidate profile.

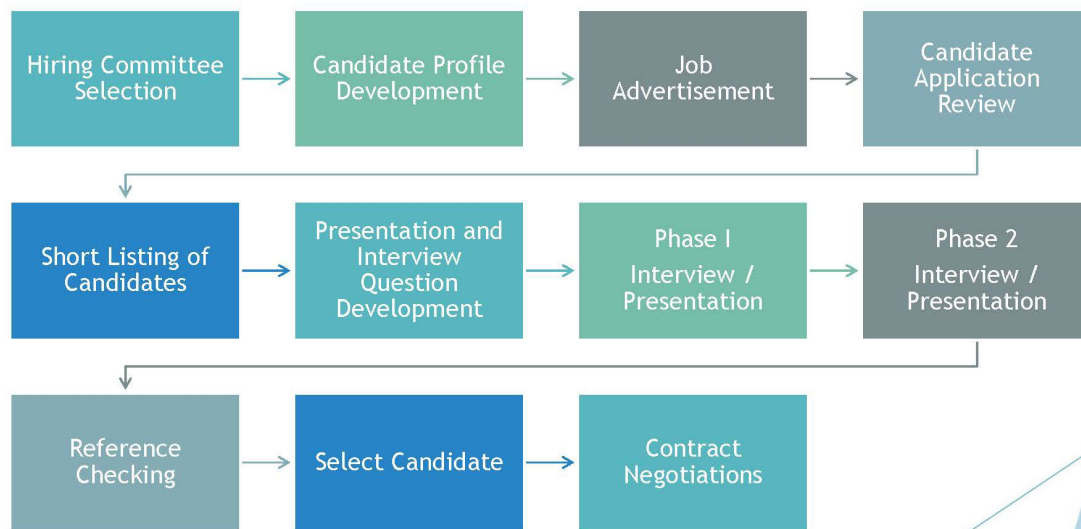
Considerations of Internal Recruitment Process:

- Managing the recruitment process internally through the Human Resources Department is more cost-effective compared to engaging an external search firm.
- The recruitment process can begin immediately, allowing for a quicker response to the CAO vacancy.
- While Human Resources staff will not be involved in selecting the final candidate, their extensive knowledge of the organization's corporate culture, current challenges, and the skills and experience needed for the CAO role will enable them to effectively facilitate the process, from candidate profile development to resume screening to developing a short list for the interview stage. This collaboration with the CAO Hiring Committee will ensure that the most relevant candidates are presented for consideration.

Standard Recruitment and Selection Process

The following graphic outlines the County's standard recruitment and selection process for hiring a senior executive, such as the CAO. This process includes key stages such as developing the candidate profile, advertising the position, reviewing applications, shortlisting candidates, and conducting interviews and presentations. The final steps include reference checks, selecting the candidate, and finalizing contract negotiations. Each step is designed to ensure a comprehensive and fair evaluation, ultimately leading to the selection of the most qualified candidate for the role.

Recruitment and Selection Process



FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

External Executive Search

The service fees for an executive search typically range from 20% to 35% of the successful candidate's first-year total salary. It is important to note that an executive search firm's fee structure is influenced by several factors, including the firm's reputation, the seniority of the role, and the complexity of the recruitment process.

Based on the CAO's annual salary range, the external executive search service fees would range from approximately \$51,214.80 to \$105,843.87. These fees are based solely on the candidate's potential salary and do not include additional costs such as advertising expenses or any out-of-pocket costs incurred by the search firm during the recruitment process.

The cost to engage an executive search firm was not initially budgeted; however, these costs may be covered by reallocating funds within the Administration Consulting Budget.

If council chooses to engage an executive search firm, staff will work with the Manager of Procurement Services to ensure that these services are procured in alignment with the County's Procurement By-law.²




² Section 7.2 of the County's Procurement By-law would allow for direct engagement with any executive search firm forming part of OECM.


Internal Recruitment Process

The costs associated with conducting the CAO recruitment internally would primarily be related to advertising the position. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$2,500.00, covering the placement of the job advertisement across various job boards, social media platforms, and professional associations.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
<p>Cultivating Community Vitality</p> 	<p>Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote and support community wellness• Innovate social and community services• Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community• Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities
<p>Connecting Through Infrastructure</p> 	<p>Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas• Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure• Use County infrastructure in an innovative way to provide a seamless service experience for residents
<p>Strengthening Our Economy</p> 	<p>Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector• Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments• Attract visitors to Middlesex County• Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Promoting Service Excellence 	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations • Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities • Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies • Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities • Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

Option 1

THAT the CAO Recruitment & Selection Process Report be received for information;

THAT staff be directed to engage an external executive search service to conduct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) recruitment in accordance with the County's Procurement By-law to a maximum of \$80,000;

AND THAT the cost to conduct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) recruitment be funded from the Administration Consulting Budget.

Option 2

THAT the CAO Recruitment & Selection Process Report be received for information;

AND THAT the Human Resources Department be directed to proceed with the CAO Recruitment Process.