

# **2024-2025 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY**



## **KERN COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Release Date**  
**May 15, 2025**

# **Kern County Human Resources**

## **Kern County Talent Strategy: Are We Fully Engaged?**

### **SUMMARY:**

The 2019-2020 Kern County Grand Jury report stated that in 2015, *The Board of Supervisors ordered the establishment of the Human Resources Division of the County Administrative Office (CAO), consolidating the Personnel Department and the Employee Relations and Health Benefits Divisions. The Human Resources Division is involved in the hiring and benefits administration of approximately 8,000 employees for the County of Kern.*

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) noted that the Kern County Human Resources Division (KCHR) had implemented the “Kern County Talent Strategy 2024-2026” which should improve their ability to develop and retain talent. (Appendix A)

### **PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:**

The California Penal Code §925 and 925(a) authorizes the 2024-2025 Grand Jury to investigate and report on the operation and management of the KCHR. While conducting a separate investigation into the Kern County Public Works, a question came up regarding the time frame of the hiring process, which prompted the Grand Jury to investigate KCHR. The Human Resources Division had not been investigated since 2019. This information came from the Grand Jury investigation of the Civil Service Commission in the 2019-2020 report.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury conducted interviews with numerous Human Resources personnel, performed internet research, and attended a New Employee Orientation.

### **DISCUSSION OF FACTS:**

The last Grand Jury report issued on KCHR was in 2019-2020. When the 2024-2025 Grand Jury did online research of KCHR, the Grand Jury discovered a program called The Kern County Talent Strategy 2024-2026. During the investigation into this program, a question came up as to what is “a fully engaged employee.” Human Resources was unable to provide a definition of “fully engaged employee.”

The following information is from the Kern County Talent Strategy program:

A. *State of Talent Health in 2023*

*Current State of Talent Metrics*

- *Fully-engaged employees – 25%*
- *Average time to hire – 55 days*
- *Workplace complaints – 16*
- *Annual health care claims - \$131 mil.*
- *Average use of sick leave – 36.8 hours*
- *Voluntary turnover rate – 15%*

B. *Projected State of Talent Health in 2026*

*Desired State of Talent Metrics*

- *Fully engaged employees – 40%*
- *Average time to hire – 42 days*
- *Workplace complaints – 12*
- *Annual health care claims - \$120 mil.*
- *Average use of sick leave – 29.9 hours*
- *Voluntary turnover rate – 10%*

C. *Top HR Strategic Goals:*

1. *Design and implement effective people-centric Human Resources practices and processes using existing and emerging technology.*
2. *Hire high-quality and diverse talent as efficiently as possible.*
3. *Reduce employee burnout and improve productivity by establishing Kern County as a Blue Zone Designated Worksite.*
4. *Coach and develop future and existing County leader[sic] to improve our effectiveness in managing our people.*
5. *Structure the HR function to support our strategic people needs in the most cost-effective manner.*

- D. Blue Zone® Designated Worksite is a workplace that has been recognized for its commitment to promoting health, happiness, and longevity among its employees.
- E. Only some State of Talent 2025 statistics are available at this point in time.
- F. New Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) is a comprehensive set of programs that will replace the current payroll, purchasing, Human Resources Information System (HRIS) among other programs which are now in the final stages of implementation, and will be fully operational by 2026.
- G. A Salary Study is the comparison of wages and benefits in other counties with similar demographics which is used in negotiating salaries.



Recruitment Posters located at  
Various Kern County Offices  
Photos by Grand Jury

## FINDINGS:

The Grand Jury finds:

- F1. Increasing the number of job fairs and expos can improve the number of applicants.
- F2. The average time to hire new recruits is down from 55 days to the target for 2026, which is 42 days, showing great improvement.
- F3. After interviewing numerous employees about the definition of being fully engaged, no one had a clear answer.

## COMMENTS:

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury has witnessed improvements in the quality and attitude of staff in Human Resources since the start of this investigation. The Grand Jury would like to thank the staff at KCHR for their very timely cooperation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. Kern County Human Resources continues to schedule additional job fairs and expos throughout the year by December 2025. (Finding #1)
- R2. The Kern County Human Resources continue to implement the changes needed to complete the desired State of Talent metrics by August 2026. (Finding #2)
- R3. Kern County Human Resources develop a definition of fully engaged employees or remove it from the Kern County Talent Strategy 2024-2026 by December 2025. (Finding #3)

## NOTES:

- The Kern County Human Resources Division should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: <https://www.kerncounty.com/government/other-agencies/grand-jury>
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website <https://www.kerncounty.com/government/other-agencies/grand-jury>

## RESPONSE DEADLINE:

- **REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS FROM:**

Kern County Board of Supervisors

Findings #1 through #3

Recommendations #1 through #3

- **REQUESTED WITHIN 60 DAYS FROM:**

Kern County Human Resources

Findings #1 through #3

Recommendations #1 through #3

**RESPONSES ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE §§933 (c)  
AND 933.05**

- **PRESIDING JUDGE  
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF KERN  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**
- **FOREPERSON  
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY  
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Cal. Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

## Kern County Talent Strategy 2024 - 2026

Deliver an exceptional people experience that improves our ability to attract, develop, and retain talent.

### State of Talent Health in 2023 Current State of Talent Metrics

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- Average time to hire – 55 days
- Workplace complaints – 16
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### Top HR Strategic Goals

1. Design and implement effective people-centric HR practices and processes using existing and emerging HR technology.
2. Hire high-quality and diverse talent as efficiently as possible.
3. Reduce employee burnout and improve productivity by establishing Kern County as a Blue Zones Designated Worksite.
4. Coach and develop future and existing County leader to improve our effectiveness in managing our people.
5. Structure the HR function to support our strategic people needs in the most cost-effective manner.

### State of Talent Health in 2026 Desired State of Talent Metrics

- Fully-engaged employees – 40%
- Average time to hire – 42 days
- Workplace complaints – 12
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### Underlying Beliefs and Assumptions

1. Employee wages will continue to grow with the cost of living each year.
2. The County will remain on track to implement new Enterprise Resource Planning system.
3. The state of the labor market remains consistent over the course of time.
4. The HR function is staffed and skilled to support the County business areas.

