



Flint Hills Regional Council Operations Manual Template

Attachment 2

Final Report of the Regional Planning Organization Project

RPO Steering Committee

RPO Technical Management Team

December, 2009

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ATTACHMENT 2

Flint Hills Regional Council Operations Manual Adopted (Fill in Date)

I. Background Information

A. Manual Purpose and Function

All new employees will report to the Executive Director or the designated Administrative Manager on their first day of employment. The Administrative Manager will review the Flint Hills Regional Council's Operations Manual with the new employee. The new employee will also be provided with a copy of the Operations Manual. The new employee will sign for receipt of the Operations Manual and will be encouraged to read it carefully. The new employee will also be provided with written materials pertaining to the organization's benefits program. Appropriate payroll, personnel, and insurance forms will also be completed.

The new employee's supervisor will then conduct an orientation that is appropriate to the employee's position. At a minimum, this will encompass all or most of the following elements:

- A tour of the facility;
- An introduction to all employees of the Flint Hills Regional Council;
- An introduction to the vision, mission and work of the organization;
- A review of the employee's assignment as it contributes to the organization's larger mission;
- A brief review of adopted plans, programs, and technical services;
- A review of organization policies and procedures;
- A detailed review of the employee's job duties; and
- A description of any training or other orientation activities, which will be conducted over the course of the employee's first few weeks of employment.

The supervisor will develop, initiate, and monitor an on-the-job training program for all new employees as appropriate.



B. Vision & Mission

The Flint Hills Regional Council; is a voluntary nonprofit organization of local governments which serves the citizens of Geary, Pottawatomie and Riley Counties, Kansas. It is organized under the provisions of Kansas Code # (TBD).

The FHRC has the following vision and mission:

Vision

The northern Flint Hills Region of Geary, Pottawatomie and Riley Counties are flourishing with an exceptional Heartland lifestyle, world-class knowledge economy, and inspiring tallgrass prairie environment. The accomplishments of the individual and distinct communities of the region have been through an extraordinary level of trust, cooperation and mutual support. The achievements have been gained with the vision, leadership, assistance and expertise of the FHRC including the contributions of partners such as Kansas State University, Ft. Riley and other institutional partners including the Chambers of Commerce.

Mission

The FHRC is a voluntary service association of the local governments of Geary, Pottawatomie and Riley Counties and other civic leaders to provide service of mutual benefit to the region best gained from cooperation and partnership. Through open communications, excellent data resources and professional expertise of the highest standards, the FHRC provides leadership support and technical assistance across all government and civic sectors of the three counties and beyond, as requested. The FHRC achieves success through equitable, cost efficient sharing of resources, and mutual efforts to bring new resources and added value for benefit to the region as a whole.

Responsibilities

The Flint Hills Regional Council will carry out its mission through exercising the following responsibilities:

- To generate meaningful dialogue and cooperation on issues of common concern;
- To contribute to the development of a common vision pertaining to the region's future;
- To provide a forum in which elected officials and other decision-makers can develop and implement solutions to regional problems;
- To promote public-private partnerships; and
- To provide a common voice for the Flint Hills region in its communications with the state and the federal government.



Core Functions

These responsibilities are achieved through the performance of seven core functions:

- The identification and framing of issues of concern;
- Regional advocacy;
- The identification of potential funding sources and the pursuit of funding;
- Project planning, programming, and coordination;
- Participation in partnerships;
- Sub-grantee administration; and
- The direct provision of technical services, data, and other resources to its member communities and organizational partners and the public as appropriate.

The seven functions pertain to three substantive service domains:

- Transportation and related land use;
- The environment and natural resources (air, water, and land); and
- Community and economic development.

C. Structure

The Board will hire an Executive Director to, in turn, hire and direct staff.

In order to accomplish its mission, the Board will establish standing committees of the Board including an Executive Committee and others it may deem appropriate and ad-hoc committees to advise it with regard to policy issues and also in cooperation with staff at the program level. Board Members serve without pay and most devote at least several hours a month to the FHRC's business. Direct expenses incurred by a board member may be reimbursed as set forth in the annual approved budget.

The clear majority of the Board members are local elected officials in units of local government within the FHRC member counties. Their participation on the Board is intended by inter-local agreement to relate area-wide planning closely to the needs of local governments and their constituencies. Board Members are thus charged with the tasks of:

1. Representing local interests; and
2. Transcending those interests in order to identify a larger interest, which is truly regional in nature.

The relationship between members of the Flint Hills Regional Council and staff is set by the executive director.

The actions and judgments of the Board in the interest of the region must be based on:

- Socio-economic forecasts of future projections which are of the highest professional quality;



- A range of thoroughly considered alternative solutions which are appropriate to the challenges within FHRC Region; and
- Staff and other expert recommendations, which are timely, complete, and pertinent.

In order to ensure that plans are successfully implemented, staff, in turn, is dependent on the support of Board members and staff ability to communicate effectively with officials of local government is essential. Board members may determine, for instance, that they should reject or alter a staff recommendation in response to policy priorities. It is important for mutual understanding between Board members and staff to recognize that planning and regional governance must both be balanced and effectively employed if regional development is to be fully accountable to the needs and desires of citizens and overall well-being of the FHRC Region and beyond.

The Executive Director is appointed by and accountable to the FHRC Board. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the FHRC's various functions and services. He or she directs the development and implementation of policies and procedures pertaining to the Board's operational, administrative, and financial responsibilities. He/she engages members of the Board in a continuous dialogue regarding the organization's mission, vision, core functions, and the substantive areas of responsibility over which it has assumed a leadership position in FHRC Region.

The staff of the Flint Hills Regional Council will be organized by the Executive Director to respond to its mission role and changing levels of staffing and funding. All staff members are responsible directly or indirectly to the Executive Director. A copy of a conceptual staff organization chart will be maintained by the Executive Director.

D. Financing

The Flint Hills Regional Council does not have taxing authority. Majority of the agency funds are annually derived from service grants, contracts and appropriations and supported by member counties and the incorporated municipalities appropriations annually in an amount equal to \$ _____ per capita. The vast majority of annual funding derives from grants and contracts provided through state and federal sources. Most of the funding received through the state is of federal origin.

E. Quality Commitment

The Board has adopted a quality program to ensure its commitment to the provision of high-quality public service. The objectives of the Board's quality program are five-fold:

- To ensure continuous improvement in the quality of every service which the FHRC provides to local governments and to the citizens of FHRC member counties;
- To reflect an ethic of stewardship in its administration of funds;
- To reflect a high level of courtesy, respect, responsiveness, and professionalism in all interactions with elected officials, citizens, other key stakeholders, and other staff members;



- To promote personal and institutional accountability in the performance of all of its core functions; and
- To ensure the ongoing development of the FHRC's capacity to meet the region's present and future needs.



II. GENERAL OFFICE PROCEDURES

A. Correspondence and Handling of Mail

All mail except mail that is marked "Personal" or "Confidential" or which is obviously so, shall be opened by the Secretary. All incoming mail shall be date-stamped. Documents attached to incoming letters shall NOT be date-stamped. In the case of booklets and other material received in bulk, only the transmittal or the top copy shall be stamped. The back cover of single booklets, pamphlets and magazines shall be date-stamped. In addition, where appropriate, material to be placed in the library shall be so stamped. Such library bound published materials of general staff interest such as periodicals may receive a routing stamp for staff circulation review before being filed.

Each copy of transmittal sheets or procedure changes and new procedures received from federal or state agencies shall be date-stamped. In no event should a date-stamp be placed where it would obliterate or make illegible any text or title. At the time of opening the mail, the envelope or wrapping in which the material came shall be saved ONLY if necessary to identify to whom or from whom the letter or material originated. Telegrams and special delivery letters shall be delivered promptly to the Executive Director.

All mail except letters, etc., addressed specifically to another staff member, shall be forwarded to the Executive Director. All mail addressed to the Executive Committee, the FHRC or its officers shall be forwarded to the Executive Director.

Staff members are requested to read, initial and forward mail as rapidly as possible. The purpose of this procedure is to insure that maximum use and benefit result from publications received while distributing the reading workload for the entire office and preventing a backlog of material from piling up on any one desk.

Publications and other material, which relate to a specific function, the responsibility for which is clearly set forth in the job description, shall be routed to that person with further routing as determined by that individual.

IN NO EVENT ARE ORIGINAL INCOMING LETTERS OR FILE COPIES OF OUTGOING LETTERS TO BE RETAINED OR PLACED OTHER THAN IN THE CENTRAL FILES AFTER INITIAL ROUTING.

If the incoming letter requires no answer, but a copy of it is desired, the letter shall be photocopied, and the original letter, after routing, shall be forwarded promptly to the Administrative Manager for filing.

In the routing of mail the rule of common sense shall apply. Any urgent items, which are the responsibility of someone absent from the office shall be called to the attention of another who may be able to handle the matter.



B. Preparation of Letters and Memoranda

Each staff member will normally be responsible for preparing answers to mail relating to the individual's function. Where appropriate, drafts shall be prepared for review by the Executive Director. Letters to an elected representative (Governor, Mayor, Congressman, etc.) shall be prepared only for the signature of the Executive Director, or, in appropriate instances, for the Chair or other Officer of the Executive Committee. This also applies to other than routine correspondence with the other local governmental units. Letters to federal or state agencies shall usually be prepared for the signature of the Executive Director EXCEPT when such correspondence is a matter of regularly assigned staff duties or generated from specifically assigned responsibilities.

The Administrative Manager shall prepare and shall sign all correspondence relating to insurance, claims, bills and related subjects except for those letters at his/her discretion which should be signed by the Executive Director or the Chairman of the Executive Committee.

Correspondence, other than submission of information with the attorneys of the agency and with other professional consultants shall be signed by the Executive Director.

Copies of correspondence shall be prepared in addition to those designated by the author described as follows.

C. Personal correspondence file copy

Author and typist's initials shall be shown on all copies in the lower left corner. Information copies shall be photocopied, and unless otherwise specified, the names of recipients of information copies shall be shown on all copies, including the original. If a blind copy is specified, the recipient's name shall appear only on his copy and on the file and reader copies preceded by "bcc", unless otherwise specified.

Mail shall generally be sent by First Class, except as may be noted by the sender.

Except in unusual circumstances, no letter shall be presented by the prepared for executive signature unless all enclosures are with that letter and the letter is ready in every respect for signing and dispatching. Enclosed documents or forms requiring signature shall be so marked.

D. Mail prepared for signature shall be assembled as follows

1. Original letters to be signed together with any enclosures clipped under the fold of a reversed envelope appropriately addressed and of the appropriate size.
2. Information copies, if any, with appropriate faced envelopes addressed and clipped thereto.
3. File copies of the letter with original of incoming letter, if any, stapled below it, so the person signing may refer to it if necessary.
4. Copies of any enclosures sent with the outgoing letter shall also be stapled to the file copies, or if not feasible, shall be identified on the file copies.



After mail is signed, it shall be returned to the Administrative Manager for checking and appropriate insertion into envelopes. The file copies also go to filing.

Interoffice memoranda shall be used to report matters of any consequence or to raise pertinent questions with copies sent to appropriate persons.

All material to be filed shall be routed as promptly as possible to the Administrative Manager who shall see that it is filed promptly. The Administrative Manager shall be responsible for the central files of the office. The Administrative Manager shall receive all outgoing mail and shall seal, stamp and dispatch same as often as appropriate.

E. Use of Telephones:

The Receptionist (or those acting in this function) shall have the responsibility for answering the telephone as well as for receiving callers to the office. If the Receptionist is absent or otherwise engaged, an employee shall be designated to assume these responsibilities.

The typical telephone greeting shall be,

"Good morning, or good afternoon, Flint Hills Regional Council. This is (state your first name)."

The Receptionist or the person answering the phone shall promptly refer all calls by means of the intercommunication line to the person the caller names and that staff member shall identify himself when he takes the call.

In the routing of all calls by the intercommunication line the person buzzing shall identify the line the call is on by number as appropriate and the name of the caller IF KNOWN. The Receptionist is to await a response from the called individual to confirm that person understood the message before returning to work. This avoids callers being on hold for an extended period of time.

The Receptionist should make a reasonable effort to identify the caller by simply asking, "May I say who is calling?" The information sought is the first and last name of the individual and the firm or organization represented.

In short, callers must not feel that it is difficult to get to talk to anyone, nor should they ever have to identify themselves more than once unless it is how to spell their name. It is important the caller be able to talk to the person who can best help him or her.

All the telephones in the office are primarily for business use and the number of lines adequate to serve the current purposes for business use. It is understandable that there will be times when personal calls are made or received. All employees shall keep such calls to a minimum and as short as possible so as not to tie up any one line for an unreasonable length of time.

Staff members are authorized to receive collect calls and are authorized to place long distance calls that are necessary to the performance of their duties. Discretion in the number of calls and checking with other staff members to avoid duplication of calls or communications is expected.



COURTESY, TACT, AND COMMON SENSE SHOULD CHARACTERIZE OUR USE OF THE TELEPHONE AND OTHER COMMUNICATION MEDIUM.

F. Use of Cells Phones, Office Vehicles, Office Computers, Internet and E-mail

Use of agency cell phones, office vehicles, office computers or Internet and e-mail services for personal business or pleasure during normal working hours is to be avoided. It is recognized that exceptions do occur, but for reasons of efficiency and production, each staff member is to keep such use at a minimum. Use of office cell phones and vehicles after hours for personal business or pleasure is prohibited unless an emergency situation exists and similar personal items are not at hand. Playing computer games during regular office hours is prohibited.

COMMON SENSE SHOULD DICTATE WHAT IS AND WHAT ISN'T APPROPRIATE.

G. Email Use Policy

To prevent tarnishing the public image of Flint Hills Regional Council, when email goes out from Flint Hills Regional Council the general public will tend to view that message as an official policy statement from the Flint Hills Regional Council

1. Scope.

This policy covers appropriate use of any email sent from a Flint Hills Regional Council email address and applies to all employees, vendors, and agents operating on behalf of Flint Hills Regional Council

2. Prohibited Use.

The Flint Hills Regional Council email system shall not to be used for the creation or distribution of any disruptive or offensive messages, including offensive comments about race, gender, disabilities, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious beliefs and practice, political beliefs, or national origin. Employees who receive any emails with this content from any Flint Hills Regional Council employee should report the matter to their supervisor immediately.

3. Personal Use.

Using a reasonable amount of Flint Hills Regional Council resources for personal emails is acceptable, but non-work related email will be saved in a separate folder from work related email. Sending chain letters or joke emails from a Flint Hills Regional Council email account is prohibited. Virus or other malware warnings and mass mailings from Flint Hills Regional Council shall be approved by Flint Hills Regional Council management before sending. These restrictions also apply to the forwarding of mail received by a Flint Hills Regional Council employee.



4. Monitoring.

Flint Hills Regional Council employees shall have no expectation of privacy in anything they store, send or receive on the company's email system. Flint Hills Regional Council may monitor messages without prior notice.

5. Enforcement.

Any employee found to have violated email policy might be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

6. Definitions.

Email - The electronic transmission of information through a mail protocol such as SMTP or IMAP. Typical email clients include Eudora and Microsoft Outlook.

Forwarded email - Email resent from an internal network to an outside point.

Chain email or letter - Email sent to successive people. Typically the body of the note has direction to send out multiple copies of the note and promises good luck or money if the direction is followed.

Sensitive information - Information is considered sensitive if it can be damaging to Flint Hills Regional Council or its customers' reputation or market standing.

Virus warning - Email containing warnings about virus or malware. The overwhelming majority of these emails turn out to be a hoax and contain bogus information usually intent only on frightening or misleading users.

Unauthorized Disclosure - The intentional or unintentional revealing of restricted information to people, both inside and outside Flint Hills Regional Council, who do not have a need to know that information.

H. Use of Office Copier for Personal Reasons:

Employee use of the office copier for personal reasons is permitted within reason provided the employee reimburses the office at the rate of \$____ per copy if more than four (4) copies are made.

I. Use of Shredder:

Documents destined to be thrown away that contain personal, official or proprietary information on clients (individual persons or businesses) are to be shredded before they are discarded in the trash.



III. Doing Business with the Flint Hills Regional Council

A. Procurement Procedures

Below are the written procurement procedures used by the Flint Hills Regional Council in the daily conduct of its business. These procedures are in general accord with federal requirements set forth in Public Law 103-355 (Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA)) and the Code of Conduct further adopted by the FHRC (included in the Appendix). The intent of the procedures is to describe how the FHRC obtains services and supplies for project activities.

- Small Purchases. Small purchases is a simple and informal method used where goods or services do not cost in aggregate more than \$_____;
- Price or rate quotations should be obtained (either by telephone or in writing) from an ample number of qualified sources (usually 3 or more);
- Documentation regarding businesses contacted and the prices quoted should be maintained in the procurement file;
- Written documentation regarding basis for selection and cost should be kept in a procurement file. Action taken by the FHRC should be recorded in meeting minutes;
- Preparation and signing of a contract formalizing a scope of work and the terms of compensation is required for purchases totaling \$_____ or more;
- Competitive sealed bids are initiated by publishing an Invitation for Bids (IFB) or similar notice in a local newspaper or local television access channel, on the agency web site and/or in contractor trade publications;
- The IFB process is used when detailed specifications for the goods or services to be procured can be prepared and the primary basis for award is cost;
- All bids received must be opened in public and tabulated according to published selection criteria; the results are provided in writing to bidders;
- The award may be a firm-fixed-price contract (based on lump sum or unit price termed a Request for Proposals, RFP); and
- Preparation and signing of a contract formalizing a scope of work and the terms of compensation is required after FHRC officials approve of the bid action and contract amount.

Competitive negotiations are initiated by preparing a Request For Qualifications (RFQ). The RFP is used when price is a factor in selection; the RFQ is used when price is primarily considered after selection. If only FHRC funds are used to pay for any of the services being procured through this process, the FHRC can elect to consider and discuss the project and proposed scope of services with a minimum of firms with which it has had prior experience. If outside federal or state program funds are used for any of the services being procured, then the procurement rules associated with the program or programs take precedent. In both RFP and RFQ, the services to be procured are clearly defined, as are the factors to be used in evaluation and selection.

- All proposals received are to be reviewed according to the defined selection criteria. The review should be in writing such as a ranking system.



- For RFQs, an invitation is made to one or more respondents to negotiate a price or fee for the services to be provided.
- For both RFQs and RFP's, final selection is made on the basis of the most responsible offer or price and other factors considered, such as qualifications.
- Preparation and signing of a contract formalizing a scope of work and the terms of compensation occurs after selection and contact is made with the chosen firm.
- Non-competitive negotiations can be used only when
- The use of competitive negotiations is not feasible;
- There is some public emergency; or,
- The results of the competitive negotiations are inadequate.

B. Purchasing and Budget Control

In purchasing equipment and supplies, the Executive Director and the Administrative Manager shall have the responsibility for obtaining the best possible merchandise at the lowest possible price. Where the cost is no greater, business insofar as possible will be conducted with firms within the region. Purchase of equipment and other substantial expenditures should be considered fully before any recommendation is made since it is essential that the agency have the most economical operation possible consistent with the needs and objectives.

The Executive Director shall be the responsible Purchasing Agent for the agency.

Purchases in behalf of the agency not exceeding \$_____ may be authorized by the Executive Director within budget limitations approved by the Board. Employees shall not buy anything for any purpose without the prior authorization of the Executive Director on such forms that may be prescribed.

Purchases in behalf of the agency in excess of \$_____ shall have the prior authorization of the Executive Committee. When such purchases are required prior to an Executive Committee meeting, the Executive Director will secure the approval of the agency's Secretary-Treasurer or in his or her absence the agency's Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

Purchases in behalf of the agency in excess of \$_____ shall be authorized by the Executive Committee after the Executive Director shall have solicited, orally or in writing, competitive quotations from at least three (3) suppliers, if so many be available. A tabulation of the competitive quotations shall be presented to the Executive Committee prior to their selecting one quotation and authorizing purchase, and such tabulation shall be kept on file.

Only the Executive Director, as Purchasing Agent for the agency, shall authorize the establishment of open accounts with potential suppliers and vendors.

C. Standards of Conduct in the Procurement of Goods and Services

All employees shall adhere to the following standards for conduct in the procurement of goods and services by the FHRC:



- No employee shall solicit or accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from either contractors or potential contractors of the FHRC.
- No employee shall restrict the free and open competition by contractors or potential contractors in the procurement of goods and services through conflict of interest, discriminatory or non-competitive practices or other methods, which may restrict or eliminate competition or otherwise restrain trade.
- All transactions shall meet the minimum ARM'S LENGTH requirements.

ARM'S LENGTH TRANSACTIONS ARE TRANSACTIONS CONSUMMATED THROUGH DEALS MADE BETWEEN INDEPENDENT AND UNRELATED PERSONS. THEY ARE COMPETITIVE, STRAIGHT FORWARD, INVOLVING NO FAVORITISM OR IRREGULARITY, PROVIDING THE FHRC AND THE SELLER AN OPPORTUNITY TO FREELY ACT, EACH SEEKING HIS OWN BEST ECONOMIC INTEREST AND AGREEING UPON A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE PRICE.

All costs or expenses from transactions between persons or businesses, which are related or associated with FHRC personnel, shall be examined for reasonableness and appropriateness. Such associations include but are not limited to:

1. Family;
2. Ownership of a business by an FHRC employee;
3. Members of the FHRC Board of Directors, conducting business with the FHRC; or
4. When the transactions are found to be NON-ARM'S LENGTH as defined above, the goods and services charged will be limited to the amount that would be allowable as the normal cost of ownership.

All bids and contracts signed with the FHRC shall have the following disclaimer:

"The undersigned bidder/contractor hereby declares the only parties interested in this proposal are named herein; that this proposal is made without collusion with any other person, firm or corporation and that no employee, officer or agent of the Flint Hills Regional Council is directly or indirectly financially interested in this bid/contract."

Any employee who purposely violates the spirit and intent of this statement shall be disciplined according to the personnel policies of the FHRC.

D. Complaints and Responses to Complaints:

Complaints from member governmental units, contractors or beneficiary clientele will occur from time-to-time given the nature and diversity of work performed by FHRC personnel. While never welcomed, once a complaint occurs the individual(s) involved will follow the prescribed procedures of the program having precedence over the project. If no such procedures exist, the following shall constitute the minimum response.

- The Executive Director is to be notified of all complaints, be they verbal or written.



- Verbal complaints are to be logged in the project file and are to be addressed at the time they are received if immediate solution is possible. Any action taken is to be noted in the file by the employee handling the complaint.
- When immediate solution is not possible, the complainant should be directed to put the issue or issues in writing. All written complaints are to be signed and dated by the complainant and directed to the Executive Director.
- Each issue raised in the complaint is to be identified and itemized by the Executive Director, with the employee(s) most capable of explaining the circumstances to return a written response to each issue within five (5) consecutive days.
- The Executive Director will use this information to then seek resolution of the matter(s) brought forth in the complaint in a timely manner.



IV. News and Media Relations

A. News Media and General Public Relations

Every employee shall have a responsibility for performing his or her work in such a manner as to insure the best possible public relations, which in turn contributes to the recognition of and support for the agency. This relates to personal contacts, both official and unofficial, and contacts by mail, email and telephone.

It will be the responsibility of all the professional staff to be prepared to present to interested groups or organizations, presentations explaining FHRC work and specific studies to which they are assigned.

In dealing with official and unofficial agencies, it is essential that a cooperative relationship be maintained to engender mutual support for present and future programs and confidence in our organization.

In accordance with this policy adopted by the Executive Committee, dealings with the press shall primarily be by the Executive Director, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, or Secretary-Treasurer. The purpose of this policy is to avoid the appearance of disagreement or lack of coordination, which quite often results from news media inquiries directed to various members of a board or organization on the same subject.

In carrying out this policy, several guidelines should be considered:

- Strive to do your best and remember that teamwork is a necessity if we are to accomplish agency goals;
- Information and education are our key services in obtaining public acceptance of agency goals;
- Honesty is always to be practiced in agency and public relations;
- Relationships with people during everyday activities will be the basis for cooperation on future projects; and
- Everyone deserves recognition and praise for their share of agency accomplishments.

ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE FHRC UNDERTAKING.

B. FHRC Public Relations

The Executive Director is primarily responsible for communicating with and reporting to Board members of the Flint Hills Regional Council. However, professional staff members and other employees may be required to interact with Board members as well.



All employees should learn to recognize members of the Board. All communications with Board members should be conducted in a manner, which is both friendly and professional as authorized by the Executive Director.

Employees who are assigned as committee or sub-committee support are expected to work closely with their respective chairs and assigned committee members. Other contacts with Board members concerning business matters before their assigned committees should be coordinated with the assigned support staff. Committee support staff are responsible for keeping the Executive Director and other members of the management team informed about matters pending before their respective committees.

The Executive Director should be advised of any issue or concern, which is raised by a Board member during contacts of this kind. Project managers may similarly need to communicate with members of the FHRC Board who have expressed a particular interest in their assigned projects. The Executive Director should be apprised of such communication.

C. Media Relations

Media requests for data or other factual, released public information should be referred to the Executive Director who may identify those employees who have access to and are familiar with the requested information for a response. Any policy questions that are raised during an otherwise routine request for information should be processed in conformance with the guidelines, which follow.

Employees are frequently asked to respond to questions posed by the public, the media, and others concerning matters of FHRC policy. Adopted plans, other published documents, and the minutes of Board meetings represent the only authoritative sources of answers to questions of policy. Many questions can only be answered appropriately by noting that policy is made by the Board of the Flint Hills Regional Council acting as a body of the whole. Unless the Board has acted officially in this capacity on a particular question, no policy, as such, exists.

As a general rule, employees should not respond to speculative questions relating to FHRC policy. Inquiries of this kind should be referred the Executive Director. Employees should avoid offering their own opinion in any situation in which it is possible that their comments may be perceived as reflective of the FHRC's position on a question. Similarly, employees should avoid drawing conclusions regarding Board actions. They should also avoid predicting Board actions. The appropriate role of an employee in press relations is to supply released, factual information.

When media contacts are initiated away from the office, a Board member or the senior employee present should respond in a manner which is consistent with the above guidelines. The contact should then be reported to the Executive Director as soon as possible.

Requests for information will be evaluated by on a case-by-case basis. Employees should not initiate contacts with members of the media on behalf of the Flint Hills Regional Council unless it is with the prior approval of the Executive Director.



Requests for information will be evaluated by on a case-by-case basis. Board members should not initiate contacts with members of the media on behalf of the Flint Hills Regional Council, unless it is with the prior approval of the Board Chair and in a manner consistent with the public position adopted by the Executive Committee on that topic or issue. Board members receiving media question pertaining to the FHRC while function in other official roles are advised to refer that question to the Chair or Executive Director for an appropriate response.



V. Compensation and Benefits

A. Staff Positions

With the exception of positions which are addressed specifically in law, the authority to hire employees for all staff positions at the Flint Hills Regional Council is vested in the Executive Director. Two types of employment are provided for the following:

1. Hourly positions are generally temporary or part-time in nature. Compensation is based on an hourly wage. As provided for in the law, workers' compensation and unemployment compensation may be provided to hourly positions.
2. Salaried positions are full-time and are expected to be continuing in nature. Fringe benefits may include paid leave provisions, insurance and retirement programs, as well as workers compensation and unemployment compensation.

B. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Status

Each staff position at the Flint Hills Regional Council is evaluated with respect to its status under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Employees whose positions are determined to be exempt will be provided with an opportunity to concur or dissent in this determination. No employee will be placed into exempt status without his or her consent.

C. Position Classification System

The Flint Hills Regional Council uses a grade and step compensation structure. The structure includes ten job classes: (1) Executive Director (job class 10); (2) Agency Management (job class 9); (3) Program Management (job class 8); (4) Professional III (job class 7); (5) Professional II (job class 6); (6) Professional I (job class 5); (7) Technical/Administrative III (job class 4); (8) Technical/Administrative II (job class 3); (9) Technical/Administrative I (job class 2); and (10) Interns and Seasonal Aides (job class 1). Grading is determined based on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics, which are associated with each job.

D. Compensation Structure

Hourly employees are paid for hours worked based on their hourly wage.

A salaried employee is normally paid 1/24th of his or her annual salary each pay period. However, if unpaid leave is taken during a pay period or if it is the employee's initial or final pay check and less than a full pay period was worked, the employee will be paid an amount equal to 1/24th of his or her annual salary less the sum of his or her hourly equivalent (i.e., the employee's annual salary divided by 1,820) times the number of hours not worked during the pay period.



E. Overtime/Compensatory Time

1. Exempt Employees:

It is expected that professional and managerial employees who are considered exempt from the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will complete their daily assignments outside of regular business hours without additional compensation. However, an exempt salaried employee may be awarded compensatory time as specified below.

- An exempt employee may request to earn compensatory time for hours worked in excess of business hours (7 hours per day) to attend meetings, events, conferences, fairs, workshops, seminars, staff development sessions, and other activities as determined by the Executive Director.
- An exempt employee may earn compensatory time for hours worked in excess of business hours (7 hours per day) to perform extraordinary assignments as determined by the Executive Director.
- Compensatory time will not be granted for additional hours spent to complete a normal job assignment.
- Compensatory time will be earned on a 1 to 1 ratio. For 1 hour of extra time worked, 1 hour of compensatory time will be earned.
- If extra time is worked on holidays or weekends to perform professional activities, compensatory time may be granted to an employee, up to a maximum of seven hours per day.
- Compensatory time may be earned in ¼ hour increments; it will be used in ½ hour increments.
- An employee should obtain approval from the Executive Director before they attend one of the approved activities listed above or before they perform extraordinary assignments.
- Requests to earn compensatory time should be turned in to the business office as soon as possible or no later than the due date for the completion of the timesheet for that pay period.
- Use of compensatory time must be scheduled and taken prior to the expiration of the grant or project under which it was earned.
- In case of termination of employment, an employee will not be paid for unused compensatory time.

2. Non-exempt Employees:

It is the policy of the Flint Hills Regional Council to restrict the work of non-exempt employees to the normal workday to the maximum extent which is consistent with the completion of assigned work. Whenever it is necessary for a FLSA non-exempt employee to work additional hours beyond the normal workday, the following policies and procedures will apply.

- Overtime/compensatory time will be paid/earned at a regular pay rate when not more than 40 hours are worked within a single workweek.
- Overtime/compensatory time will be paid/earned at a time and a half rate when more than 40 hours are worked within a single workweek.



- A non-exempt employee may earn compensatory time to perform extraordinary assignments as determined by an employee's supervisor and the Executive Director.
- Compensatory time may be earned in ¼ hour increments; it will be used in ½ hour increments.
- An employee should obtain approval from their supervisor and/or the Executive Director before they work more than 35 hours within a single workweek or before they perform extraordinary assignments.
- Requests to earn compensatory time should be turned in to the business office as soon as possible or no later than the due date for the completion of the timesheet for that pay period.
- Use of compensatory time must be scheduled and taken prior to the expiration of the grant or project under which it was earned.

F. Insurance, Retirement and Other Benefits

As provided for in law, the Flint Hills Regional Council provides social security, workers compensation, and unemployment compensation benefits to all employees who are covered by applicable state and federal laws.

The Board also provides other insurance and benefit programs for salaried employees. The types, amounts, provisions and providers of these optional insurance programs are subject to change by the Board at any time. Described below are a summary of the various programs and benefits, which are currently in effect.

1. Health Insurance

The Flint Hills Regional Council participates in the (TBD) health insurance program. This program includes fee-for-service health care coverage, dental coverage, vision coverage, term life insurance, and certain other benefits.

All salaried employees and their eligible dependents are eligible to participate in this program, subject to the terms and conditions of the program. Insurance premiums are paid jointly by the FHRC and the employee through payroll withholding. Because the group health insurance program and its benefits are subject to change, employees are advised to refer to the insurance booklets which are provided to them for more information. Employees may also contact the TBD or its plan administrator for additional information.

2. Disability Insurance

The Flint Hills Regional Council provides both long-term and short-term disability insurance to salaried employees. This insurance is provided by the TBD. It provides up to TBD salary continuation in the event of a disabling condition due either to on the job injury or work related illness. Insurance premiums are paid in full by the FHRC. Because this coverage is subject to change, employees are advised to refer to the insurance booklets, which are provided to them for more information.



3. Retirement Fund

The Flint Hills Regional Council is in the TBD retirement fund. Participation in the program is required for all salaried employees. Each covered employee is required to contribute TBD percent of gross of his or her salary through payroll withholding. The FHRC contributes an amount to the program, which is determined by actuarial assessments made by TBD. TBD furnishes annual statements to all participants, which contain information on member contributions through the preceding year. Additional information may be obtained from the Administrative Manager.

Deferred Compensation Plan

All salaried employees are eligible to participate in the optional IRS Section 457 deferred compensation plan which is offered by the Flint Hills Regional Council and administered by the (TBD such as ICMA Retirement Corporation). Employees who enroll in the program elect to have a certain amount of their pay “deferred” on a pre-tax basis until retirement. Employees may join or change their contribution amount at any time. The (TBD) provides a variety of investment options which are described in materials which are available from the Administrative Manager.

4. Salary Reduction Plan: (TBD Option)

Employees who participate in the group health insurance plan are likely to benefit from participation in the FHRC’s “salary reduction” plan. Established under Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code, this plan enables employees to reduce their compensation in order to pay for their share of group insurance premiums on a pre-tax basis. An employee’s taxable income is lowered thus reducing his or liability for federal, state, and FICA taxes. Questions regarding this plan should be directed to the Administrative Manager.

5. Credit Union: (TBD Option)

Employees are eligible to join the (TBD Credit Union) at any time during their employment with the Flint Hills Regional Council. Fixed amount deposits to a credit union account may be made through payroll deduction. All other transactions must be conducted at one of the TBD’s off-site locations. Informational materials and enrollment forms can be obtained from the Business Office.

6. Staff Development: (TBD Option)

Employees may be given an allowance each year that can be used to attend professional conferences, pay membership dues in professional organizations or subscribe to professional journals (not FHRC-directed). Management staff, professional staff and administrative staff are the three categories, which are given different allowance amounts respectively. The employee may choose to roll over the year’s unused allowance to be used the following year. No reimbursement is provided for unused benefits.



VI. Time and Leave

A. Business Hours

The Flint Hills Regional Council is open to the public on Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays.

Business hours extend from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

All employees are required to work for a 7-hour workday exclusive of a lunch period between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. All employees are required to work between the core hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

With the exception of employees who perform functions, which require a fixed schedule (e.g., reception or telephone answering duties) outside of core hours, employees may begin the workday at any time between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. For salaried employees, the regular work day then extends to a point in time equaling 7 full hours plus an amount equal to the employee's scheduled lunch period. A comparable calculation is appropriate to part-time employees.

Flextime may be suspended in order to ensure attendance at required or general meetings, to ensure the completion of assigned job tasks, or to attend to job tasks identified by the employee's supervisor. To the extent that it is possible to do so, suspensions in flextime will be: (1) scheduled in advance; and (2) issued infrequently.

All employees will sign in when entering the building and sign out when leaving. When leaving before the end of a workday or if an employee does not plan to come to the office first thing in the morning, they need to state their destination, if on FHRC business, and approximate return time. This should be done for the purpose of the receptionist conveying information to visitors and callers.

If abuse is noted by an employee's supervisor, the employee may be required to record the time on the sign in sheet instead. The supervisor will be required to review hours worked on the sign in sheet until the issue is resolved.

B. Accounting for Time Worked

All employees of the Flint Hills Regional Council are accountable for the hours, which they work. This will be accomplished in the following ways.

1. Each employee will prepare a time sheet on a provided standard form documenting time charged to appropriate work activities. Completed time sheets will be available to the employee's supervisor on the last day of the pay period or on the first day of the subsequent pay period.



- Supervisors will ensure that all time sheets are prepared in a timely manner and will review and approve all time sheets. By doing this, they are certifying the accuracy of the hours charged to each project code. All time sheets will be available for the payroll manager to begin the payroll process no later than the third working day of the subsequent pay period.*

C. Lunch

Salaried employees are generally required to take a 1-hour lunch break during the workday. A salaried employee may take a ½ hour lunch break on an occasional or infrequent basis with the advance approval of a supervisor. This provision is intended to provide additional flexibility in the workday for employees. Salaried employees must nevertheless work through the workday's core hours.

Non-salaried employees who are paid on an hourly basis may take either a 1-hour or a ½ -hour lunch period.

Lunch breaks do not constitute paid time.

D. Holidays

The following holidays are observed by the Flint Hills Regional Council:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Holiday *
- Presidents Day *
- Good Friday *
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The Friday following Thanksgiving Day *
- Christmas Day

* Alternate Holidays

Salaried employees receive full pay for these holidays. Because part-time employees can only be paid for hours actually worked, they are not paid.

Salaried employees wishing to celebrate religious holidays not included among the designated holidays or wishing to take off on other days for personal use may do so in place of one of the indicated alternate holidays. The scheduling of alternate holidays needs to be approved by the employee's supervisor at the beginning of the year.

A listing of all observed holidays is posted at the beginning of each calendar year.



E. Vacation Leave

Salaried employees earn vacation time according to the following schedule:

- 5.25 hours per month during the first 3 years of salaried employment;
- 7 hours per month during the fourth, fifth, and sixth years of salaried employment;
- 8.75 hours per month during the seventh, eighth, and ninth years of salaried employment; and
- 10.5 hours per month during the tenth and all subsequent years of salaried employment.

For this purpose, a year begins on the first calendar day of the first full month of an employee's salaried tenure. Only – but all - time in a salaried status counts in fulfilling this requirement, even if it is not continuous.

No vacation leave accrues to employees for any month in which 5 or more days of unpaid leave are accumulated.

Accrued vacation time may be used in ½ hour increments.

Up to 30 days of accumulated vacation leave may be carried over from 1 year to another. Cash payments for unused vacation time of up to 30 days may be made only upon separation from salaried employment.

A prescribed form will be used in applying for vacation leave. If possible, vacation leave will be requested at least 2 weeks in advance of its use. The needs of the Flint Hills Regional Council will be considered in approving or disapproving all leave requests.

F. Sick/Personal Leave

Salaried employees will accrue 3.5 hours of sick/personal leave for each full month of salaried employment that can be used any time after it is accrued.

No sick/personal leave accrues to employees for any month in which 5 or more days of unpaid leave are accumulated.

Sick/personal time may be used in ½ hour increments.

Up to 12 days of accumulated sick/personal leave may be carried over from one year to another. No cash payments for unused sick/personal leave may be made upon separation from salaried employment.

Sick/personal days may be used for any form of illness or personal business, including doctor or dental appointments, inclement weather, emergency situations, or other personal business.



G. Other Paid Leave

1. Up to 3 consecutive business days of funeral leave will be granted to employees following the death of a specified relative. Specified relatives include: husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, or the spouse of any of these, or a person living in the same household with the employee. For a married employee, these members of the spouse's family are included. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform his/her supervisor of the length of time they will require for funeral leave. "Steps" or "greats" of the above listed relatives are also covered.

In the event of the death of a co-worker, a decision shall be made by the Executive Director concerning the use of leave time.

2. Salaried employees who are members of the National Guard or the organized military reserve will be allowed up to 2 calendar weeks of military leave per year. Employees should provide as much advance notice of the need for military leave as possible. Employees will be paid the difference between their salaries and the amount of the compensation, which they receive for their military service during this period.
3. Salaried employees will be allowed paid leave for jury duty. Employees should provide as much advance notice of the need for leave for this purpose as possible.

H. Unpaid Leave

Any absence other than those described above in sections D (Holidays), E (Vacation Leave), F (Sick/Personal Leave), and G (Other Leave) represents an unpaid leave of absence.

Although unpaid leave is generally discouraged, an employee may request an unpaid leave of absence through his or her supervisor; however, no unpaid leave requested by an employee of less than twelve hours will be granted unless all accrued vacation leave, sick/personal leave and compensatory time has been exhausted by the employee. As much advance notice as possible should be provided. A request related to sickness or disability will be evaluated in terms of section I (Sick/Disability Provisions) below. The needs of the Flint Hills Regional Council will be considered in approving or disapproving all other requests for unpaid leaves of absence.

I. Court Leave

Any regular, full-time employee of the Flint Hills Regional Council shall be entitled to a leave of absence if he or she is called to testify in a court case or is summoned to jury duty. In the event pay received by said employee for court or jury duty does not equal or exceed the agency salary of such employee, the employee can turn over to the FHRC the pay received and the agency will pay said employee the regular hourly rate or salary.

An employee requesting a leave of absence for court or jury duty shall submit a written request to that effect to the Executive Director along with appropriate duty verification.



J. Sickness and Disability Provisions

The Flint Hills Regional Council offers disability insurance in order to provide income continuation to salaried employees who experience an injury or a major illness. The FHRC also provides vacation leave and sick/personal leave to salaried employees.

Consistent with the requirements of the organization's insurance program, salaried employees have certain options with respect to the type of leave or insurance benefit to use in the event of an injury or illness. However, employees who are eligible for disability benefits may not receive both paid leave and disability payments for the same period of time.

All employees (i.e., both salaried and hourly) will provide advance written notice of request for leave whenever possible.

If an employee attributes an absence to illness, injury, or medical treatment, the employer reserves the right to request a statement from an attending physician, which documents the nature of the injury or illness. A physician's statement is required for absences of 3 or more days due to injury or illness. Additionally, the employee may also require an employee who is absent due to sickness for an extended period of time or for recurring periods of time to consult with a physician or medical facility of the employer's choosing for the purpose of a confirming diagnosis.

The Flint Hills Regional Council is not subject to the provisions of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. Unless and until the thresholds set forth in the Act become applicable, no entitlement, which is provided for in the Act, will accrue to employees beyond those which are provided for in this document. At its discretion, however, the FHRC may extend unpaid leave to an employee for purposes, which are covered in the Act as well as those, which are not covered in the Act.

K. Absence and Tardiness Provisions

Employees will provide advance notice of any request for leave whenever possible. Prescribed forms will be used for this purpose.

In instances in which advance notice of an absence cannot be provided, the employee will call the FHRC, as early as possible, to inform the FHRC that they will not be in that day. If the employee calls before 9:00 AM, a message should be left. The receptionist will make a note of the absence on the sign-in sheet and let the supervisor know of the absence. A supervisor may have the need to contact the employee afterward in the case that information is needed right away and cannot wait until the employee returns.

Employees are expected to report to and begin work on time. The availability of flextime and leave increments of ½ hour should accommodate most eventualities. Additionally, tardy arrivals of less than ½ hour after 9:00 a.m. may be disregarded if they are of an infrequent and irregular nature and should be treated as flex time with the employee compensating with a full 7-hour work day.



L. Office Closing

The Executive Director must approve office closings due to inclement weather or other causes. It is anticipated that office closings will only be approved in rare instances.

If a decision is made to close, the Executive Director will notify all members of the management team. Supervisors, in turn, will immediately call their employees to notify them of the office closing. Salaried employees will be paid for office closings, which are declared by the Executive Director.

M. Personal Hardship Policy

In cases of personal situations, flexible working hours, work-at-home hours or a combination of both may be considered. Requests in this regard should be made in writing and describe the nature of the request, the proposed work schedule, the duration of the special arrangement, and suggested arrangements for coverage of the staff member's responsibilities during this arrangement. Such requests will require the approval of the Executive Director.

If work-at-home hours are requested, consideration will be given as to whether the nature of the employee's work lends itself to being done at home and allows for supervisor evaluation of productivity. Positions, which require frequent or ongoing face-to-face interaction with other staff and/or the general public, are generally considered inappropriate. Consideration will also be given as to whether the work requires the use of equipment or information on the agency's premises, which may not reasonably be taken off-site, and employee's remote connectivity to the agency and its information resources. A work-at-home arrangement generally may not entail any additional financial expense to the agency. A determination must also be made that sufficient staff coverage exists within the department to allow for this option to occur. Participating employees must have demonstrated the ability to perform the work with minimal supervision. A request may be denied on the basis of any of the above criteria.

The employee must be reachable by telephone and email during the specified work-at-home hours and consent to have her or his telephone number released to and used by staff and/or other individuals deemed to have a justifiable need to speak to the employee on work-related matters. The cost of all telephone calls to the FHRC's offices must be borne by the employee, although he or she may request reimbursement for other work-related telephone calls if documentation of the charges is submitted with an expense report.

Supervisors will also be expected to monitor compliance with the flextime rules and resolve conflicts, which may arise. If the work hour preferences of an employee conflict with the FHRC's interests, the interests of the agency will be paramount.



VII. Values and Ethics

A. Statement of Core Values

Employees of the Flint Hills Regional Council are individually and collectively responsible for the following Core Values. The agency is committed to and strives for:

1. Public Service

The identification of and response to the needs of the regional constituencies;

2. Leadership

The development of a progressive vision and clear sense of purpose within the Flint Hills Regional Council and the advancement of a strong and unique role for the FHRC within the region together with a corresponding commitment to understand, support, and champion this vision;

3. Teamwork

A dedication to cooperative interaction and the shared knowledge and use of staff expertise;

4. Respect

A commitment to conducting internal and external relationships with courtesy, dignity, an appropriate degree of confidentiality, and an appreciation for individual and cultural differences;

5. Quality

Products and services characterized by thoroughness, timeliness, responsiveness, and efficiency;

6. Professionalism

A dedication to honesty, integrity, and accountability for both the Flint Hills Regional Council's internal and external relationships is expected.

7. Integrity

The practice of fair and ethical behavior in all FHRC activities;

8. Advancement

An encouragement of each employee's potential and expertise through an individual and a collective commitment to on-going professional and personal development;



9. Innovation

A fostering of flexibility and creativity necessary to accomplish the mission of the Flint Hills Regional Council and an environment supportive of exploring new ideas and methods is encouraged as appropriate to the FHRC mission;

10. Recognition

An acknowledgement and appreciation for each other's achievements through both informal and formal means;

11. Communication

An open and transparent conduct of the XXPC mission work both internally between staff and leadership and with the agency's regional constituents and the general public; and

12. Commitment

Positive interaction among all employees to promote our common vision and to introduce new programs, products, and services.

B. Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

It is the policy of the Flint Hills Regional Council to abide by all federal and state employment laws and to provide equal opportunities to employees and applicants. To assure full implementation of this policy, the FHRC will take affirmative action to assure that it:

- Hires only well-qualified people to perform the many tasks necessary in providing high-quality service within budgeted costs;
- Recruits, hires, and promotes without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status; and
- Ensures that all other actions relating to employer-employee relationship, such as compensation, benefits, transfers, conditions of employment, training, compensation, and termination of employment, will be administered without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability or veteran status.

Equal employment opportunity is the responsibility of the entire workforce. Supervisors, however, are required to be familiar with equal employment opportunity requirements. Further, the Executive Director is responsible for assuring all current and all prospective employees of equal employment opportunity. The Administrative Manager is responsible for the administration of EEO activities and reports directly to the Executive Director.

An employee who feels that he or she has not been afforded equal opportunity in an employment matter may pursue his or her complaint in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures set forth in this manual. An employee who initiates an equal opportunity complaint or who serves, as



a participating witness in an investigation will not be retaliated against, disciplined or discriminated against for having done so in good faith.

C. Harassment Policy

It is the policy of the Flint Hills Regional Council to provide a productive work environment for its employees and not to tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any employee which harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another employee's work performance or which creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment.

THE Flint Hills Regional Council PROHIBITS ANY FORM OF HARASSMENT BECAUSE OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AGE, DISABILITY, MARITAL STATUS, SEX, OR ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTIC PROTECTED UNDER FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LAW. VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINE UP TO AND INCLUDING DISCHARGE.

Sexual harassment, in particular, is strictly prohibited and will engender appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for favors or any conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

While sexual harassment is generally associated with the conduct of a supervisor toward a subordinate, misconduct may also result from the improper actions of co-workers or vendors. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual flirtation, touching, advances or propositions;
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- Graphic or suggestive comments about one's clothes or body;
- Sexually degrading words to describe an individual; and
- The display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, including nude photographs.



Any employee who believes that he or she has been sexually harassed has a responsibility to report the situation as soon as possible to the organization's Executive Director. Complaints alleging sexual harassment by the Executive Director should be directed in writing to the current Board Chair for immediate referral to the Flint Hills Regional Council attorney. The organization's attorney will fully investigate all such allegations. Complaints will be investigated and processed according to the grievance procedures as set forth in this manual.

D. Whistleblowing Policy

This Whistleblower Policy of Flint Hills Regional Council:

- encourages staff and volunteers to come forward with credible information on illegal practices or serious violations of adopted policies of the Organization;
- specifies that the Organization will protect the person from retaliation; and
- identifies where such information can be reported.

Encouragement of Reporting.

FHRC encourages complaints, reports or inquires about illegal practices or serious violations of the Organization's policies, including illegal or improper conduct by the Organization itself, by its leadership, or by others on its behalf. Appropriate subjects to raise under this policy would include financial improprieties, accounting or audit matters, ethical violations, or other similar illegal or improper practices or policies. Other subjects on which the Organization has existing complaint mechanisms should be addressed under those mechanisms, such as raising matters or alleged discrimination or harassment via the Organizations' human resources channels, unless those channels are themselves implicated in the wrongdoing. This policy is not meant to provide a means of appeal from outcomes in those other mechanisms.

Protection from Retaliation.

FHRC prohibits retaliation by or on behalf of the agency against staff or volunteers for making good faith complaints, reports or inquires under this policy or for participating in a review or investigation under this policy. This protection extends to those whose allegations are made in good faith but prove to be mistaken. The agency reserves the right to discipline persons who make bad faith, knowingly false, or wrongful complaints, reports or inquiries or who otherwise abuse this policy.

Whistle Blowing Procedure

The agency Chair will annually appoint a board member (including *ex officio* and non-voting member) of undisputable repute and extensive work experience to be the Whistle Blower Ombudsman in charge of the management and administration of any whistle blowing occurrences. Phone and email contact information of this appointment will be prominently posted for agency staff access.

A Whistle Blower should report a suspected occurrence to the designated board member for council on filing a formal complaint.



With advice to proceed and/or the employee's desire to proceed the employee will submit a written complaint to the reviewing board member. All whistleblowers' reports should be diligently acknowledged, recorded and screened. A whistleblower, whose report is not considered bona fide, should forthwith be told so and such report should be disregarded.

If there is abuse of the process, disciplinary action can be envisaged.

After review of the charge by the designated board representative that is deemed serious and credible, a designated independent attorney separate from the agency's general council selected by the Whistleblower board member and approved by the Executive Committee should investigate the report. The report will be forwarded to the investigator, under strict confidentiality rules, as well as to the appropriate person(s) in the agency.

As soon as reasonably possible, the main results of the due diligence examination should be appropriately communicated as feedback to the whistleblower. The person, whose behavior has been reported, should also be informed of the main object of the ongoing procedure, thereby allowing this person to present objections.

All employees should be in a position to report serious occurrences, as defined above, without fear of retaliation or of discriminatory or disciplinary action. Therefore, the whistleblower's employment, remuneration and career opportunities are protected by the agency during a reasonable period of time.

The agency will maintain, to the fullest extent possible and at all times, the confidentiality of the data revealed through whistleblowing, and the identity of the whistleblower, subject to overriding legal requirements, and should protect such data with the most appropriate

E. Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Flint Hills Regional Council is committed to achieving and maintaining a safe and productive workplace which is free from the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of alcohol. Employees are expected to be in suitable mental and physical condition to perform their assigned job tasks in a satisfactory and professional manner. The use of alcohol, illegal drugs or other intoxicants, which interfere with job performance, may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination. The use, sale, transfer, or possession of alcohol, drugs, controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, or any combination thereof, on the premises of the Flint Hills Regional Council is grounds for immediate termination. All employees are expected to demonstrate moderation in the use of alcohol while participating in business or social functions on behalf of the Flint Hills Regional Council.

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance by a FHRC employee while conducting FHRC business - on or off the organization's premises - is prohibited. This includes off-premises activities during lunch breaks or any other break periods after which an employee is scheduled to return to work, as well as time periods immediately prior to work.



An employee must notify his or her supervisor within 5 working days of any conviction arising out of the misuse of alcohol or any controlled substance while in the employ of the agency. As a condition of continued employment, every employee must abide by the provisions of this policy with regard to drugs and other controlled substances.

An employee found to be in violation of the alcohol provisions of this policy will be issued a written warning. The employee will also be encouraged to seek treatment, if treatment appears to be warranted. Subsequent violations of the alcohol provisions of this policy will result in further disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Any employee found to be in violation of the provisions of this policy that pertain to drugs or any other controlled substances will be required to enroll in an approved rehabilitation program. Any and all costs and expenses associated with the employee's participation in the program will be the sole and exclusive responsibility of the employee. Failure to successfully complete a drug rehabilitation program or failure to pass a return-to-duty drug test, which meets the requirements of federal law and regulations, if applicable, as well as any subsequent violations of the provisions of this policy, will result in further disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

An employee who is not able to perform his or her job satisfactorily because of the effects of an over-the-counter or prescribed medication should request a leave of absence. An employee will be expected to disclose the use of medication if a supervisor questions his or her job performance and the employee believes that a medication, which he or she is taking, may be having an adverse effect. The supervisor will take this circumstance into consideration in recommending an appropriate action to the Executive Director. Appropriate actions include, but are not limited to, sending the individual home in accordance with leave policies or requiring a drug test.

Flint Hills Regional Council requires that this policy be read by the new employee and taken seriously. The FHRC views any violation of this policy as a serious offense, which will be fully investigated. Employees are expected to cooperate with any such investigation.

F. Professional Standards Policy

1. Because of the Flint Hills Regional Council's status as a governmental agency, it is incumbent on all employees to be mindful of any conduct which could be subject to public scrutiny, comment, and/or criticism. Employees should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Employees should know and reflect the FHRC's values set forth in this manual in the day-to-day performance of all of their assigned duties.
2. Employees should avoid loud conversations and other disruptions in hallways and other common areas so as not to interfere with the work of other employees. Radios or other music players are permitted to the extent that they are used with a personal listening device such as headphones and do not provide a distraction to other employees.
3. Every effort should be made to maintain all common areas in a neat, clean, and uncluttered state.



Maps, posters, and other materials may be displayed within individual work areas provided that they are maintained in a neat fashion. The display of materials in corridors or other common areas is not permitted without the prior approval of the Executive Director.

To the extent possible, shared working materials should be returned to their drawers and/or bookcases at the end of the workday or left in a prearranged work area as agreed to by the Administrative Manager.

G. Dress Code

Casual business attire is warranted at all times by office personnel who come into daily contact with member representatives or business clientele. Formal business attire is mandated only when the employee is representing the FHRC at meetings with federal or state officials present or at public meetings and conferences where such attire is considered to be the "dress-of-the-day".

Field personnel are to dress appropriate to the demands of the job being performed.

COMMON SENSE ONCE AGAIN IS THE RULE. EMPLOYEES REPRESENT THE FHRC WHEN PERFORMING TASKS ASSOCIATED WITH INDIVIDUAL POSITION AND AT TIMES IMAGE IS EVERYTHING. IT IS IMPORTANT THOSE SERVED PERCEIVE FHRC EMPLOYEES AS BEING PROFESSIONAL AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

H. Ethics Guidelines

All employees of the Flint Hills Regional Council will perform their assigned duties in a manner which will safeguard the public's confidence in the integrity of the FHRC. They will do so by being honest, fair, responsive, and respectful of citizens. They will avoid conduct that could create an appearance of impropriety or which could be perceived as unbecoming of the public service. This policy reflects the organization's core values on which the FHRC's commitment to excellence is based:

- An ethic of stewardship in the exercise of all public responsibilities; and
- The promotion of personal and institutional accountability in the delivery of services.

In addition to other specific provisions, which are contained in other sections of this manual, employees will follow and observe the following guidelines:

- Employees will be impartial in the discharge of all of their official duties;
- Employees will not use their official positions for private gain;
- Employees will not participate in any decision that could influence their own financial interests or the professional or financial interests of their relatives and business associates;
- Employees will not directly or indirectly solicit any gifts, favors, services, loans, entertainment, food, or drink for themselves, their relatives or their business associates for any activity which should be performed as a part of their official assigned duties;



- Employees will not accept any gifts, favors, services, or loans for themselves, their relatives, or their associates in return for any activity, which is performed as a part of their official or assigned duties. It is recognized that token gifts, entertainment, food, and drink are sometimes provided in the course of conducting business with the Flint Hills Regional Council. This is acceptable as long as the offer is of nominal value;
- Employees will not accept payment for any appearance, speech or written work product, which is a part of their official or assigned duties during normal salaried working hours;
- Employees will not misuse official time, FHRC owned or leased facilities, equipment, or supplies; and
- Employees will not disclose or use any information for a non-official purpose, which is of a confidential or proprietary nature that is gained through the exercise of their official or assigned duties.

Complaints alleging ethics violations will be directed, in writing, to the Executive Director. Complaints alleging an ethics violation by the Executive Director will be directed in writing to the Board Chair for immediate referral to the Flint Hills Regional Council's attorney. The organization's attorney will fully investigate all such allegations. Appropriate action will be taken in all such cases.

Any employee who initiates an ethics complaint or who serves as a participating witness in an investigation will not be retaliated against, disciplined, or discriminated against for having done so in good faith. A personnel action that results from a report of a criminal violation of official misconduct that an employee knows to be false will not constitute a reprisal action. Internal investigation will be kept confidential to the extent that it is feasible to do so.

I. Political and Lobbying Activity Provisions

1. Political Activity.

Employees, like all citizens, have constitutionally protected rights to vote, support political candidates of their choice, and freely express their political opinions. At the same time, there are certain restrictions which employees are subject to because of the Flint Hills Regional Council's status as a governmental entity.

Because the FHRC receives a large percentage of its funding from the federal government, employees are subject to the provisions of the Hatch Act, which limits the political activity of persons employed in connection with federally supported projects. This law specifies that employees of state and local governments receiving federal grants or loans may not:

- Use their official authority for purposes of interfering with and/or affecting the results of an election or nomination for office;
- Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise a state or local officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes; or
- Be a candidate for elective office in a partisan election.



Employees must also recognize the closeness of the FHRC's working relationship with political officials throughout the FHRC Region and its dependence on good working relationships with these officials. The FHRC's effectiveness thus depends, in part, on the prudence with which its employees exercise their political rights. An employee may express his or her opinion on legislation being considered by other units of government; the employee must, however, clearly identify his or her position as his or her own, unless the FHRC has instructed the employee to present a position on its behalf.

Similarly, while the Hatch Act now permits certain types of partisan political campaigning and activities other than those, which are identified above, it is important that employees not use the FHRC's facilities or paid work time for such purposes. Employees who are contemplating a run for nonpartisan office or management of the affairs or service as an officer of a partisan political campaign, party, or political club are advised to inform the Executive Director of their intentions. Guidance and, if necessary, a legal opinion will be provided. This policy is not intended to inhibit or prohibit any employee from exercising political rights expressly protected by law.

2. Lobbying Activity.

FHRC follows the standards set for lobbying activities established by state legislation and federal legislation that are governed by the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 USC Section 1913, originally enacted in 1919). The purpose of the Act is to prevent agencies, acting through their employees or agents, from using appropriated funds, or resources secured with appropriated funds, to lobby any federal, state, or local government official with respect to any pending or proposed legislation, resolution, appropriation, or measure.

It is important to note that these provisions are not intended to inhibit the necessary flow of information and communication to federal, state or local levels; they are intended to prevent any inappropriate or undue influence on the legislative process.

As a nonprofit organization FHRC carefully follows the lobbying restrictions defined by the IRS for nonprofits as defined:

In general, no organization may qualify for section 501(c)(3) status if a substantial part of its activities is attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as *lobbying*). A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status.

Legislation includes action by Congress, any state legislature, any local council, or similar governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items (such as legislative confirmation of appointive office), or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure. It does not include actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies.



An organization will be regarded as attempting to influence legislation if it contacts, or urges the public to contact, members or employees of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if the organization advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation.

Organizations may, however, involve themselves in issues of public policy without the activity being considered as lobbying. For example, organizations may conduct educational meetings, prepare and distribute educational materials, or otherwise consider public policy issues in an educational manner without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. IRS Web site < <http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=163392,00.html>>

J. Outside Employment Provisions

Under certain circumstances, the Flint Hills Regional Council may permit employees to engage in supplementary employment outside of regular working hours. However, in all such circumstances, outside employment will require the prior written approval of the Executive Director. This prior approval is needed in order to avoid any real or perceived conflicts between the employee's official duties and his or her outside responsibilities. The following criteria will be utilized in considering the appropriateness of outside employment:

No activity may be performed by an employee on behalf of another employer or client during regular working hours.

- No activity may be performed by an employee on behalf of another employer or client that will in any way interfere with an employee's responsibilities to the Flint Hills Regional Council, the stated purpose or goals of the FHRC, or the implementation of the FHRC's work program.
- An employee may not be engaged by another employer or client to perform any activity, which the FHRC, through its staff, might be able to provide that employer or client.
- An employee may not be engaged, in any capacity, by a local unit of government within the FHRC's planning jurisdiction without the prior written approval of the Executive Director.
- An employee may not appear before a local unit of government or provide services to a local government on behalf of another employer or client.
- An employee may not use the material resources of the FHRC on behalf of another employer or client.
- An employee may not voluntarily and for compensation provide expert witness in any case even remotely related to the XXPC mission and the employee's expertise used in agency work.
- An employee may not represent himself or herself to another party as being an agent of the FHRC with regard to any activity for which the employee would receive remuneration from another employer or client.



A copy of all written requests by employees to engage in outside employment activities along with a written approval or disapproval will be placed in the employee's personnel file. Any employee who engages in outside employment without the prior written approval of the Executive Director will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including possible suspension or dismissal.

K. Access to Personnel Information

All personnel files will be maintained in a secure fashion in the Flint Hills Regional Council's Business Office. A personnel file may not be removed from the offices of the Flint Hills Regional Council for any reason.

Employees are permitted access to their own personnel files. An employee may arrange to review his or her personnel file by contacting the Administrative Manager or, in his/her absence, the highest ranking employee in the Business Office. An employee may request a photocopy of a document in his or her personnel file, but may not under any circumstance remove a document from the file.

An employee's supervisor, the Administrative Manager, and the Executive Director are authorized access to personnel files on a work-related, "need to know" basis. Business Office staff personnel who are responsible for maintaining the organization's personnel files are also permitted access for this purpose. If an employee is being considered for reassignment or promotion to another component within the organization, the supervisor may have access to the employee's personnel file as well. Each staff person with authorized access to personnel files will treat information contained in those files in a confidential manner consistent with legal requirements.

All inquiries regarding current or past employees should be referred to the Business Office. The Business Office will verify employment dates, job title, and salary information without an authorization from the subject employee. Requests for any other information must either be authorized in writing by the current or past employee or accompanied by a legal order.

L. Solicitation and Distribution

Non-employees are strictly prohibited from soliciting funds, time, or support on-site for charitable, commercial, or other purposes. This includes solicitations pertaining to memberships, signatures, pledges, dues, subscriptions, products, and services.

So that employees may not feel unduly pressured, employee solicitations of funds, time, or support for charitable, commercial, or other purposes are generally prohibited. They may, however, post a notice regarding a solicitation on the staff bulletin board or display goods in the facility's kitchen/vending area. Except as specified below, employees may not directly approach other employees or any other parties who may have business with the Flint Hills Regional Council regarding a solicitation of funds, time, or support. Solicitations of funds to address the special circumstances of a current or former employee (e.g., illness, death, the birth of a child, marriage, etc.) may be made directly. Contributions in response to solicitations of this kind are voluntary, and will be conducted by an anonymous circulation of a contributions request envelope.



(Option) The Flint Hills Regional Council participates in local United Way community campaigns. With the approval of the Executive Director, formal presentations by representatives of the United Way may be made to staff. Nevertheless, employee participation in a community campaign is a voluntary matter between the employee and the United Way.

Presentations by private sector firms, organizations, and institutions, which pertain to benefits, which are provided by or made available by the Flint Hills Regional Council may also be permitted with the approval of the Executive Director.

M. Smoking Policy

Smoking not permitted in the offices of the Flint Hills Regional Council. This policy pertains to all employees, Board members, contractors, and other visitors to the Flint Hills Regional Council.

N. Building Security

It is the policy of the FHRC to provide a secure workplace for employees and partner agency employees, and to persons visiting the premises on a temporary basis, such as members of the general public attending meetings or contractors or vendors providing goods or services. The security of our building relies, in large measure, on the vigilance of all persons employed here (employees and others), both in following existing building security rules and in identifying improvements that will enhance our security.

O. Equipment and Information Resources Use

1. Office Equipment.

The FHRC's equipment is essential to the effective and efficient operation of the organization. Moreover, as a public agency the FHRC must take reasonable steps to maintain and secure such assets.

If equipment is signed out through the business office, the person who signed it out is responsible for its safe return as soon as possible after use. If equipment will be used away from the FHRC offices, it should be noted on the sign out sheet.

Employees are expected to take reasonable care of equipment, which has been issued to them in order to avoid misuse, damage, loss or theft. Offsite use of laptops and other equipment is allowed. However, employees are expected to practice due diligence to protect the equipment and the confidential data contained therein. Employees who are deemed to be negligent may be requested to pay personally for the replacement or repair.

Electronic equipment should not be exposed to extreme temperatures or excessive humidity. Therefore, overnight storage of electronic equipment in a vehicle is not permitted.

Equipment is to be used to conduct FHRC business. It may be used for *de minimis* (i.e., limited) personal use that cannot reasonably be handled away from work.



2. Information Resources

The term “Information Resources” includes all hardware, software, data, information, network, telephones, facsimile and photocopy machines and other information technology (IT).

All information created, accessed, or stored on the organization’s Information resources, including e-mail and Internet use, is considered FHRC property and may be subject to public disclosure.

Flint Hills Regional Council reserves the right to monitor any and all use of Information Resources, including e-mail and Internet use; employees have no right to and no expectation of privacy with respect to the use of Information Resources. Information including but not limited to documents, software, files, and email, that an employee creates, accesses, transmits, or stores while using Information Resources are *Flint Hills Regional Council’s* property.

Inappropriate use of Information Resources could result in disciplinary actions, up to and including immediate dismissal from employment or criminal prosecution where the act constitutes a violation of law.



VIII. Performance Management and Staff Development

A. Employee Performance Evaluation

1. Purpose

The evaluation process exists to attend to the professional health and performance of the employee and the supervisor and to the relationship between them. It is an opportunity to examine work performance and the context in which the work takes place. It serves both parties' need to set time apart to reflect, dialogue, celebrate success, raise concerns, catalyze new ideas, and stimulate professional and organizational growth and development.

2. Characteristics

The evaluation process is made up of frequent informal dialogue and an annual formal performance review, which does not include any surprises. Both forms serve the purpose stated above, and both are a means of communication and learning. Ideally, the relationship between employee and supervisor. The purpose of the performance review is conducted for the following reasons:

- Furthers Flint Hills Regional Council's mission;
- Exemplifies Flint Hills Regional Council's values;
- Facilitates individual and organizational accountability;
- Furthers the personal and professional development of the individual; and
- Facilitates vital connections to the organization as a whole.

3. The Process

Informal process

This process is an ongoing dialogue between employee and supervisor characterized by a sense of collegiality and partnership. It affirms direction, considers strategy, offers support, and notes areas of difficulty or dissatisfaction and designs mid-course corrections, as needed. It is intended to ensure that there will be no surprises at the annual performance evaluation. It is incumbent upon the supervisor and employee to initiate documentation, as appropriate or desired, with full knowledge of the other party.

Formal process

The formal evaluation process shall be conducted annually. It will have been completed by the employee's anniversary date, and will commence within the month preceding the anniversary date. The formal process will include:

- Employee self-evaluation;
- Written performance evaluation;
- Dialogue in a face-to-face meeting; and



- Sign-off by the Executive Director.

The Performance Evaluation Form consists of five (5) parts:

Part 1: Relevant expressions of expectation for the individual employee, such as job description, project assignments, internal team assignments, *Flint Hills Regional Council's* guiding principles* and mutually developed goals from previous evaluations.

Part 2: Employee self-evaluation

Part 3: Supervisor parallel evaluation and a written evaluation

Part 4: Joint consideration of *Flint Hills Regional Council's* Guiding Principles and employee goal development

Part 5: Acknowledgement and employee comment

* *Flint Hills Regional Council's* guiding principles embody qualitative characteristics of significance to organizational health. They address areas of:

- Personal leadership and initiative;
- The quality of relationships, practices of shared responsibility and teamwork;
- Commitment to quality, service and organizational success;
- Commitment to learning for understanding; and
- Integrity and ethical behavior.

B. Performance Improvement Plans

A performance improvement plan will be written for any employee whose work is determined to be unsatisfactory. Under no circumstance will a performance improvement plan be used to address a disciplinary concern.

The performance improvement plan will identify:

- The nature of the improvement which is required;
- How that improvement will be measured or assessed;
- The time frame during which improved performance must be demonstrated;
- Any assistance or support which will be provided to the employee; and
- The consequences of not achieving a satisfactory level of performance.

C. Awards and Recognition

Flint Hills Regional Council is committed to the informal and formal recognition of effective employee performance on a frequent and ongoing basis. Two formal programs are provided for this purpose.

Employees will be honored with certificates on the occasion of their 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, etc. anniversaries with the *Flint Hills Regional Council*.



All employees who are awarded anniversary certificates during a calendar quarter will be recognized during the last full Board meeting in that calendar quarter. Further, a press release identifying the employees will be issued in conjunction with the FHRC's meeting.

Agency management and leadership should constantly seek to recognize and reward exceptional performance by individual and work teams.

D. Suggestion Program

All employees are responsible for participating in the continuous improvement of the programs and job tasks to which they are assigned.

Employees are also asked to identify improvements that go beyond the requirements of their individual assignments. Suggestions of this kind can be submitted either formally or informally. A formal suggestion is recommended when a full presentation of the suggestion's costs and benefits would facilitate assessment. A prescribed form is provided for this purpose, a copy of which is included in the appendices. Formal and informal suggestions can be submitted for evaluation either to the employee's supervisor.



IX. Personnel Actions

A. Employment-at-Will Disclaimer

This manual provides basic information pertaining to policies, practices, responsibilities, and benefits which are associated with employment at the *Flint Hills Regional Council*. However, no provision of this manual represents a contract or should be construed as such.

Employment is at the will of the employer. Both the employer and the employee may terminate employment at any time with or without cause. The *Flint Hills Regional Council*, through its own action or through the action of the Executive Director, may change any term or condition of employment whether that term or condition is stated in the Manual or is otherwise established as an employment practice. Written or oral statements made to employees are not to be interpreted in any way, which alters the “at will” employment relationship.

The disciplinary procedures identified in this handbook are advisory rather than binding on the employer. They may be adjusted or modified at the discretion of the employer.

B. Advancement and Job Posting

The *Flint Hills Regional Council* is committed to staff development. It is the FHRC’s intent to promote from within to the extent that it is feasible to do so. For this reason, current employees are encouraged to identify developmental opportunities and to pursue advancement within the organization. Employees are also encouraged to share their career objectives with their supervisors so that appropriate advice and assistance can be provided in this regard. Supervisors will be prepared to discuss the employee’s potential for advancement within the organization as part of the annual performance evaluation. Additionally, employees may request the development of a formal individual development plan.

Notices of all vacant permanent positions are posted to the bulletin board located in front of the Business Office. All permanent positions will be posted for at least 5 working days and will remain posted until a selection has been made. Depending on circumstances, temporary positions may or may not be posted. A position may be posted concurrently or in advance of outside recruitment to fill a position.

C. Disciplinary Procedures

Employee failures to adhere to the policies and procedures which have been established by the Flint Hills Regional Council will be addressed in an informal manner whenever possible. Further, every effort will be undertaken to prevent the need for disciplinary action. Under no circumstance will disciplinary action be used to address issues pertaining to job performance.

In the event that formal disciplinary action is required, the progressive application of the following four steps will be followed. The specific step at which discipline is initiated will depend, however, on the nature of the precipitating behavior.



In step 1, the supervisor will issue an informal (i.e., undocumented) reprimand to the employee.

In step 2, the supervisor will issue a formal (i.e., documented) reprimand to the employee. The written reprimand will identify: (a) the nature of the action which engendered the reprimand; (b) the action or behavior which is required; and (c) the consequences which will attend to further violations of the established policy or procedure which is in question.

In step 3, the employee will be issued a written notice of non-performance, which may include a suspension from duty without pay. A suspension may range in length from 3 workdays to 60 workdays. A suspension may only be issued with the documented approval of the Executive Director. The written notice of the suspension will identify: (a) the length of the suspension; (b) the nature of the action which engendered the suspension; (c) the action or behavior which is required; and (d) the consequences which will attend to further violations of the established policy or procedure which is in question. At the discretion of the Executive Director, step 3 of the progressive discipline process may be repeated in the case of recurring behavior.

In step 4, the employee will be terminated should the conduct addressed in the previous steps continues.

No advance notice of the application of disciplinary procedures is required. In all such cases, however, the employee will be afforded the opportunity to grieve the specific application of the Flint Hills Regional Council's disciplinary procedure.

D. Grievance Procedure

Every effort will be made to resolve employee questions, concerns, and disputes to the satisfaction of all interested parties in a manner which is quick, fair, effective, and fully consistent with the established policies and procedures of the *Flint Hills Regional Council*.

A formal grievance procedure is provided as a vehicle for addressing questions, concerns, and disputes, which have not otherwise been addressed to an employee's satisfaction. This procedure applies both to grievances (i.e., complaints which refer to an inappropriate application of policy) and allegations of sexual harassment (whistleblowing reporting of improprieties, fraud or other illegal behaviors within the organization is covered separately).

The *Flint Hills Regional Council's* grievance procedure consists of 4 steps. Each step must be followed in sequence.

1. In step 1, the employee will initiate an informal (i.e., undocumented) discussion with his or her supervisor. If the matter pertains to an equal employment opportunity or to a harassment issue, or other impropriety of the supervisor the informal discussion may be initiated through the agency administrator.
2. In step 2, the employee will file a formal grievance with the supervisor. If the matter pertains to equal employment opportunity, or to a harassment issue, the formal grievance may be filed through the Executive Director. The employee must file the grievance on a prescribed form



within 10 workdays of the action or event, which precipitated the complaint, or within 10 workdays of the employee's first having become aware of the action or event. Additional time may be granted at the discretion of the supervisor. The grievance form will require the employee to identify: (a) the nature of the complaint; (b) the statute, regulation, policy, or precedent which has been violated; and (c) the remedy which is sought. Within 5 workdays of having received the grievance, the supervisor will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the complaint. The supervisor will issue a written response to the employee within 5 workdays of the required discussion.

3. In step 3, the employee may appeal the supervisor's decision if he or she is not satisfied with the supervisor's response. A step 3 appeal must be filed in writing within 5 workdays of having received the supervisor's response to the formal grievance. Additional time may be granted at the discretion of the Executive Director. Within 5 workdays of having received the appeal request, the Executive Director will determine whether or not a meeting with the employee is required. If so, a meeting will be arranged within 5 workdays. The Executive Director will issue a written response to the employee within 5 workdays of the meeting if one is held. If a meeting is not held, the Executive Director will issue a written response to the employee within 10 workdays of having received the appeal request.
4. In step 4, the employee is afforded the opportunity to appeal the decision of the Executive Director. A step 4 appeal must be requested in writing within 5 workdays of having received the Executive Director's response. The request for a step 4 appeal is to be delivered to the Executive Director who will arrange for the appeal to be considered by the Finance and Personnel Committee within 60 days. The employee is afforded an opportunity to make a formal presentation to the Executive Committee regarding the complaint. (A formal presentation is optional on the employee's part.) The Executive Director may identify and secure any additional information or input which might be required for it to adjudicate the grievance. The Executive Committee will issue a written response to the employee within 30 workdays of its formal consideration of the matter. The Executive Committee's decision on the matter is final.

E. Voluntary Separation

In order to accommodate the orderly transfer of assignments from one employee to another, all employees are asked to provide as much advance notice as possible (i.e., 2 to 4 weeks) when choosing to leave employment with the Flint Hills Regional Council.

In cases of retirement, employees are asked to provide written notice at least 30 days prior to their scheduled separation in order:

1. to meet the requirements of the established pension plan;
2. to accommodate the time needed to process any required arrangements; and
3. to provide sufficient time for the orderly transfer of assignments.



Every employee who chooses to separate voluntarily from the organization will be asked to participate in an exit interview conducted by the Executive Director or his or her designee. The exit interview will be used to obtain feedback – both positive and negative – from the employee pertaining to his or her reason(s) for leaving. The feedback received from the employee will be shared with the employee’s supervisor and/or other members of the management team. Notes pertaining to the exit interview will not retained in the separating employee’s personnel file.

The administrative manager will secure the return of keys and any other items of value which are owned by the *Flint Hills Regional Council*. Any expenses due to the PRO will be settled separately from the final paycheck unless a settlement is specifically provided for in state law or agreed to in writing by the employee.

After notice of voluntary separation is provided, an employee will not be permitted to use accrued vacation days. Pay for accrued, unused vacation time will be paid to the employee on the first regular pay date after the employee receives his or her final paycheck for time actually worked. Employees will not be permitted to exhaust their unused personal/sick days and any accumulated compensatory time after notice of separation is provided.

F. Involuntary Separation

With or without notice, an individual may be separated at any time for any reason which is deemed appropriate by the *Flint Hills Regional Council*. The following represent some of the possible reasons for the involuntary separation of an employee:

- A reduction or change in the organization’s funding or programs;
- Dishonesty;
- The falsification of information or data;
- Neglect or carelessness resulting in damage to property;
- A violation of the organization’s drug and alcohol policies;
- Habitual tardiness or absenteeism;
- Unsatisfactory job performance;
- Insubordination; and
- Any other form of behavior, which is deemed to constitute serious misconduct.

Employees who are affected by funding or work program changes may be offered other positions with the organization for which they are qualified. Available funding and the requirements of the alternative assignment will be considered in making a job offer of this kind.

If circumstances warrant, a termination notice of at least 2 weeks (i.e., 10 working days) may be provided to an employee. If the organization elects to terminate an employee immediately or to provide notice of less than 2 weeks, severance pay will be issued in an amount equal to the employee’s established wage or salary for a period of 10 working days minus the wage or salary paid for the total number of days of advance notice which have been provided to the employee. Unless the organization dismisses the employee immediately, an employee will be required to work until his or her established release date in order to be eligible for severance pay. Any unused accrued compensatory time for FLSA non-exempt employees and any unused accrued



personnel/sick days for salaried employees may be used during the notice period. Unused vacation days may not be used during the notice period. Further, the severance benefit will be waived if the employee enters into a new job prior to the end of the time period for which severance pay would have been paid.

Accrued, unused vacation pay will be paid to the employee on the first regular pay date after the employee receives his or her final paycheck for time actually worked.



X. Travel

A. General

The following sections shall be applicable to providing or reimbursing FHRC members or employees for travel accommodations when such travel has been authorized by the Executive Director or appropriate department head and claims are made on the prescribed forms.

B. Registration Fees

The cost of registration or similar fees for conferences, seminars and other similar meetings or functions related to FHRC business will be provided for or reimbursed when supported by original receipts. Whenever possible, arrangements will be made by designated staff personnel and direct billed to the FHRC.

C. Transportation

1. Travel by rail service, bus or similar common carrier (including taxi) will be provided for at a prevailing “coach” or “tourist” rate when supported by original receipts. When travel is by commercial airline, a direct billing or reimbursement will be provided for an amount not to exceed the prevailing “coach” rate. Whenever possible, reduced fare tickets will be purchased by designated staff for direct billing. Common carrier travel to and from airports will be reimbursed when supported by original receipts.
2. When a personal automobile is used in lieu of common carrier transportation, the miles (of a round trip) will be reimbursed at the amount at the then current mileage rate authorized by the State of Kansas for general use by state employees.
3. The Executive Director shall cause to be prepared a standard mileage chart to be used for frequent origins and destinations. FHRC members and employees are encouraged to use this chart when possible. When the chart is not used, odometer readings will be required.
4. Parking fees and tolls will be reimbursed when supported by original receipts.
5. The Executive Director may authorize the use of rental cars when suitable local transportation is not available or feasible. When properly authorized, associated costs will be provided for or reimbursed when supported by original receipts.

D. Lodging

1. Lodging costs will be provided for or reimbursed when an overnight stay is required for out of region destinations, which are greater than seventy-five miles from the FHRC offices. Under special circumstances, the Executive Director may authorize an overnight stay for destinations, which are less than seventy-five miles.



2. Whenever possible, lodging will be arranged by designated staff personnel.
3. Lodging will be provided for or reimbursed when supported by original receipts in the following manner:
 - Single occupancy will be provided at actual cost.
 - Double occupancy will be provided at actual cost when both parties are eligible for reimbursement.
 - Double occupancy will be provided at the single occupancy rate when only one party is eligible for reimbursement.
 - Hotel suites will be provided for when a meeting or gathering space is required to accommodate an FHRC function.
4. Reimbursements for lodging costs shall be limited to room costs and associated taxes.

E. Meal and Incidental Per Diem

1. A sixty (\$__) dollar per diem will be provided to FHRC members for meal and incidental expenses when an overnight stay is required for an out of region destination. An expense voucher must be submitted to claim the per diem.
2. A per diem amount equal to the federal per diem rates established on a city-by-city basis (known as CONUS) will be provided to employees when an overnight stay is required for destinations which are greater than seventy-five miles from the FHRC offices.
3. A (\$__) dollar per diem will be provided to FHRC members and employees for out of region destinations of greater than seventy-five miles from the FHRC offices, which do not require an overnight stay.
4. These per diems are intended to cover meal and other incidental fees.
5. The Executive Director's expenses will be reimbursed when accompanied by adequate documentation. In the course of providing for the achievement of FHRC goals and objectives, it is, on occasion necessary to provide for the expenses of those who are not FHRC members or employees of the *Flint Hills Regional Council*. The Executive Director is authorized to make such provisions. When such provisions are made, the Executive Director is eligible for reimbursement of necessary expenses. With the pre-approval of the Executive Director, expenses for a meal function attended by an employee at FHRC direction are eligible for reimbursement, even if the destination is less than seventy-five miles from the FHRC offices.



XI. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

A. Decision of the Executive Director

The Executive Director may, if he or she wishes, submit any situation which may arise as a result of authority vested in him/her by these Personnel Policies and Office Policies and Procedures to the Executive Committee for consideration and action, either at a special or regular meeting, whether an employee has entered written appeal or not.

B. Matters Not Covered

If personnel matters not covered in these Policies and Procedures arise, the Executive Director may render a decision and refer the matter to the Executive Committee for confirmation.

C. Creation of New Positions

The Executive Director may establish new positions as needed in the Classification and Pay Plan subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

D. Authority in the Executive Director's Absence

In the absence of the Executive Director, the person in next highest authority designated by the Executive Director shall have the authority to act for the Executive Director, within an area of authority described by the Executive Director related to the regular daily operation of the agency.



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