

Promote Human Resource Excellence

Utilities are challenged more than ever with attracting and retaining employees who have the skills necessary to replace the retiring workforce. Your utility's human resources (HR) function is critical to laying the foundation for the future generation of employees. How does your utility's HR function measure up?

Large utilities may have dedicated HR departments, but for many smaller utilities, the HR function is one of many hats worn by a single individual. This checklist is designed to provide a high-level overview of best practices for your HR function grouped into five key areas below. Using this checklist, you can complete a quick assessment of your utility's operational effectiveness in each of these critical areas and identify internal deficiencies. Addressing these areas of improvement in your utility's HR practices is the first step toward building strong employee practices.

Establish Sound Human Resource Policies

Set organization and human resource policies (at the board and senior management levels) that reflect the important contributions of people to the utility's success.

- Review and revise policies to ensure that they are aligned with the utility's strategic and long-term goals.
- Promote the integration of human resource programs, processes and strategies into the utility's overall strategic plan.
- Make sure the budget adequately supports the utility's human resource programs.
- Provide resources for human resources staff to stay abreast of trends in the employment market, innovations in human resources practices, and changes in legal compliance matters.
- Create and support an environment that encourages two-way communication with employees and provides ways for employees to share ideas with management.
- Ensure that compensation and benefit programs are compliant with applicable laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Review your utility's compliance with safety laws, safety training requirements, and other safety measures.

Recruitment and Retention

- Review compensation programs to ensure that salaries and benefits are competitive in the marketplace.
- To attract and retain employees, offer enhancements that provide flexibility and accommodate personal values. These could include flexible work hours, telecommuting, retention incentives, job-sharing and educational opportunities.
- Educate elected officials and the community on the importance of competitive pay and benefits to ensure there is support for competitive compensation.
- Establish partnerships with technical and vocational schools to improve recruitment opportunities.
- Establish onboarding programs to ensure that new employees have the tools they need to effectively do their jobs.
- Build programs to encourage a positive work environment and supports a culture of innovation.

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Succession Planning and Staff Development

- ❑ Develop a succession plan. Identify those in key positions that are eligible to retire in the next five years. Plan for position vacancies and new skills needed so there are seamless transitions in key employee areas.
- ❑ Educate your staff. Budget for and require training for professional education for every employee and encourage them to participate in state and national public power events.
- ❑ Develop a continuous learning environment that provides access to ongoing training, to ensure that as the industry changes, each employee has the proper skills to perform his/her job.
- ❑ Provide leadership and management training for supervisors and managerial employees.
- ❑ Consider working with your joint action agency, state association, or other utilities for job-sharing opportunities where specialized skills are needed but hard to find.
- ❑ Educate all employees on the philosophy and benefits of public power and its focus on customer service so they reflect public power values in dealings with customers and the community.

Workforce Diversity

- ❑ Educate employees on the benefits of workforce diversity. Establish strategies and practices to recruit and retain a work force that reflects the diversity of the community you serve.
- ❑ Provide diversity training as part of employee orientation and educate employees on the benefits of a diverse work force.

Data and Technology

- ❑ Employ technologies that enable employees to do their jobs more efficiently and expands their skill levels.
- ❑ Consider implementing technology to streamline current processes, such as onboarding, benefits enrollment, and performance management.
- ❑ Ensure your utility has adequate document retention practices. Consider data that may be needed years from now for programs such as a pension plan or other retirement benefits.
- ❑ Utilize a Human Resources Information System (HRIS) or other system to capture important employee data, such as phone numbers and emergency contacts.