



Executive  
Search & Recruitment Services  
for the  
City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida

**CITY ATTORNEY**

B

**THE MERCER GROUP FLORIDA**  
**Dona Higginbotham**  
**3245 S. Atlantic Ave., Suite 607**  
**Daytona Beach Shores, Florida 32118**

[www.mercergroupincflorida.com](http://www.mercergroupincflorida.com)



# Mercer Group Florida LLC

*Consultants To Management*

January 20, 2023

City of Fort Lauderdale  
100 North Andrews Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

The Mercer Group Florida understands the City of Fort Lauderdale is looking to engage the services of an executive search firm to conduct executive search and recruitment services for a City Attorney.

Mercer Group Florida is pleased to assist the City to recruit exceptionally well-qualified candidates for the position of City Attorney. If selected to conduct the search and recruitment process for this position, we will have no difficulty beginning immediately to ensure a smooth process. It is our understanding that the scope of work, minimum responsibilities, and search and recruitment services shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Development of Candidate Profile and Recruitment.
- Production of Recruitment materials
- Strategy Outreach to best-fit candidates and Advertising Campaign.
- Candidate Screening.
- Candidate selection, background and offer.
- Appointment and follow-up.

The objectives that we will meet to find the best qualified candidates for the City Attorney position are as follows:

- To conduct needs assessment for the new City Attorney.
- To develop a comprehensive position profile.
- To encourage top level people to apply who would otherwise be reluctant to respond to an advertisement.
- To save a considerable amount of the City's time in establishing a position profile and reviewing applicants.
- To comply with appropriate personnel regulations and state laws (i.e., EEO, Affirmative Action and ADA).
- To assess the qualifications and suitability of candidates independently and objectively for the position.

- To respond to all candidate inquiries and produce all correspondence during the search.
- To mail an information packet supplied by the City to all qualified applicants.
- To recommend a pool of finalist candidates.
- To assist staff with coordinating finalist candidate interviews.
- To preserve the confidentiality of inquiries to the degree possible under Florida law.
- To assist the City in reaching a final decision.
- To assist in negotiating a compensation package with the successful candidate.
- To keep the liaison closely involved in key decisions and informed of our progress.

The purpose for engaging the services of an executive search firm is to seek out and recruit experienced candidates and to assist the City in selecting highly qualified individuals who meet the profile and needs of the City and who might not otherwise apply. Mercer Group Florida is well-qualified to assist with this project. Most recently we have successfully completed and/or currently engaged in searches for the Cities of Largo, Deltona, Port Orange, DeBary, St. Petersburg, Temple Terrace, St. Pete Beach, Cape Coral, Cocoa, Gainesville, Dunedin, Fort Myers, Deerfield Beach, Hallandale Beach, Hollywood, Key Biscayne, Key West, Mary Esther, Orange Park, Palatka, Palm Beach, Palmetto Bay, Plant City, Pompano Beach, Sewall's Point, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority and TBARTA. These are just the **Florida** recruitments; there are many more in the Southeast and nation-wide.

Mercer Group Florida LLC, a minority owned LLC, has been in operation since June 2010, has the resources available to conduct this search and avoid untimely delays in the process.

If selected, I will personally lead this recruitment from our Daytona Beach Shores office; with over 20 years of private and public sector recruiting experience, I am uniquely qualified to lead this search for The City of Fort Lauderdale's City Attorney.

The Mercer Group Florida fees for the Executive Search/Recruitment Services are:

**\$19,500.00 plus expenses not to exceed \$4,000.00.**

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the City with this important assignment. Please contact me directly at 954-559-8865 if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,  
Dona Higginbotham

**THE MERCER GROUP FLORIDA**

## What Mercer Group Florida Offers

### Qualifications and Staffing

The Mercer Group, Inc. has been in operation for over thirty (30) years with offices in thirteen (13) States, including **Volusia County, Florida**.

Mercer Group Florida, a minority owned company, has been in operation since June 2010.

Dona Higginbotham will be assisting the City of Fort Lauderdale for the City Attorney Search and Recruitment Services and will serve the City from our Daytona Beach Shores location. More information about current and previous searches is available at: <http://mercergroupincflorida.com/about-us>

### Understanding the Project & Our Approach

Services provided include, but are not limited to position analysis and preparation of a position profile, recruitment for the position, inviting potential candidates to apply, reviewing and screening applications, conducting interviews, reference checks and background checks of selected candidates, recommending a list of final candidates, coordinating final interviews, contract negotiating as required, and following up.

### Our 7-Step Search Process

We recommend a seven (7)-step search process as follows:

1. **Position Analysis** - Define work relationships, job qualifications and requirements for the position - the "Position Profile".
2. **Recruitment Process** - Recruit State-wide, regionally, and nationally for the position and network to locate qualified candidates.
3. **Resume Review** - Identify qualified candidates.
4. **Candidate Screening** - Thoroughly screen prospective candidates.
5. **Background Investigation** - Thoroughly evaluate prospective candidates.
6. **Interview Process** - Make recommendations and assist in selection.
7. **Negotiation and Follow-up** - Facilitate employment and follow-up to ensure complete integrity of the process.

The **Candidate Screening** will be handled personally and thoroughly by Ms. Higginbotham of the Mercer Group Florida.

## **Schedule**

While the schedule and timeline will be determined by the City of Fort Lauderdale following our consultations, the schedule we recommend provides for the successful candidate to be selected within 12 weeks from start to finish or an alternate schedule to be determined by the Council.

<b>PROJECTED TIMELINE</b>	<b>DELIVERABLE</b>
One week following execution of agreement	Kickoff Meeting with designated individual(s)
Week One	Interviews/Consultation (as desired) to: *Develop Characteristics & Attributes of a Successful Candidate. *Develop Compensation Package and Job Description
Week Three	Approve Recruitment Materials
<b>Week Three</b> - Search Officially Opens	Recruitment of Qualified Individuals Ads Placed
Weeks Three through Seven	Send Recruitment Materials Invitation Letter to potential candidates
Weeks Three through Seven	Outreach Telephone Calls/Email
As received	Acknowledge Receipt of Application Materials
Week Seven	Closing Date for Receipt of Applications
Ongoing through Week Seven	Screen Applications Against Selection Criteria Consultant Interviews of Top Candidates
Week Eight	Meet with the designated liaison to Review Top Candidates and assist in the selection of Finalists.
Weeks Nine & Ten	Conduct Reference and Background Checks (conditional offer may be made to candidate)
Week Ten	Send Interview Guide of Selected Finalists
Week Eleven/Twelve	Conduct Interviews of Selected Finalists
Week Eleven/Twelve	Selection of Candidate
Week Eleven/Twelve	Negotiate Agreement
At close of search process	Notify Candidates Not Selected

### **Reasonable Fees**

The Mercer Group. proposes a **fee of \$19,500.00, plus expenses not to exceed \$4,000.00, for the Executive Search/Recruitment Services** for the City of Fort Lauderdale.

<b>SEARCH / RECRUITMENT SERVICES</b>	<b>FEE</b>
Position Analysis	2,750
Outreach Campaign	2,750
Resume Review	3,875
Candidate Screening	2,875
Background Investigation	3,750
Interview Process	2,750
Negotiation and Follow-up	500
<b>TOTAL FEE</b>	<b>\$19,500</b>

The **only** additional cost to the City, will be the costs related to bringing candidates to the City of Fort Lauderdale for in-person interviews. Transportation, hotel, meals, etc.

The City agrees to pay:

- one-third of the base fee (\$6,500) at the time notice to proceed is given to Mercer Group Florida.
- one-third (\$6,500) when applications are closed, and Mercer Group Florida provides a recommended list of semi-finalists to be approved for more intensive review by Mercer Group Florida.
- and the final one-third (\$6,500) when candidate selected as City Attorney .
- Expenses will be submitted at the close of each search.
- All payments for agreed upon services shall be due and payable upon the submittal of an invoice by Mercer Group Florida describing services completed.

### **Guarantees**

We make ten (10) guarantees of our search and recruitment work for City of Fort Lauderdale.

- 1. Client Organization:** The client is defined as the entire entity, including all departments, divisions, sections and groups. This assures that all our guarantees apply to the entire client organization.

2. **Two-Year Off Limits:** We will not recruit candidates from a client organization for two years after completion of a search assignment without the full agreement of the client.
3. **Placement Off Limits Forever:** We will never recruit a candidate whom we have placed in a client organization as long as he/she is employed by that organization without the full agreement of the client.
4. **Continue the Search:** If, for any reason, the client does not feel comfortable selecting a candidate from our original recommended group of candidates, we will continue the search until the client can make a selection.
5. **Replacement of Successful Candidate:** If the candidate we place with the client leaves the client organization for any reason during the 12-month period following the date of placement with the client, we will replace the candidate for out-of-pocket expenses only and **there will be no professional fees** charged by The Mercer Group Florida to make the new placement.
6. **Parallel Candidate Presentation:** We will not present a candidate simultaneously to more than one client. This permits our firm to represent one client organization without any conflicts of interest.
7. **Client Conflicts:** If asked, we will disclose to our clients the names of the organizations which are "Off Limits" that logically would be target organizations on the new search assignment.
8. **Deceptive/Misleading Search Techniques:** We commit to our clients and to our prospective candidates that we will not use any search techniques which may be considered as deceptive or misleading.
9. **Resume Floating:** We will not float resumes to organizations in the hopes that we can collect a fee if that individual is hired.
10. **Not Represent Individuals:** We assure our clients and individuals who may become candidates that we will not collect a fee from candidates whom we may recommend for a position.

We look forward to partnering with the City of Fort Lauderdale.

**THE MERCER GROUP FLORIDA**  
Dona Higginbotham  
Senior Vice President  
3245 S. Atlantic Ave., Suite 607  
Daytona Beach Shores, Florida 32118  
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[www.mercergroupincflorida.com](http://www.mercergroupincflorida.com)

## REFERENCES





December 16, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

It gives me great pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation on behalf of the Mercer Group.

The Mercer Group recently provided consulting services for the Village of Palmetto Bay's Village Manager search. Ms. Dona Higginbotham, the firm's Senior Vice President, conducted a national search for the position. Palmetto Bay is a small municipality in South Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Under normal circumstances, a national search for this position, given the limitations we placed on salary and benefits, would have been difficult, but the challenges of conducting a search during a global pandemic added an additional hurdle for the Council and the firm. Ms. Higginbotham was not only professional and thorough, but she conducted her work with a personal and hands on approach. She spent time both virtually and in person to discuss with each member of the Council the qualities we were looking for in a Village Manager, advertised the position, reviewed the resumes, interviewed the many that applied and brought to the Council the most qualified individuals as semi-finalists. I am proud to say that the search garnered a candidate that not only brings experience and expertise but also checks all our search criteria boxes!

As someone who has worked in public service my entire professional career both as teacher and public school advocate for thirty-five years, and an elected official in my hometown of Palmetto Bay for six years, I have had the opportunity to work with many individuals and businesses, large and small, in our diverse community.

We had many choices of firms to contract with, but I am so pleased we choose to work with the Mercer Group. It is rare to have the opportunity to find consultants that embody not only work ethic and skill but provide the professional and personal touch. The Mercer Group and Dona Higginbotham are rare finds in consulting world.

Should you have any further questions, I can be reached by phone anytime at 305-799-0695 or by email at [kcunningham@palmettobay-fl.gov](mailto:kcunningham@palmettobay-fl.gov).

Warm regards,

Mayor Karyn Cunningham  
Village of Palmetto Bay  
9705 East Hibiscus Street  
Palmetto Bay, FL 33157

December 18, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

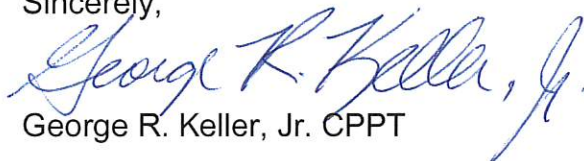
Please accept this correspondence as my sincere and firm letter of reference for Dona Higginbotham of Mercer Group Florida. On behalf of the City of Hollywood, FL, I have had the pleasure and success of working directly with Ms. Higginbotham and Mercer Group Florida on multiple occasions in recent years in the search for key senior management personnel. The two most recent experiences involved finding and securing individuals to serve as major department directors for our municipality. In both cases, the City had followed traditional "in house" public advertising and search processes on a national scale repeatedly over an extended period of time. Unfortunately, both efforts proved unsuccessful in identifying a match despite prolonged and persistent actions via all of our internal resources.

We then turned to Mercer Group Florida and Ms. Higginbotham. In both cases, new candidates were identified and the single right fit was secured for each key position, in a fraction of the time already spent by the City. Ms. Higginbotham's professional services cost structure was also very competitive compared with other major search firms, and in fact was lower than most. In retrospect, the City should have used the services of Ms. Higginbotham from the initial outset saving a good deal of time and expense.

Ms. Higginbotham has proven through our collective experiences to be very insightful, persistent, and sensitive to the needs of our organization. She has always conducted herself and represented our City as an ethical professional whom we could trust and depend upon to follow our needs and directions, especially in the most sensitive and difficult of search efforts. She has always conducted her thorough due diligence in finding, evaluating and proposing candidates; and only those that were credible and of substance. Her respected reputation and that of Mercer Group Florida is well earned and deserved. The City will look to use her services again in the future.

You are welcome to contact me directly at 954-232-4186 should you desire any additional information.

Sincerely,

  
George R. Keller, Jr. CPPT

Deputy City Manager

2600 Hollywood Boulevard  
P.O. Box 229045  
Hollywood, Florida  
33022-9045

[hollywoodfl.org](http://hollywoodfl.org)



**City of Fort Myers**  
***Kevin B. Anderson***  
**Mayor**

May 21, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am both pleased and honored to write this letter of reference for Dona Higginbotham of Mercer Group Florida. This was my first opportunity to work with a search firm in my official capacity as Mayor of the City of Fort Myers. The City Council interviewed four potential firms and Mercer was rated either first or second among all councilmembers. My decision to rank Mercer number one was an easy decision thanks to Ms. Higginbotham's outstanding presentation.

Ms. Higginbotham demonstrated a firm of understanding of the needs of the position. She interviewed each councilmember and me extensively to determine what qualities we were looking for in our next city manager. From a list of 113 applicants, she presented us with 10 highly qualified candidates. It was a challenge to pare the list down to three.

After doing so, Ms. Higginbotham coordinated the candidates' visit to Fort Myers, a citizen review panel, a meet-and-greet between the public and the candidates, meetings with staff, and one-on-one interviews with the elected officials. Throughout the entire process Ms. Higginbotham was nothing less than professional, responsive, efficient, and well prepared to fulfill her obligations.

It was an absolute pleasure working with her and I look forward to future opportunities to work together again.

Sincerely,

Kevin B. Anderson  
Mayor



**City of Fort Myers**  
*Liston D. Bochette III*  
**Councilman Ward 4**

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my profound pleasure to recognize the professional services provided by, as well as recommend Ms. Dona Higgenbotham for future projects on all fronts.

Our governmental body has worked closely with Ms. Higgenbotham and obtained excellent results. Her organizational experience, unwavering discipline, and focus on detail produced the proper outcome we requested.

In addition, I found Ms. Higgenbotham an effective and open communicator who creates a conducive working environment for all parties. She knows her field of expertise and is able to apply that knowledge to a wide variety of fixed and varying needs. Ms. Higgenbotham addresses the issues along with the criteria demanded to produce positive results.

I remain available to further the discussion if needed.

Sincerely,

Dr. Liston D. Bochette III  
Councilman, Ward 4  
City of Fort Myers