



Update on New York City Staffing Trends

Highlights

- In September, the Mayor directed his agency heads to identify ways to achieve new savings of 3 percent of City-funded spending in FY 2023, followed by savings of 4.75 percent beginning in FY 2024.
- As in recent years, vacancy reductions could be a significant source of savings.
- The decline in the City workforce over the past two years exceeds the decline during and after the Great Recession. This decline in the City's full-time staffing has been uneven.
- Of the City's 37 largest municipal agencies (250 or more full-time employees), 11 have experienced a decline that is at least twice the citywide average.
- In absolute terms, the decline since June 2020 has been the steepest at the uniformed agencies (by 6,857 positions, 7.6 percent), the Department of Education (by 4,815 positions, 3.6 percent) and at the social services agencies (by 3,011 positions, 13.5 percent).
- Nineteen major occupations (consisting of at least 250 employees) have experienced a decline of at least 13 percent through August 2022.
- Five major agencies, and twenty-three major agency divisions, are experiencing vacancy rates that are at least twice the citywide average rate of 7 percent.
- Understanding the impact of the uneven decline in staffing on the City's service performance should inform the City's vacancy decisions and what positions should be filled to improve or expand municipal services.

New York City employs the largest municipal workforce in the United States. Prior to the pandemic, the City government (which, unlike many local governments, includes its schools), employed about 300,400 full-time employees, an increase of 33,023 employees since City fiscal year (FY) 2012 and the peak annual level when compared to prior fiscal years ending June 30. Largely in response to [fiscal challenges](#), as well as unusually high attrition, the City's workforce has decreased to 281,333 through August 2022 (6.4 percent, larger than the 4.7 percent decline between fiscal years 2008 through 2012, during and after the Great Recession).

The Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) has noted in our [previous report on the City's workforce](#) that balancing the need to support a robust recovery through the delivery of vital City services with the need to generate savings and maintain a healthy fiscal condition going forward will require care and good judgement between City leaders and stakeholders. Recent reports have suggested some services have not kept up with demand. Understanding changes in staffing, in relation to other contextual factors including new service initiatives, is an important task for balancing the City's budget with its service delivery needs.

While there are many ways to look at staffing trends, this report focuses on two indicators: the decline in staffing since June 2020 and the number and rate of vacancies as of August 2022. OSC found that the decline in staffing has been uneven, with certain program areas and occupational groups experiencing a decline of more than twice the citywide average. Staffing declines in these areas suggest additional analysis is warranted to understand the impact on service delivery, particularly as the City embarks on a new plan to generate prudent cost savings.

Program to Eliminate the Gap

In the final financial plan submission prepared under the previous Mayoral administration (November 2021), the City had assumed that full-time staffing would reach 307,346 employees by June 30, 2023. This target would have been a small increase (2.3 percent) over the pre-pandemic, year-end peak in FY 2020, but still represented a large increase over the current level. In February 2022, the new Mayoral administration implemented its first Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG), a major savings program, which among other initiatives, eliminated more than 7,000 vacant positions across the City, mostly at the Department of Education (3,642 positions). These vacancy reductions made up more than half of the PEG dollar savings identified in February 2022.

To help maintain budget balance in FY 2023 and to reduce the growing [budget gaps](#) over the financial plan period (fiscal years 2023 through 2026), the Mayor has directed his agency heads to identify ways to achieve new savings of 3 percent of City-funded spending in FY 2023, followed by savings of 4.75 percent beginning in FY 2024. No agency has been exempted from the new PEG, but the Mayor has included a “No Layoff” pledge. In addition, agency heads were also informed that savings initiatives must not negatively impact services unless those services are demonstrably underutilized. Responses from agency heads were due September 30, 2022, but a list of selected initiatives has not yet been published, although, they should be included in the November Plan modification to the City’s budget.

Uneven Decline in Full-Time Staffing

Between June 2020 and August 2022, the City’s full-time workforce declined by 6.4 percent (19,113 positions), to 281,333 employees.¹ This is the steepest decline in full-time staffing since after the recession in the early 1990s and has already exceeded the decline recorded in the wake of the Great Recession (13,226 positions, 4.7 percent).² The current staffing is also among the lowest levels since August 2015 (or since July 2014, if staffing at the Department of Education is excluded).

The decline in the City’s full-time staffing has been uneven. Of the City’s 37 largest municipal agencies (250 or more full-time employees), 11 have experienced a decline that is at least twice the citywide average of 6.4 percent (see Figure 1, next page). The Department of Correction, the Department of Investigation, and the Taxi and Limousine Commission have each experienced a decline of at least three times the citywide average (by 23.6 percent, 22.2 percent, and 20.5 percent, respectively). While a decline at the Department of Correction had been planned through this period, the pace of the decline has been steeper than anticipated.

In absolute terms, the decline since June 2020 has been the steepest at the uniformed agencies (by 6,857 positions, 7.6 percent); the Department of Education (by 4,815 positions, 3.6 percent); and at the social services agencies (by 3,011 positions, 13.5 percent).³ The social services and uniformed agencies represented a little more than one-third of full-time staffing (37.3 percent) as of June 30, 2020, but accounted for more than half of the citywide decline (51.6 percent) through August 2022, driven largely by

¹ The City also staffed 23,590 full-time equivalent positions as of June 30, 2020, for a total of 324,036 positions.

² OSC calculated the nominal and percentage decline in year-end full-time staffing based on the change between the “peak” fiscal year to “trough” fiscal year of each recession period.

³ The uniformed agencies consist of the Police Department, Fire Department, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Sanitation. The social service agencies consist of the Department of Social Services, Administration for Children’s Services, Department of Homeless Services, Department for the Aging, and Department of Youth and Community Development.

FIGURE 1

Uneven Decline in Agency Full-Time Staffing

(Full-time employees)

Agency	Actual	Actual	Percent Decline	Plan
	June 2020	August 2022		August 2022
Dept. of Correction	10,978	8,388	23.6%	9,574
Dept. of Investigation	361	281	22.2%	316
Taxi & Limousine Commission	584	464	20.5%	486
Law Dept.	1,713	1,400	18.3%	1,551
Finance Dept.	1,996	1,660	16.8%	1,800
Citywide Administrative Services	2,403	2,028	15.6%	2,159
Dept. of Homeless Services	2,119	1,793	15.4%	2,012
City Planning	301	255	15.3%	283
Youth and Community Development	546	465	14.8%	514
Dept. of Probation	1,116	962	13.8%	1,035
Dept. of Social Services	12,330	10,637	13.7%	13,023
Subtotal	34,447	28,333	17.7%	32,753
Department of Education	134,684	129,869	3.6%	140,364
Police Dept.	51,429	48,007	6.7%	49,274
Children's Services	7,039	6,159	12.5%	6,445
All Other	72,847	68,965	5.3%	73,560
Total	300,446	281,333	6.4%	302,396

Note: August 2022 data includes 11 positions at the Districting Commission. The City's planned headcount is as of the FY 2023 Adopted Budget.

Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

disproportionate reductions at the Department of Correction, Police Department, Department of Social Services, and Administration for Children's Services.

The decline in full-time staffing has also been uneven for the City's major occupational groups. As shown in Figure 2, OSC notes that 19 major occupations (consisting of at least 250 employees) have experienced a decline of at least 13 percent through August 2022, more than twice the citywide average.⁴ Many of these highlighted occupations are in "white collar" administrative roles (including lawyers, clerks, executive assistants to managers, accountants and auditors), but also include public-facing roles in public safety, maintenance and social work.

The decline in public safety (e.g., correction officers and school safety agents) appears to be

largely consistent with the City's financial plan expectation, which reflects a sharp reduction to the maximum number of budgeted positions approved by the New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB), i.e., authorized fill level, for these positions since FY 2019, but the pace of decline in other highlighted professions may not have been anticipated. For example, OSC estimates that the number of correction officers declined by more than one-quarter (25.9 percent). The City's grounds maintenance workers (nearly all at the Parks and Recreation Department) have declined by a similar share (24.5 percent).

Vacancies at City's Major Agencies

The City's authorized fill level is a budgetary safeguard to ensure agency payroll expenditures do not exceed available appropriations. Agency

⁴ OSC aggregated the City's more than 3,000 active civil service titles into nearly 300 occupational groups based on

occupational data provided by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services.

FIGURE 2
Decline in Staffing by Major Occupation
 (Full-time employees)

Major Occupational Group (250 & more employees)	Actual	Actual	Percent Decline
	June 2020	August 2022	
Executive Assistants (Other than Schools)	482	351	-27.2%
Correction Officers	8,246	6,114	-25.9%
Groundskeepers and Gardeners	1,283	969	-24.5%
School Safety Agents	5,302	4,133	-22.0%
Information Clerks	356	279	-21.6%
Counselors	792	638	-19.4%
Lawyers	2,141	1,727	-19.3%
Legal Assistants	461	381	-17.4%
Fire Inspection and Prevention Occupations	401	334	-16.7%
Other Financial Officers	739	618	-16.4%
Architects	313	262	-16.3%
Accountants and Auditors	785	658	-16.2%
General Office Clerks	5,826	4,895	-16.0%
Mechanics and Repairers	423	359	-15.1%
School Administrative Support Staff	393	336	-14.5%
Social Workers	12,251	10,491	-14.4%
Investigators and Adjustors	1,709	1,464	-14.3%
Managers	3,356	2,919	-13.0%
Sheriffs and Related	2,059	1,791	-13.0%

Note: Numbers may not match headcount published by the NYC Office of Management and Budget due to different data processing methods used to compile and aggregate the data.

Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; Department of Citywide Administrative Services; OSC analysis

heads submit staffing requests to OMB as part of the annual budget process. OSC uses the authorized fill level to track the City's progress toward achieving its staffing targets, which was 302,396 positions as of August 2022. The City states that the number of positions filled at any time during the year will vary from the authorized headcount because of employee terminations, the hiring process and other reasons.

Based on the current authorized fill level, OSC estimates that the number of vacancies total as many as 21,063 positions (7 percent of the authorized fill level for August 2022), among the highest rates in at least a decade (see Figure 3; and Appendix A for more detail).⁵ The elevated vacancy rate is driven mostly by a temporary reduction in hiring in FY 2021, under the City's

hiring and attrition management initiative, and a sharp rise in attrition since then.

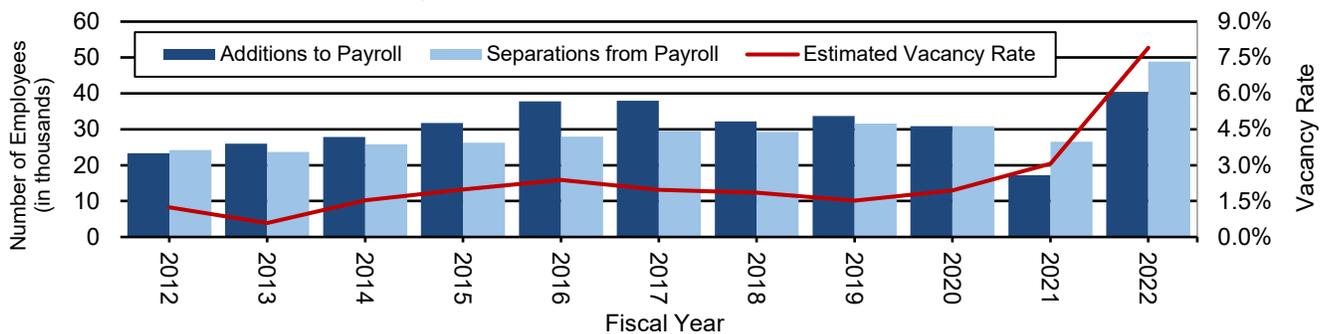
As shown in Figure 4, five major agencies have estimated vacancy rates of at least 14.7 percent, more than twice the citywide average, including as much as 18.3 percent at the Department of Social Services.

OSC also notes that the target in August 2022 for many of the highlighted agencies is equal or close to the year-end target for the agency as of June 30, 2022, suggesting that the City budgeted conservatively for the vacant positions. If the vacancies at these agencies remain unfilled through June 30, 2023, the City would generate substantial payroll savings in the current year.

⁵ The OSC-estimated vacancy rate is equal to the quotient of the difference between the authorized fill level and the actual headcount as of the most recent month complete data are available, divided by the authorized fill level. OSC

estimates represent the maximum number of vacancies but internal agency staffing targets may be lower than the estimated vacancy rate.

FIGURE 3
Estimated Year-End Vacancy Rates



Note: The vacancy rate is estimated based on the City's last forecast of full-time headcount published in each Adopted Plan.
Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

The City's current financial plan assumes full-time staffing will reach 306,302 employees by the end of FY 2023, 24,969 positions (8.9 percent) more than the current level and higher than the pre-pandemic fiscal year-end peak of 300,446 employees. On a nominal basis, most of the planned increase is concentrated at the Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Police Department, Department of Environmental Protection, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This does not yet reflect savings initiatives for the FY 2023 PEG, which could scale back the planned increases.

Agency-wide reviews can mask some of the vacancies at a program level, as some core municipal services may be well staffed but other divisions within an agency could be experiencing staffing challenges. OSC reviewed headcount data for each agency's major budget division ("Unit of Appropriation") with at least 250 full-time employees. Approximately 90 units of appropriation met this staffing threshold as of August 2022, which can provide greater insight on staffing trends at relatively large agencies.

As shown in Figure 5, OSC estimates that 23 major agency divisions are experiencing vacancy

FIGURE 4
Estimated Vacancy Rates at Selected Major Agencies
(Full-time employees)

Agency	Actual	Plan	Estimated Vacancy Rate	Plan
	August 2022	August 2022		June 2023
Dept. of Social Services	10,637	13,023	18.3%	13,023
Dept. Consumer & Worker Protection	400	485	17.5%	485
Dept. of Environmental Protection	5,331	6,351	16.1%	6,413
Design & Construction	1,115	1,310	14.9%	1,310
Administrative Trials & Hearings	336	394	14.7%	394
Subtotal	17,819	21,563	17.4%	21,625
Department of Education	129,869	140,364	7.5%	140,364
Police Dept.	48,007	49,274	2.6%	50,072
Fire Dept.	16,707	17,089	2.2%	17,489
Dept. of Correction	8,388	9,574	12.4%	9,034
Children's Services	6,159	6,445	4.4%	7,073
All Other	54,384	58,087	6.4%	60,645
Total	281,333	302,396	7.0%	306,302

Note: August 2022 Plan includes 11 positions at the District Commission.
Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

FIGURE 5**Major Agency Divisions with the Highest Vacancy Rates**

(Full-time employees)

Agency: Unit of Appropriation	Actual	Actual	Percent Decline	Plan	Estimated Vacancy Rate
	June 2020	August 2022		August 2022	
Social Services: Child Support Services	523	422	-19.3%	775	45.5%
Education: Categorical Programs	5,605	4,914	-12.3%	7,941	38.1%
Education: Early Childhood Programs	758	544	-28.2%	837	35.0%
Parks: Recreation Services	286	255	-10.8%	371	31.3%
Education: Universal Pre-Kindergarten	6,176	5,755	-6.8%	8,290	30.6%
Homeless Services: Administration	318	270	-15.1%	362	25.4%
Education: Special Education Instr. & Leadership	29,428	24,615	-16.4%	32,279	23.7%
Social Services: Adult Services	1,835	1,539	-16.1%	1,987	22.5%
Health Dept.: Mental Hygiene Management	568	460	-19.0%	592	22.3%
Social Services: Medical Assistance	1,395	1,117	-19.9%	1,422	21.4%
Environ. Prot.: Central Utility	885	781	-11.8%	994	21.4%
Environ. Prot.: Water Supp. & Wastewater Coll	2,470	2,257	-8.6%	2,861	21.1%
Health Dept.: Family & Child Health	539	431	-20.0%	545	20.9%
Education: School Facilities	644	525	-18.5%	656	20.0%
Housing Preserv. & Dev.: Office of Development	364	308	-15.4%	384	19.8%
Transportation: Traffic Operations	1,450	1,354	-6.6%	1,675	19.2%
Social Services: Administration	4,134	3,653	-11.6%	4,453	18.0%
Youth & Comm. Dev.: Management	272	202	-25.7%	246	17.9%
Correction: Administration	1,143	1,004	-12.2%	1,201	16.4%
Investigation: All	294	232	-21.1%	277	16.2%
Design and Construction: All	1,246	1,098	-11.9%	1,310	16.2%
Office of Administrative Trials & Hearings: All	302	332	9.9%	394	15.7%
Transportation: Bureau of Bridges	680	624	-8.2%	731	14.6%

Note: OSC estimates vacancy rates based on the difference between the actual headcount and authorized fill level (i.e., the "Plan"). Numbers may not match headcount published by the NYC Office of Management and Budget due to different data processing methods used to compile and aggregate the data.

Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; Department of Citywide Administrative Services; OSC analysis

rates that are at least twice the citywide average rate of 7 percent. Many of these divisions with high vacancy rates are located within the Department of Education and at the social services agencies, including areas that the City has identified as a priority or experiencing increased demand in recent years. Given the magnitude of the vacancies, many of these agency divisions could be experiencing significant staffing challenges (either in the form of delays in rolling out new service expansions, or the impairment of existing services due to a staffing shortage).

The sample shown in Figure 5 excludes many relatively small agency divisions, which have vacancy rates that are more prone to volatility. A number of these divisions (such as community

development at the Commission of Human Rights; and Energy Management at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services) have also experienced a significant decline in full-time staffing through August 2022 and have substantial estimated vacancy rates, which may warrant further review.

Attrition is Outpacing Hiring

The City's current financial plan assumes that full-time staffing will total 306,302 by the end of FY 2023, 24,969 positions greater than the current level. The City's target for June 30, 2023, is ambitious, however, given current attrition levels. Additions to the workforce (e.g., new hires) during FY 2022 totaled 40,261 employees, 35

percent more than were added, on average, over the last decade (29,866 per annum).

However, separations from service rose even more quickly (by 77 percent when compared to the 10-year historical average of about 27,600 positions). Recent data indicates that attrition has so far remained elevated in FY 2023 and is still outpacing hiring on a citywide basis.

OSC also reviewed data published from the City's online job hub, NYC Jobs, to help assess the City's effort to increase staffing in recent months.⁶ As of October 25, 2022, more than half of the City's major agencies had external job postings equal to at least 20 percent of the agency's reported decline in full-time staffing between June 2020 through August 2022, suggesting there has been significant effort to replace employee turnover and/or staff service expansions at these agencies in early FY 2023. Notably, almost all of the social service agencies showed signs of a significant effort to hire, and the Administration for Children's Services and Department of Homeless Services ranked among the highest in number of job listings (427 positions and 223 positions, respectively). The City's health department also ranked among the highest for the total number of job postings (471 positions).

Other major agencies did not show significant effort to hire as of September 2022, but a number of these agencies could be in the early stages of the hiring process and could post substantial job listings at a future date.

Vacancy Savings Must Be Measured Against Service Delivery Performance

The City faces a number of economic and fiscal uncertainties (e.g., volatility in the financial markets, which could adversely impact tax collections and pension investment earnings; the

outcome of upcoming labor negotiations; high inflation; and mandated new needs, including shelter and other services for asylum seekers).

As a result, the City has issued a call to its agencies for new PEG savings targets. As in recent years, the City is expected to leverage vacancies to generate some of these savings. OSC anticipates that vacancy reductions could be a significant source of savings, however, it is currently unclear how agencies will use vacancies to achieve savings and where those vacancies will come from. The City should also consider how the changes could affect service delivery, as the City has stated that the initiatives must not negatively impact services unless those services are demonstrably underutilized. OSC has identified the agencies that rank the highest in terms of the decline in staffing from June 2020 through August 2022 (both in absolute terms and share) as well as in terms of vacancies (e.g., programs for early childhood education as well as other public health and social services).

As noted above, the City has experienced an uneven decline in staffing since June 2020 and is currently confronting substantially higher employee turnover, a challenge faced by many public employers. Understanding the impact of the uneven decline in staffing on the City's service performance since June 2020 should inform the City's decisions over which vacancies may be able to be taken for savings and which should be filled to improve or expand municipal services.

It is possible that some agencies with the largest vacancy rates and percent decline in staffing through July 2022 are currently experiencing operational challenges attributed to staffing shortages. In such cases, the City may decide not to eliminate the vacancies and find other forms of savings, in the interest of increasing staffing to a level that is adequate to meet current and

⁶ NYC Jobs, while comprehensive, does not appear to include every job posting for the City's workforce. For example, positions at the Department of Education, uniformed positions (e.g., police officers), and certain

other occupational groups were notably absent from the City's central job hub. Postings for such jobs are instead announced on the hiring agency's webpage, a standalone job portal, or through other decentralized sources.

emerging demands for municipal services, unless it can clearly identify operational efficiencies that would permit the agencies to operate with fewer-than-planned full-time positions.

There is currently not enough information available to the public to understand the relationship between current staffing levels and operational performance (e.g., the extent to which service output is impacted by each reduction in planned head count). The Mayor's Management Report, while providing comprehensive data on many of the City's operating indicators, does not provide enough information on staffing and the impact on workflow at certain agencies. The City is encouraged to publish a narrative and tabular summary of its review of agency operations to help the public better understand the impact of current staffing levels on the City's ability to deliver services based on current and anticipated demand.

The City also has not released an update on its [workforce profile](#) since the FY 2019 report, which provides information on a number of attributes about City employees, including age, years of service and residency. An updated report may provide additional insight on the underlying cause of recent employee turnover.

Appendix A

OSC-Estimated Historical Vacancy Rates – Major Agencies

(Full-time employees)

Agency	Average		
	FYs 2012-2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Mayoralty	9.9%	13.0%	17.2%
Board of Elections	-7.6%	-40.0%	-37.3%
Comptroller	4.5%	5.2%	13.0%
Law	6.5%	7.7%	15.5%
City Planning	14.9%	15.0%	21.8%
Investigation	15.9%	10.5%	18.7%
Department of Education Civilian	-6.5%	-2.4%	5.1%
Department of Education Pedagogical	-0.2%	3.8%	8.5%
City University Civilian	-0.4%	14.0%	7.6%
City University Pedagogical	-3.5%	0.8%	1.1%
Police Department Civilian	4.2%	6.4%	8.2%
Police Department Uniform	-0.6%	0.4%	0.6%
Fire Department Civilian	-1.1%	1.2%	0.5%
Fire Department Uniform	0.1%	1.8%	3.0%
Administration for Children's Services	8.2%	1.6%	10.5%
Department of Social Services	9.2%	7.9%	17.3%
Department of Homeless Services	7.9%	5.2%	12.5%
Department of Correction Civilian	18.3%	4.0%	23.9%
Department of Correction Uniform	0.4%	-16.2%	5.3%
City Council	9.9%	18.8%	14.3%
Aging	7.5%	5.6%	13.5%
Financial Information Services Agency	7.1%	0.5%	5.2%
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission	17.5%	6.3%	14.3%
Youth and Community Development	7.3%	8.9%	18.2%
Probation	9.3%	5.9%	16.1%
Housing Preservation and Development	10.2%	10.1%	15.2%
Buildings	9.3%	6.5%	24.2%
Health and Mental Hygiene	10.6%	5.7%	19.1%
Administrative Trials & Hearings	6.0%	0.7%	17.6%
Department of Environmental Protection	7.6%	9.8%	15.7%
Department of Sanitation Civilian	6.7%	3.6%	3.8%
Department of Sanitation Uniform	0.3%	2.8%	-1.8%
Department of Finance	9.3%	6.7%	15.4%
Transportation	8.3%	6.1%	11.8%
Department of Parks and Recreation	4.6%	4.8%	11.3%
Department of Design and Construction	12.2%	5.1%	17.2%
Citywide Administrative Services	5.4%	9.5%	16.4%
Department of Information Technology and	14.3%	4.6%	12.3%
Department of Consumer and Worker Protection	12.4%	2.9%	10.7%
District Attorney - Manhattan	-36.6%	-28.9%	-27.1%
District Attorney - Bronx	-12.5%	2.5%	12.2%
District Attorney - Brooklyn	-14.8%	-2.8%	-1.9%
District Attorney - Queens	-19.5%	-8.4%	-1.3%
Citywide	1.7%	3.1%	7.9%

Note: Excludes agencies with less than 250 full-time employees as of August 2022. Rates are estimated based on the difference between actual headcount and the last published forecast for each fiscal year ending June 30. Negative rates indicate that actual headcount exceeded the year-end forecast.

Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

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