

**Human Resources Policy Bulletin
City of Lincoln**

Number: (2025)-1
Date: January 2025

Reference:	Title:
Volunteer Policy 2013-1	Background Investigation and Reference Check Policy
Driving and Motor Vehicle Policy 2025-1	

I. PURPOSE

The goal of the City of Lincoln is to hire individuals who have integrity, produce quality work and are responsive to customers. Background investigations and reference checks are conducted to help achieve this goal, create a safe environment for all City of Lincoln employees and members of the community, and help uncover valuable insights that may not come up in interviews.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. "City volunteers" are uncompensated persons who perform services directly related to the business of the City, to support the humanitarian, charitable, or public service activities of the City, or to gain experience in specific endeavors.
- B. "Vulnerable Population" refers to individuals who are more susceptible to harm or exploitation due to various factors such as age, disability, illness, socioeconomic status, or other conditions that may impair their ability to protect themselves or advocate for their own well-being.
- C. Candidate means any person who has applied for a position with the City of Lincoln ("City") and been referred from Human Resources to the hiring department.
- D. Top candidate means the remaining candidate(s) after all screening and interviewing have taken place.
- E. Internal candidate means any candidate who is presently employed with the City.
- F. Reference checks provide insights into a candidate's work ethic, personality, and cultural fit, reveal potential red flags, offer feedback on past job performance, and help avoid issues.
- G. Employment verification confirms a candidate's work history (dates, titles, and employers), identifies gaps or false claims, assesses job eligibility, and checks if a former employer would rehire them.
- H. Red flag means issues, facts, or concerns that are identified by a reference check that may indicate the candidate would not be a suitable hire.

III. ELIGIBILITY

This policy applies to candidates for positions within the City's classified or unclassified service and volunteers where specifically identified.

IV. PROVISIONS

- A. Background investigations will be conducted for all candidates receiving an offer of employment and volunteers, unless waived by the Human Resources Director. Current employees who transfer, demote or promote into a position in law enforcement, require a valid driver's license, or are being considered for a position

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that provides service to vulnerable populations may be subject to additional background investigations. Please see Appendix B below for the departments which require a new background investigation.

- B. Background investigations cover a seven-year history, and the investigation scope depends upon the position for which the candidate or volunteer is considered. The investigation may include, but is not limited to:
- i. Academic credentials
 - ii. Criminal and civil court records
 - iii. Adult and Child Protective Services records
 - iv. Driving record
 - v. Employment history
 - vi. Professional license(s)
 - vii. Professional certification(s)
 - viii. Reference checks and employment verifications
- C. Employment or appointment by the City and approval of a volunteer applicant is contingent upon the completion of a background investigation, the results of which are satisfactory to the City. A person may be officially hired or appointed once Human Resources confirms they successfully completed the background investigation.
- D. Any omission or misrepresentation made by a candidate on the employment application, any information supplementing the application, or during the interview process shall be sufficient cause to withhold or withdraw an employment offer or separate employment. Such withholding or withdraw by the City shall not be subject to grievance or appeal by the candidate.
- E. The City may require a background check for any employee who separates employment with the City and is rehired within six months.
- F. Reference checks may be conducted on both internal and external candidates.
- G. Individuals who complete reference checks need to refrain from asking questions either directly or indirectly that lead a candidate disclosing information about legally protected characteristics like age, gender, religion, disability, ethnicity, pregnancy status, etc.

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- H. If a City employee is called by an outside entity requesting a reference, or employment verification, on a current or former City employee, they are to refer the requestor to Human Resources.

V. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

- A. Managers will notify Human Resources of their decision to offer a candidate a position and Human Resources will initiate a background investigation.
- B. All potential exempt, non-exempt, full-time, part-time, temporary candidates, and volunteers will complete a release, authorizing the City to investigate, to the extent permitted by law. The release remains valid for hired candidates for the duration of the employment with the City.
- C. Managers may verbally offer a candidate a position contingent upon successful completion of a background investigation. A probationary employee's start date shall not be less than two weeks from the date of the verbal offer, unless otherwise approved by Human Resources.
- D. All written offers of employment will be contingent upon a background investigation and are drafted by Human Resources.
- E. Human Resources will review the results of the background investigation and determine if the results are acceptable to the City.
- F. The investigation results will be sent to the hiring department indicating eligible or not eligible for hire. Employment shall not begin until the investigation results confirm eligibility for hire.
- G. Human Resources will ensure compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
- H. In cases where the eligibility for hire decision is disputed, Human Resources will convene a meeting with the manager and the Legal Department to conduct a review of the decision.
- I. Human Resources will rescind contingent employment offers or partner with managers when necessary to separate employment.
- J. Background investigation results are confidential and retained by Human Resources.

VI. REFERENCE CHECK / EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

It is recommended that the hiring department check at least two professional references once an applicant becomes a top candidate, before making an offer.

- A. Hiring department will confirm if consent to contact provided references or conduct an employment verification has been provided on the top candidate's application under "May we contact this employer", or the "References" section.
 - 1. If the top candidate has provided consent, notify the candidate you will be calling their references or conducting an employment verification.


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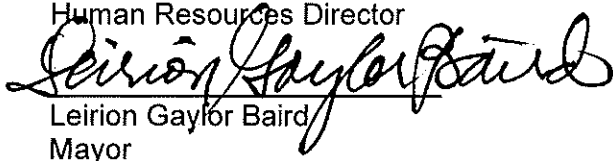
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2. If the top candidate, internal or external, has not provided consent on their application or provided references, contact them to obtain written consent. Notify them you'll be contacting their references.
 3. If a top candidate is an internal candidate, the hiring manager may contact Human Resources to review the candidate's employee file.
- B. Hiring department will prepare your questions in advance. See Appendix A for potential questions.
- C. Hiring department will contact references, document questions asked and the response.
1. Provide one to two business days for reference check and employment verification contacts to get back to you.
 2. Provide the reference check documentation with all other interviewing materials to Human Resources.
 3. If you are going to disqualify someone based on a dissatisfactory reference, obtain approval from Human Resources before candidate disqualification.
- D. Hiring department will listen for consistent behaviors across multiple references. For example, is the candidate consistently described as reliable or proactive? If a red flag appears, conduct additional references or consult with Human Resources.
- VII. Employment Eligibility
- C. Information from an employee's background investigation may affect their employment status in their current position and eligibility for employment in any other position.
- D. Background investigation results will assess the candidate's suitability for hire into the position for which the candidate applied.
- E. Factors considered in criminal history convictions may include the date of the conviction, conviction patterns, time since the last conviction, and the seriousness and nature of the violation in relation to the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- F. Driving records will be evaluated to ensure that the candidate meets the City's insurance requirements if operating a city-owned motor vehicle if required for the position.

VIII. The City has the exclusive right to interpret this policy.


Barb McIntyre

Human Resources Director


Leirion Gaylor Baird
Mayor

3/25/2025
Date

3/31/2025
Date

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APPENDIX A

Potential Reference Check / Employment Verification Questions

Relationship & Role Context

- Can you confirm the candidate's position and employment dates with your organization?
- What was your working relationship with [Candidate's Name]?

Performance & Strengths

- How would you describe [Candidate's Name]'s performance in their role?
- Can you provide an example of when they went above and beyond in their work?

Areas for Improvement

- Were there any areas where the candidate could improve or develop further?
- How did they respond to feedback or constructive criticism?

Work Style & Interpersonal Skills

- How would you describe their work style? (i.e. independent, collaborative)
- How did they manage relationships with colleagues and supervisors?
- How did they handle stressful situations or tight deadlines?
- Was the candidate punctual and reliable?

Final Question

- Would you rehire [Candidate's Name] if given the opportunity?

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APPENDIX B

Department or Office	Requires Background Investigation on Current Employees Moving Positions
Aging Partners	X
Health	X
Libraries	X
Lincoln Fire and Rescue	X
Parks and Recreation*	X
Police	X

*indicates investigations are only required for certain positions, not required if employee is not working directly with a vulnerable population.