

# COLETTE FARNES, M.A.

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An accomplished Human Resources executive manager with over 27 years of experience leading high-impact HR functions in one of the nation's largest counties. Proven expertise in workforce management, labor relations, classification and compensation, EEO policy, training, policy development, strategic planning, and public sector operations. Recognized for transformational leadership and practical, equity-focused solutions tailored to the unique needs of local government.

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## EXPERIENCE

### **Chief Executive Officer | CivicSphere HR Solutions | Anaheim Hills, CA**

Founder and Chief Consultant ~ June 2025 – Present

Founded and lead CivicSphere HR Solutions, a strategic HR consulting firm serving public sector agencies and executive teams. Responsible for setting organizational vision, developing service offerings, and establishing operational frameworks to deliver high-impact HR solutions. Oversee all aspects of company operations, financial management, and service delivery.

- Developed and launched new service models for executive HR consulting, change management, labor relations, and organizational design, tailored to the needs of public sector clients.
- Cultivated partnerships with agency leaders, driving business growth and expanding the client portfolio.
- Delivered organizational assessments and policy updates that improved client operational effectiveness and employee engagement.

### **Chief Human Resources Officer | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**

Executive Department Head ~ October 2021 – Retired March 2025

Provided strategic leadership and administration of Human Resource Services for Orange County's 19,000 employees across 26 departments. Directed a staff of 225 HR professionals and provided executive guidance to the County Executive Officer and Board of Supervisors. Accountable for departmental mission, strategic planning, service delivery, and multimillion-dollar budget oversight. Ensured compliance with labor laws, modernized HR policy frameworks, and led organizational development to maintain employer-of-choice status.

- o Spearheaded a comprehensive classification maintenance study that modernized the County's management classification system, resulting in the creation of 125 classifications and reallocation of over 1,300 positions.
- o Launched a performance-based evaluation process for management staff, facilitating the implementation of merit salary increases aligned with measurable outcomes.
- o Led the revamp of the County's Personnel and Salary Resolution—first update in a decade—with full support from labor unions and Board approval.
- o Created the OC Career Academy, building inclusive public sector career pipelines for high school graduates with limited work experience, increasing workforce diversity and equity.
- o Converted the Retiree Medical Grant program to Healthcare Reimbursement Accounts, reducing the County's long-term liability by \$91.6 million.
- o Served as Treasurer of the *California Counties Human Resources* professional association, collaborating with statewide HR leaders on innovation and policy (2023–2025).

**County Director, Employee & Labor Relations | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**  
Administrative Manager III ~ August 2018 to October 2021

Directed high-stakes labor relations, discipline, grievances, and equal opportunity functions at the county level. Led a team of specialists in labor negotiation strategy, contract administration, and employee rights. Provided executive consultation to elected officials and department heads on sensitive employee relations and workplace risk.

- o Orchestrated the COVID-19 emergency response staffing strategy, reallocating 1,000 employees to support Super POD vaccine sites under Operation Independence.
- o Developed and implemented the Voluntary Incentive Program, including policy drafting, labor negotiations, and stakeholder briefings—resulting in \$50 million in strategic savings.
- o Led interpretation and application of rapidly evolving COVID-19 legislation, including Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and federal pandemic regulations, producing a countywide guidance framework and labor FAQ resource.
- o Successfully managed concurrent contract negotiations with 10 labor organizations, including impasse and fact-finding resolution.

**HR Manager, Orange County Community Resources | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**  
Administrative Manager II ~ September 2017 to August 2018

Directed department-wide HR operations for a workforce of 1,300, ensuring legal compliance and best practice execution across labor relations, recruitment, return-to-work programs, and employee development. Partnered with agency leadership to support complex operational needs with timely HR solutions.

- o Assessed the structure and delivery of administrative services across the department, identifying duplication of effort, inconsistent practices, and gaps in service alignment; facilitated leadership discussions to define strategic priorities for improvement.
- o Developed and presented a set of organizational recommendations that streamlined HR, payroll, and administrative support functions, resulting in clearer accountability, improved service delivery, and increased internal customer satisfaction.

**County Classification & Compensation Manager | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**  
Administrative Manager II ~ November 2015 to September 2017

Led strategic planning and delivery of countywide classification and compensation systems for 19,000 employees. Advised on pay equity, labor market alignment, and policy modernization to support recruitment and retention.

- o Managed a team of seven Classification and Compensation Analysts that conducted maintenance studies and developed updates for 160+ classification specifications, aligning them with current workforce needs and labor market benchmarks.
- o Developed multiple new occupational series and advanced proposals through Board of Supervisors approval, facilitating critical talent acquisition strategies.

**HR Manager, Orange County Public Works | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**  
Administrative Manager II ~ July 2012 to November 2015

Directed department-wide HR operations ensuring legal compliance and best practice execution across labor relations, recruitment, return-to-work programs, and employee development. Partnered with agency leadership to support complex operational needs with timely HR solutions.

- o Managed a team of 16 HR professionals serving over 1,000 employees.
- o Supported executive leadership in workforce planning, policy development, and reorganization strategy.
- o Led all HR planning and change management activities for a major department-wide reorganization of over 1,000 positions, gaining Board of Supervisors approval and aligning staff resources with agency goals.

**Supervising Employee Relations Manager, Social Services Agency | County of Orange, Human Resource Services | Santa Ana, CA**

Administrative Manager I ~ November 2007 to July 2012

Managed employee relations for multiple Social Services Agency divisions, including investigations, discipline, labor strategy, and personnel records.

- o Developed and implemented layoff and voluntary reduction procedures, managing impacts for over 200 employees during a budget-driven reorganization.
- o Investigated, wrote legally defensible documents, and implemented dozens of disciplinary actions up to and including employee suspensions and discharges.

**Supervisor/Social Worker, Children and Family Services | County of Orange, Social Services Agency | Orange, CA**

Senior Social Services Supervisor/Senior Social Worker ~ November 1997 to November 2007

Supervised several units of Master's-level social workers, reviewed child abuse investigations, and managed complex child welfare cases.

- o Provided services to children and their families to ensure safety and aid in stabilization of the family.
- o Provided interagency coordination and expert testimony.
- o Administered residential treatment center contracts and developed programs to provide support services to families.

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## **EDUCATION**

- o Chapman University — Master of Arts, Psychology, 1995
- o California State University, Fullerton — Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 1991

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## **LICENSES & CERTIFICATIONS**

- o Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, 2003
- o California State Association of Counties – Advanced Executive Leadership Certification, 2019
- o Orange County Leadership Academy Graduate, 2013

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## **HIGHLIGHTS & RECOGNITION**

- o Orange County Business Journal — Distinguished Leader in Human Resources, 2023
- o Recognized by California State Senate as a female leader *"Making Herstory"*, 2024