

Memorandum

**TO: Board of Administration for the
Federated City Employees'
Retirement System**

FROM: John Flynn, CEO

SUBJECT: Overstrength Program Manager

DATE: October 16, 2025

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

Approve one full-time overstrength Program Manager (Job Code 8073) in the Benefits Division of the Office of Retirement Services (“ORS”) through June 30, 2026, to stabilize operations impacted by high workload and turnover, add additional capacity for technology and innovation projects, and support succession planning by bridging a critical leadership gap.

BACKGROUND

The Pension Team within the Benefits Division has faced ongoing operational instability driven by high staff turnover, limited experience among current personnel, complex business processes, and a sustained high workload. These challenges are compounded by the absence of an intermediate leadership role between the Senior Pension Analyst and Division Manager.

Senior Analyst Turnover and Workload

Turnover at the Senior Pension Analyst level continues to present a significant challenge to the stability and effectiveness of the Division. Since 2020, four of the five individuals hired into this role have separated from City service, with an average tenure of only 1.69 years.

Sr Pension Analyst	Hire Date	Separation Date	Years in Role
Employee 1	11/29/2020	10/1/2022	1.84
Employee 2	5/2/2021	6/4/2022	1.09
Employee 3	9/4/2022	2/17/2024	1.45
Employee 4	4/2/2023	8/16/2025	2.38
Average Years in Role			1.69

Exit feedback shows that nearly all departing staff cited excessive stress and responsibility as key factors in their decision to leave. The steep learning curve compounds these pressures as gaining a solid understanding of the rules across eleven retirement tiers and the complex business processes for pension benefit administration typically requires two or more years. With the most recent resignation on August 16, 2025, only one Senior Pension Analyst remains in the role, and that individual has just over one year

of experience at the Senior level. This creates a critical vulnerability in both operational capacity and institutional knowledge.

It's important to highlight that turnover has also been significant at the Analyst level with five separations in the last five years, including three within the past two. Among the six current Analysts on the Pension Team, the average tenure is under three years, with half having fewer than two years of experience. This limited depth of experience places further pressure on the Senior Pension Analysts to simultaneously oversee day-to-day operations and fill critical gaps in staff development, training, and quality assurance.

Sustained turnover at both the Analyst and Senior Pension Analyst levels demonstrates an ongoing and systemic need for additional leadership and support within the Division. Without strategic investment in added capacity, the Division will remain at risk of recurring staff burnout, loss of institutional knowledge, and disruption of core functions. The consequences extend beyond internal operations as service delays, errors, and diminished responsiveness directly affect retirees and active employees who rely on timely and accurate pension administration.

Establishing additional support at the senior level would not only distribute workload more effectively but also strengthen service delivery, safeguard institutional knowledge, and provide the stability necessary for succession planning and long-term organizational resilience.

Lack of Intermediate Leadership and Career Path

In addition, the lack of intermediate-level leadership in the Division contributes to turnover by leaving a significant gap between the Senior Pension Analysts, who function as operational supervisors, and the Division Manager, who serves as senior management. This gap places considerable pressure on Senior Pension Analysts to manage a wide scope of responsibilities without the necessary structural support. At the same time, it limits opportunities for staff to develop the leadership and decision-making skills required for advancement, making succession planning and leadership continuity more difficult to achieve.

Creating an intermediate leadership role, such as a Program Manager, would establish a logical career progression, provide opportunities for internal talent development, and improve retention of high-performing staff. This position would also help preserve institutional knowledge, strengthen organizational stability, and ensure sustainable leadership capacity within the Pension Team.

ANALYSIS:

ORS has evaluated multiple staffing approaches to address challenges in the Benefits Division and recommends the addition of a **Program Manager** overstrength position to provide a critical intermediate leadership role.

At present, the Benefits Division Manager directly oversees a wide range of high-volume programs and complex operational areas, including:

- **Pension Programs Administration** including retirements, deaths, reciprocity, service purchases/military leave, withdrawals of contributions, outside employment disability, divorce,

family law matters, Police sick leave payoff, worker’s compensation offsets, 415b/401a, and student survivorships.

- **Disability Retirements Administration**
- **Health Program Administration**
- **Customer Service**
- **Business-Led Technology Innovation**
- **Cross-functional initiatives and special projects** and direct coordination with the CEO, Deputy Director and Retirement Boards on complex problems and initiatives.

The breadth and complexity of these responsibilities create significant workload pressure on both the Division Manager and two Senior Pension Analysts. Establishing a Program Manager role will help stabilize the Pension Team, distribute workload more effectively, and provide a clear leadership bridge and career path to develop talent internally.

A Program Manager is recommended in lieu of an additional Senior Pension Analyst, due to the breadth and complexity of the responsibilities. While Senior Pension Analysts are well-positioned to lead smaller teams and provide technical and analytical expertise, the Program Manager role will provide an intermediate level leadership role best positioned to address complex challenges faced in the Division.

Primary Responsibilities of the Program Manager:

- **Supervision of Three Teams:** Disability Retirement (2.0 FTE) and Retirement/Death Application Intake & Customer Service (4.0 FTE), and Business Systems (no ongoing resources) (see attached Proposed Organizational Chart).
- **Manage the Disability Retirement Program** for the Police & Fire Department Retirement Plan (Police & Fire) and Federated City Employees’ Retirement System (FCERS), processing approximately 35 applications annually, most involving legal representation.
- **Champion Business-Led Technology Innovation** by identifying, prioritizing, and implementing technology solutions that improve Benefits service delivery and perhaps more important, delivering self-services capabilities to increase efficiency.
- **Oversee the Retirement/Death Application Intake & Customer Service teams**, which triaged and served approximately 219 retirement applications, 236 death cases, and over 15,000 customer contacts in FY 2024–25.
- **Oversee the Return-of-Contributions desk**, which processed approximately 109 pension contribution withdrawal requests and proactively contacted about 350 separated employees in FY 2024–25.
- **Present to the Police & Fire and FCERS Boards and Disability Committees** on disability retirement applications including complex matters such as Independent Medical Examiner disputes, workers’ compensation offsets, and legal appeals.
- **Manage contracts** with the Boards’ Disability Retirement Counsel and medical vendors.
- **Review and approve pension system entries**, including establishment of pension benefits, disability retirement setups, death benefits, pension payroll adjustments, reciprocity calculations, and more.

- **Lead problem-solving and research efforts** to resolve complex benefit, eligibility, and service credit issues.
- **Provide high-level analytical support** to the Division Manager on strategic projects to ensure pension benefits are administered in compliance with the San José Municipal Code and provide continuous improvement to services provided to members.

The addition of an overstrength Program Manager is an important investment that will stabilize the Pension Team, improve supervision and workload distribution, and support leadership continuity. By bridging the operational gap between Senior Analysts and Division Manager, this position will strengthen internal capacity and help the Division prepare for future transitions.

FUNDING:

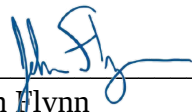
The table below shows the approximate costs associated with this request:

Job Code	Title	Approx # of Pay Periods	Cost in FY25-26 (Using Top Range)	Annual Cost Impact (Using Top Range)
8073	Program Manager	18	\$94,147	\$174,851.04

If approved, ORS will assess the ongoing need for this position and will consider either extending it through FY 2026–27 or recommending its conversion to a permanent position, based on operational demands and organizational priorities.

Funding for this position is available in ORS’ 2025-26 Budget due to vacancies. This request will increase the number of full-time positions within ORS by one. Costs will be allocated per the table below:

Funding
Retirement Plans: 135-770983004001– 50% 134-770983004001– 50%



John Flynn
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)