STRATEGIC CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER (CHRO) TOOLKIT

Leveraging the Talent Function to Support Your School System’s Goals
People are arguably the most important asset in any organization. In education, this holds especially true.

- Research shows that teachers and school leaders are the two most important in-school factors in increasing student learning. In fact, students with a great teacher three years in a row outperform those with less effective teachers by 52 percentage points.¹

- From a strict dollars and cents perspective, people costs represent approximately 80-85% of school system budgets, the majority of which is made of school-based staff like teachers and school leaders. ² This is a massive investment that requires an intentional strategy.

In school systems, Human Resources (HR) departments have traditionally been responsible for people-related functions. However, these HR departments have often focused more on compliance and transactional work than leveraging the massive investment in people for students’ benefit. For decades, the main purpose of HR was to enter new employees onto payroll, enroll employees in benefits, ensure educators were certified in compliance with state regulations, and conduct transactions for employee movement within a school system.

In short, HR and its leaders have been the keeper of the rules and records, enforcing contracts and policies or maintaining employee files. And while some compliance and transactional work will always exist within the HR function and it remains important to do that work efficiently, the challenges facing our nation’s school systems – particularly for students in our highest-needs communities – demand a new and different approach.

Enter the Strategic Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), aka the Chief Talent Officer (CTO) or Chief People Officer (CPO).

The Strategic CHRO efficiently executes the transactional HR needs of the school system as a minimum requirement. But s/he doesn’t stop there.

The Strategic CHRO leverages the school system’s people to achieve outstanding results for students. To do that, the Strategic CHRO proactively aligns and invests their time, team, and resources with the goals of:

1. **Getting, growing, and keeping talent** aligned to organizational needs and strategy – now and in the future

2. Establishing talent policies and procedures that create the conditions for a high-performing workforce, including negotiating labor relations and collective bargaining agreements

3. **Creating systems that ensure equity of talent distribution** for our highest-needs students

4. **Building principal and leadership capacity** to effectively leverage talent on their teams in service of student learning needs

5. **Measuring meaningful indicators** of workforce effectiveness and engagement, organizational culture, and talent work broadly
This work requires that Strategic CHROs exhibit critical mindsets including:

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<th>CRITICAL MINDSETS</th>
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<td>Forward-thinking</td>
<td>Meet today’s challenges AND proactively plan for tomorrow’s needs</td>
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<td>Business-aligned</td>
<td>Design people processes AND align talent – especially teachers and principals – to meet the organization’s strategic priorities</td>
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<td>Equity-focused</td>
<td>Provide a strong baseline of effective educators for all students AND actively work to undo talent practices that have disadvantaged students of color and employees of color</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity-building</td>
<td>Advise on key talent policies AND grow the talent skills of key organizational leaders – like principals and principal supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer-focused</td>
<td>Improve internal HR efficiency AND deliver an exceptional experience to all candidates, employees, and managers</td>
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New and current CHROs generally enter the role from two primary pathways –

(a) As an education leader from within the system – usually a principal, an instructional supervisor, or an in-house attorney; or (b) As an HR expert from outside the system – from the corporate, university, or public HR world, with limited knowledge of the unique aspects of school systems.

Leaders from within a school system often understand education but not strategic or even basic transactional human resources (like benefits enrollment); and leaders from the outside will often understand strategic HR work, but not education, and may assume a level of transactional functionality that is not reliably present in many school districts.

No matter the pathway into the role, the learning curve for Strategic CHROs can be significant. They must prioritize aligning their resources to the “right” short- and long-term work that will move the needle for students, while ensuring efficiency in basic HR functions, which can often consume their attention.

This guide provides the roadmap for those from all pathways to find success by situating the work of the Strategic CHRO role with the unique context of school systems.

The Strategic CHRO Toolkit is comprised of three complimentary sections, outlined below:

1. **The Core Work of the Strategic CHRO** – What is the work, what is good practice, and how can it be measured?

2. **The Tools Available to the Strategic CHRO** – What are the tools and resources at a CHRO’s disposal to support the work and move it forward?

3. **The New Strategic CHRO’s Entry Plan** – What are the first steps a new CHRO – or a current CHRO who wants to reset – can take that make a meaningful impact?

Note: Throughout this document, USHCA refers to the department responsible for leading and supporting all aspects of getting, growing, and keeping great staff as Human Resources or HR, as it is commonly referred to in the field. In some places, this office may be called Talent or Human Capital (HC). No matter the name, this team is responsible for creating a great experience for the employees of the organization throughout every aspect of their career.

When USHCA references the broader term Human Capital or Talent Management, this includes all efforts to improve the quality of the workforce, some of which fall into HR’s scope of responsibilities to lead, and some that do not. For example, the HR department and its recruitment team will create a pool of candidates for hire, but when those teachers need coaching and development in how to analyze student data, the principal or others outside of HR might be responsible. While teacher development is still a human capital issue, it often spreads far and wide beyond HR. The HR department’s role is to support human capital activities wherever they exist in the organization.

3. Note: In some charter management organizations, recruitment is not a subset of the HR department, but exists side by side with it. Still, as defined in this paper, a Strategic CHRO should be involved in all aspects of getting, growing, and keeping great staff for the organization. When recruitment sits outside of the HR department, the Strategic CHRO should work to support these efforts no matter where they exist.
1. THE CORE WORK OF THE STRATEGIC CHRO

Strategic CHROs need to lead with an equity lens – and help our highest need schools be competitive for talent. Not every school needs the same support and we need to be willing to make the tough decisions to serve our highest need students.
- CHRO in Midwest

The Strategic CHRO in a school system has a big role. Similar to how the Chief Financial Officer manages and allocates financial capital to achieve the school system’s goals, the CHRO’s role is to manage and allocate its human capital – or its people – for the greatest impact.

Human Capital is defined as the collective and individual knowledge, skills, and abilities available to apply to an organization’s goals. How school systems align, manage, and leverage their people’s knowledge, skills, and abilities means the difference between meeting their student learning goals or not.

Of course, the Strategic CHRO also oversees many of the more technical and transactional aspects of human capital management too, such as staffing/onboarding new employees, ensuring compliance with labor contracts, or administering benefit plans, but this work cannot supersede the strategic alignment of people to strategy.

In fact, Strategic CHROs seek to minimize the time, effort, and resources spent on technical and transactional work without strategic value, and focus more of their time of aligning people to the school system’s instructional strategy.

Below are six core functions to which a Strategic CHRO must attend in order to strategically manage their workforce and align talent to meet organizational needs and fulfill their primary goal to get, grow, and keep an effective workforce first and foremost.

Across each core function, the Strategic CHRO and their team play THE key leadership role in design and execution of the strategy at the system-level. That said, frontline managers, most importantly, school principals, play an essential role in cultivating talent to support their individual school’s needs. Thus, an overarching responsibility for HR across each core function below is to expand the capacity of school principals to leverage and align individual employees’ talents and their teams strategically to support their school’s unique student learning needs.

Increase strategic work to get, grow, and keep people aligned with the school system’s instructional goals
Decrease or streamline transactional & technical work that does not impact the school system’s goals
The core functional areas are:

1. **Sourcing & Selection** – Building a broad and diverse pool of candidates – for now and the future – and assessing and hiring individual candidates that best match the school’s or organization’s needs

2. **Performance Management** – Assessing and improving the quality of the workforce – individually and collectively

3. **Staffing for Equity** – Actively working to undo systemic racism in talent practices that have historically disadvantaged students and employees of color

4. **Strategic Retention** – Keeping top performers while simultaneously exiting the weakest performers

5. **Employee Experience & Labor Relations** – Ensuring each touchpoint with an employee – individually and through collective bargaining, when applicable – is positive, inclusive, and increases their effectiveness and commitment to the organization

6. **HR Operations** – Streamlining essential HR functions that support employees and ensuring accessible talent data

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

Within each of the six core functions, there are certain strategic actions that will produce the greatest impact on getting, growing, and keeping great staff. This does not mean that these are the only actions that a Strategic CHRO must take; different contexts will require additional actions, but all Strategic CHROs must be intent on improving the quality of the workforce and aligning it with the needs of the school system.

Over time, Strategic CHROs should attend to every area. For those just beginning the work, USHCA recommends identifying key pain points based on conversations and feedback from key stakeholders – like principals, principal supervisors, teachers and teacher leaders, the superintendent, etc. – and starting there. [See USHCA’s First 90 Days deck for a full outline of what to do when and what questions to ask to best assess HR’s strengths and gaps, particularly in terms of how HR is serving principals. Even if the Strategic CHRO is not new to the role, this resource provides key protocols for collecting information, as well as data to review.]

**Note: use of the term CHRO means s/he leads the team(s) to ensure all the strategies and outcomes below.**
## SOURCING AND SELECTION

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<th>Strategic Practices the CHRO Leads</th>
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| Identifies & understands talent needs of the organization | Plans in isolation or with Academics or Finance only. Considers staffing needs for the current year without a sense of how trends may shift over time or without analyzing data trends. | The CHRO collaborates with Academics & Finance to understand the skills and experiences needed for current and future programming. Together, they meet to identify new needs and areas for continued growth. The CHRO informs the discussion by projecting future needs by analyzing complete data, including number and type of vacancies and individual school trends around, for example, retirements, resignations, and retention; number and diversity of applicants; proactively soliciting from staff their intent to return; etc. | • Applicant to vacancy ratio by subject/position  
• Percentage of vacancies filled by May 1, July 1, August 1, and after opening of school  
• Diversity of applicants, as well as new hires, analyzing any differences  
• Effectiveness of new hires by provider/source  
• Principal/hiring manager satisfaction with applicant pool to meet their needs |
| Grows short- and long-term pipelines of talent | Seeks candidates from limited sources that have proven fruitful in the past, without considering if they meet current or future needs. Limited investment in new or longer-term pipelines. | The CHRO and recruitment team sources from traditional and alternative pathways and tracks the effectiveness of hires from each pathway to inform future hiring. The CHRO also builds new and longer-term partnerships and programs to build strong candidate pipelines. One popular long-term pipeline is Grow Your Own programs - these might include programs to recruit current high school students to teaching, transition substitutes and paraprofessionals to teachers, etc. | |
| Builds a diverse and easy-to-access applicant pool | Expresses a desire for diversity but does not track metrics towards a specific improvement goal. Builds a pool of candidates but makes it time-consuming for principals to understand who might best meet their needs. | The CHRO and recruitment team creates multiple strategies to expand applicant diversity and tracks the new hires’ diversity towards a specific improvement goal. The CHRO and recruitment team also ensures 24/7 online Applicant Tracking access to all applicants and principals and gives principals the ability to sort by high potential applicants. | |
| Supports hiring managers in selection | Assigns teachers to schools without school input or views selection as the responsibility of the hiring manager, taking a hands-off approach to selection. | The CHRO and team develops principals’ and school selection teams’ skills in best practices in interviewing and selection, providing added support to those schools with new principals or those who struggle to hire early. | |
| Facilitates the practice of early hiring | Notifies Principals of the need to hire early for quality but has limited resources in place to support this practice. | The CHRO works with principals and their supervisors to ensure the school system completes early contracts in critical shortage areas by May 1 and opens all schools with no vacancies. This might require added or differentiated support to those schools that struggle to hire early. | |
| Onboards new hires | Places responsibility on the candidate to complete all requirements to be onboarded. | The CHRO and HR operations teams ensures new hires are processed within all systems with 72 hours of hire. The CHRO also ensures that all onboarding activities set up new hires for success and focus on engagement, support, and service versus transactions. | |
## EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE & LABOR RELATIONS

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<tr>
<td><strong>Drives the organization’s labor strategy to align with organization’s needs</strong></td>
<td>Negotiates as a reaction to an external event or based on specified timelines.</td>
<td>The CHRO engages the school system’s legal team and labor partners – both formal and informal – to craft human capital policies that ideally work for staff and students, in areas like hiring, assignment, evaluation, work rules, compensation, career pathways, and due process on an ongoing basis.</td>
<td>• Hires per employee referral</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Solicits feedback on the individual employee experience for improvement</strong></td>
<td>Surveys teachers or principals, but not all employees on their experience within the district.</td>
<td>At least annually, the CHRO and team surveys individual employees system-wide to understand what is working and what can be improved. CHRO shares data with relevant stakeholders to drive improvement.</td>
<td>• Number of employee grievances by type</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partners with principals and supervisors to monitor school culture</strong></td>
<td>Monitors school culture primarily through monitoring retention data or reviewing exit surveys.</td>
<td>The CHRO and team implements climate surveys and supports principals and managers to ensure a positive workplace culture in schools.</td>
<td>• Employee satisfaction and exit surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Climate survey results by location</td>
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## STAFFING FOR EQUITY

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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourages strategic assignment based on student needs</strong></td>
<td>Leaves assignment to schools for teachers and to chance for schools leaders.</td>
<td>The CHRO and staffing team assists principals and principal supervisors in determining best match for new hires – teachers and principals – based on student needs.</td>
<td>• Percentage of incoming and outgoing transfers by performance rating and school need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structures systems for mutual consent</strong></td>
<td>Forced placement of teachers/ staff into open vacancies by seniority.</td>
<td>The CHRO structures systems and processes that foster mutual consent as a foundation for teacher selection and works to change collective bargaining agreements that block mutual consent practices, where applicable.</td>
<td>• Percentage of new teachers and leaders in high-needs schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensures high needs schools and classrooms are competitive for talent</strong></td>
<td>Treats all schools the same. Provides no services or limited differentiated services to high needs schools.</td>
<td>The CHRO works to ensure equity between high- and low-needs schools by providing incentives and opportunities for highly experienced, effective teachers and principals, along with quality applicants, to seek roles in high-needs schools. The CHRO and team actively work to undo talent practices that harm high needs schools and students, particularly students of color and students with special needs. Systems such as lock-step and undifferentiated pay, placing our newest teachers and principals in our most challenging environments, last in- first out lay off policies, etc.</td>
<td>• Performance of teachers and leaders in high needs vs lower needs schools and classrooms</td>
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### STRATEGIC RETENTION

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<td>Actively works to recognize, develop, and retain high performers</td>
<td>Does not review retention data by performance. Creates retention policies that apply broadly to all employees.</td>
<td>The CHRO creates system-level strategies to keep top performers as well as supports principals/managers in customizing strategies to retain their best. S/he utilizes multiple incentives and career opportunities for highly effective staff overall, with specific targets for high-needs schools and and roles of critical need.</td>
<td>• Percentage of effective and highly effective staff retained (or promoted) by high/low-needs schools, subject area, or position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grows the capacity of principals (and principal supervisors) to develop and retain effective staff</td>
<td>Focuses HR discussions and metrics on filling vacancies at the school level.</td>
<td>The CHRO and team focus discussions early and often with principals (for teachers) and principal supervisors (for principals) on retention, providing guidance, tools, and data to support conversations. S/he ensures that the entire system understands the link between recruitment and retention as two sides of the same coin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improves or exits low-performers</td>
<td>Provides contractual or legal guidance to principals dealing with low performing teachers when support is requested by the principal.</td>
<td>The CHRO works with the legal team to proactively provide templates, documentation support, and dedicated legal and HR assistance to principals/managers addressing low performers and streamlines processes to make it possible to significantly improve or terminate low performers.</td>
<td>• Percentage of tenured and non-tenured staff who either improve to effective ratings or are exited</td>
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Ensures performance management systems are fair, accurate, and provide clear measures of effective performance by role.
## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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<tr>
<td>Designs &amp; implements a valid, reliable performance management system aligned to organizational vision and goals</td>
<td>Creates a performance management system with multiple measures, but does not update it as needs change. Backs away from using student learning as one measure of performance, when under pressure.</td>
<td>The CHRO ensures a system based on multiple measures of performance and that aligns to the organization’s visions and goals, revising as needed. This requires the CHRO to collaborate with the school system leadership to define key measures. For teachers and principals, some measure of student learning is used. The CHRO leads the HR team to support principals and principal supervisors throughout the performance evaluation process and for any performance issues.</td>
<td>• Distribution of staff by performance rating, school need type, pipeline or source, demographics, etc. to look for trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligns resources to support individual and collective learning needs</td>
<td>Offers Professional Development systemwide with general pull-out training that is not linked to individual or team needs</td>
<td>The CHRO ensures systems are in place that provides development that is done in connection with performance – at the individual and team levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides career pathways for high performers</td>
<td>Offers some differentiated roles for teachers and leaders but does not require the roles be offered to highly effective employees</td>
<td>The CHRO and team creates, continuously improves the design of and ensures highly effective teachers and leaders are recruited and developed for multiple differentiated leadership roles (which may not mean leaving their current position entirely, similar to Opportunity Culture type roles) Where appropriate, the CHRO prioritizes these roles for high needs schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitors teacher attendance and ensures a quality substitute workforce for necessary employee absences</td>
<td>Monitors teacher absenteeism and leave use overall but does not address as an issue of performance</td>
<td>The CHRO and team continuously monitor employee attendance, especially teacher attendance, and shares the attendance and substitute fill data with principals and relevant stakeholders. The CHRO takes action on leave issues to ensure impact on student achievement is not negatively impacted by absences.</td>
<td>• Attendance by month and by location</td>
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<td>• Substitute teacher fill rate by month and by location</td>
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## HR OPERATIONS

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<tr>
<td>Ensures efficient HR transactional processing</td>
<td>Maintains some paper and in-person processes. Minimal use of online self-service for employees.</td>
<td>The CHRO and HR operation team makes sure that any transactional and required compliance work is accomplished efficiently and online, to the extent possible. Typical transactional items include enrollment and changes to employee benefits, maintaining employee records, processing employee leaves and movements, transactional onboarding of new employees into the organization - e.g., fingerprinting, I-9, badges, payrolling, etc.</td>
<td>• Employee satisfaction surveys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The CHRO is responsible for creating a menu of benefits to attract and retain the best staff. Often, this includes asking employees what they need to be successful and stay.</td>
<td>• Employee inquiries/questions resolved within 24 hours of initial outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a variety of benefits that individuals can access as needed</td>
<td>Offers a one-size benefits package for all employee groups</td>
<td>The CHRO is responsible for creating a menu of benefits to attract and retain the best staff. Often, this includes asking employees what they need to be successful and stay.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligns HR data and systems to meet organizational goals</td>
<td>Provides reactive reports based on external requests. Has data but does not share it with all stakeholders to drive changes.</td>
<td>The CHRO creates and shares data systems, reports, and dashboards that provide on-demand data to understand workforce needs in service of the organization’s goals.</td>
<td>• Percentage of principals/managers satisfied with data support for HC management</td>
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2. THE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO THE STRATEGIC CHRO

The CHRO role requires a strong understanding of the system’s strategy for student success. It’s our role to make sure all of our people and HR policies and practices align with that strategy.

- CHRO in Northwest

In order to implement the strategic actions of the six core functions – Sourcing & Selection, Employee Experience, Staffing for Equity, Strategic Retention, Performance Management, and HR Operations – the CHRO has five key tools at their disposal to move the work forward. All five tools must work together in an aligned way for the greatest strategic impact.

THE HR DEPARTMENT’S VISION & CULTURE

Vision and culture are complementary tools in the CHRO’s toolkit. The vision the CHRO sets lays out the destination where HR expects to be in the future; while the culture represents the “way things are done around here” – with each other and customers – in service of that vision. For example, the CHRO’s vision might be to be labeled as the greatest place to work in the geographic region. To achieve this vision, the CHRO might build a culture focused on valuing the employee’s experience – which could include such actions as consistently measuring the employee experience, seeking feedback from employees at all levels about their needs, and setting aside funding to improve the employee experience.

Why focus on culture?

- Strong organizational culture ATTRACTS top talent
  - 41% of candidates search for info on company culture before they apply
- Strong culture RETAINS top talent
  - For example, turnover rates among “Irreplaceable” teachers – the best of the best – were 50 percent higher in schools with weak instructional cultures
  - Even more important, on a Jobvite survey of job-seekers who had left a job within the first 90 days, 32% listed organizational culture as the reason
- Strong instructional culture DRIVES PERFORMANCE – in organizations and schools – for students
  - In schools with strong cultures, proficiency rates are 21 percentage points higher in math and 14 points higher in reading

CHROs might build many types of culture – data-driven, customer-focused, etc. Whatever type of culture the CHRO seeks to build, two are especially important in K-12 education:

- Intentional culture – In an intentional culture, all actions and behaviors consistently align with who the department is and what is valued in service of the work. For example, if the message is the department has a collaborative culture but decisions are only made at the Chief level, that is not intentionally aligning actions with the desired culture. Trust, transparency, and a customer focus are key values to build
intentionally into the district’s processes, policies, and ways of working.

- **A diverse & inclusive culture** – A diverse and inclusive culture seeks, welcomes, and leverages the knowledge and perspectives of all voices in the organization, not just those that are most powerful and the loudest. In practice, this means intentionally engaging voices of those who have been un- and under-represented in past conversations. Actively seeking these voices is especially crucial because broader power dynamics may keep marginalized communities from speaking up for their interests.

**Questions to consider:** What vision and culture best suits the needs of the district? What are 1-2 tangible actions the CHRO can put into place to grow and reinforce that culture? What might be happening that is inconsistent with the desired culture? How might we ensure we hear from those who have been historically marginalized?

**BUDGET**

The HR budget is a powerful tool to use in support of the broader vision. The HR budget represents a tangible and objective reflection of the priorities that matter most. The way that budgets are allocated and spent demonstrates what leadership values. If something is a priority, then sufficient dollars must be allocated to it. For example, if the district believes that students in high-needs schools deserve excellent teachers but are unwilling to fund incentives or other strategies for teachers to go those schools, then the budget does not reflect what the district claims are priorities.

HR's budget is also a powerful indicator for showing others what matters most. The programs and people that are funded are what matter – no matter whatever else is said. It is critical to review the budget to see what it demonstrates about priorities.

**Questions to consider:** What are the biggest line items in HR's current budget? Do they represent the priorities set forth in the vision? If not, why not? How does the HR budget align – or not – with the broader priorities of the district?

**HR TEAM STRUCTURE**

The staffing and organization of the HR team sends a strong signal to others about how they will be served. Is the team organized to only meet internal needs – or to serve the district's customers? What are the types of responsibilities of team members – are they only transactional and compliance-driven or strategic and supportive?

USHCA has found that all HR teams, however they are structured, should be designed to serve the needs of their key customers – principals and schools. No one structure is superior; each structure has its own advantages and disadvantages that must be considered based on the local context and needs of the organization. Visit HRinEd.org for more information on HR team structures.

USHCA has found having one point of contact for principals for all their human capital needs to be a critical success factor in meeting principal's needs – this role is called the HR Partner.

**Questions to consider:** In what ways can the HR team be organized to best meet school and principal needs, first and foremost? How might varying needs of schools and principals require flexibility in the HR team structure?

**DATA & TECHNOLOGY**

Human Capital data and technology are powerful tools for the CHRO. Data can help answer key questions or measure performance against goals. Technology offers a way to streamline and automate processes that would otherwise require staff resources to execute. While some school systems
may have separate data and technology teams outside of HR, we recommend each HR department allocate staff resources to build and support data collection, analysis, and technology specific to HR’s needs. The CHRO should ensure the following:

- **Systems & Processes** – Technology systems and processes are in place to capture, connect and report HC data reliably and efficiently

- **People Capacity** – Individuals and teams have the knowledge, skill, and will to fully leverage HC data and technology

- **Sharing and Distribution** – HC data is accessible to principals and principal supervisors, with guidance and follow-up support on how to use this data and technology

- **Accountability to Metrics** – Individuals and teams across HR are held accountable based on data

- **Culture of Use** – Everyone – from leadership to front line staff – habitually demand data as part of their everyday work

USHCA listed key data in the Core Work of the Strategic CHRO section above, as well as outlines key Power Metrics for Teachers and Principals the CHRO can use to measure the impact of the HR team’s work. Visit HRinEd for more information about Power Metrics and using data.

**Questions to consider:** What human capital questions need answers? What current data does the HR team use internally? Who else is data shared with – how and when? How easy is it to access the data?

**COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

A key component of the CHRO’s role is to position the HR team as the key to operationalizing the school system’s strategy, rather than as a transactional or compliance-focused department. Depending on the context, the Strategic CHRO’s first order of business is to help others understand

the value a strategic HR can provide. Only then can the work of finding, growing, and keeping great teachers, leaders, and staff occur. As a reminder, this work does not reside only in HR though. Other stakeholders’ engagement and support is essential to the CHRO’s success and the sustainability of any initiatives, programs, or policies. Strong relationships and partnerships are essential.

Key relationships for the CHRO to cultivate include:

- Superintendent and School Board Members – to solidify the vision and mission, as well as ensure HR has support for key policies, processes, and hires

- Principals & Principal Supervisors – to understand school needs and human capital challenges, as well as satisfaction with HR’s services

- Teachers & Other Employees – to understand employee experiences (Consider using USHCA’s Engaging Teacher and Principal Voice tool)

- Finance and Budget – to discuss staffing timelines and position control

- Teaching and Learning/Curriculum – to understand instructional initiatives

- School Improvement/School Supervision – to build a quality principal pipeline

- Special Education/Student Services – to increase supply for critical shortages

- Technology – to provide key data

- All Cabinet-level Executives – to promote succession planning on their teams, fill critical vacancies, and retain top staff

- Accountability/Assessment – to understand school data and its impact on workforce needs

- Communications – to review and improve HR’s website and use communications strategically to position the school system as the employer of choice in the region
• Chief of Staff – to align HR with the district’s priorities and strategies

• General Counsel – to discuss how HR and legal can work together on workforce issues/disputes

• State Departments of Education – to align certification and other HC policies and practices

• Unions/Labor – to craft Collective Bargaining and Contract Agreements that work for staff and students

For initial ideas on how to connect with other school system offices, see USHCA’s Ten Steps to Connect HR More Strategically to Other Offices.

Questions to consider: Based on the context in the district, with whom is it most important to connect? How can HR provide value to them immediately? How might I position the HR department as a strategic support, if it’s not currently viewed that way?

1 Bersin, J., Forbes, 2015.
2 TNTP, 2012.
3 TNTP, 2012.
3. THE NEW STRATEGIC CHRO’S ENTRY PLAN

You can get caught up in a lot of transactional work in HR. Do it well, yes, but it’s not going to move the needle for kids. The real magic happens when we focus on the right work that will make an impact for students.
– CHRO in Northeast

WHERE TO BEGIN?

As a new CHRO, the first 90 days are essential to building credibility as a leader and being viewed as a strategic leader – both internally with the HR team and externally with principals, their supervisors, other offices, and labor leaders.

To set up for success, in the first 90 days, USHCA recommends the CHRO prioritize the following actions:

1. Pinpoint 1-2 major HR pain points for principals – What human capital issues are they struggling with most? Solve those challenges first, whenever possible.

2. Identify current gaps in HR functionality – use the Six Core Functions section for an initial review.

3. Determine the role and functions of each HR team/individual and how they align with the Six Core Functions.

4. Understand what’s working currently to build upon.

5. Identify potential “quick hits” that can be implemented to build credibility and show progress.

See USHCA’s First 90 Days deck for a full outline of what to do when and what questions to ask to best assess HR’s strengths and gaps, particularly in terms of how HR is serving principals.

In addition, the following documents will help to get a “lay of the land.”

- **Org Chart** - Who reports directly to the CHRO? What functions does HR oversee? What is the most effective structure to achieve the vision? What was the genesis of the current structure?

- **The budget** - Where does HR spend its budget? How are budget decisions made?

- **District and/or HR Strategic Plan** - Is there a strategic plan? What is the status of the strategic plan? How does HR’s work align with the broader district goals and priorities? What metrics exist?

- **Recent Board Minutes** - What is the board considering that might impact HR’s work?

- **Survey Data** - How do principals, teachers and parents feel about their work and the support they get from HR?

- **HR Handbook, Policies, Rules/Regulations** – Which key policies impacting HR’s work (e.g. – last in, first out) in line with a strategic mission? Are policies and rules up to date and aligned to current values?
• **Local News and Media** - How do people in the city/area get their information? What, if anything, has the local media reported about the district/organization that relates to talent?

*Note: While this First 90 Days section is generally intended for those new to the role, if you are currently in the role and interested in understanding how the HR team is perceived, this section can also be invaluable to you.*

Whether you’re new or a veteran, we hope this guide was useful and we encourage you to reach out to use at info@theushca.org should you have any questions or need additional support.

### ADDITIONAL TOOLS & RESOURCES

- [HRinEd.org](#)
- [Learning Agenda & Listening Tour Template](#)
- [The New Teacher Project (TNTP) Publications](#)
- [The Wallace Foundation School Leadership Knowledge Center](#)
- [Stakeholder Management Tool](#)
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