

## District 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors and employees become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that employees and board members review and then have a 10-minute discussion on a selected guide at each board meeting as part of the district's commitment to continuing education for leadership and staff.

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### *Guide No. 3 – Hiring, Supervising, and Managing District Employees*

One of the most challenging duties of conservation district directors is the hiring and supervision of employees. Districts need a structure or system in place that provides good communication with employees and a means to deal with any personnel issues that might arise. Some of the basic things required to effectively supervise employees are current and accurate position descriptions, performance standards, an established system for performance reviews, and district policies that provide guidance to employees.

#### **Position Descriptions:**

Position descriptions should contain a detailed description of the major job duties and the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of the employee. These expectations should be the basis for evaluating job performance. Position descriptions should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that they stay current and reflect the duties being performed and the KSAs that are required. General position descriptions with performance evaluation standards for OCC allocated positions are available on the OCC website for use by districts. The descriptions may be adjusted to meet each individual district's needs.

#### **Performance Standards:**

Position descriptions outline the major job duties and KSAs required of an employee and effectively establish the performance standards that the board expects the employee to meet. Performance standards are developed in the position description for each major job duty and are used in evaluating job performance.

#### **Performance Evaluations:**

Performance reviews provide an opportunity to discuss performance issues and any need for improvement, employee concerns, and an

opportunity to let employees know where they are performing well.

Performance evaluations are to be completed on each district employee at least annually; the evaluation should be based on the position description and the established performance standards. The review of an employee's performance and discussion with the employee should be completed in an executive session.

The employee should be given a copy of their evaluation (signed and dated by a board member and the employee to document the review), and the board should keep a copy in a secure place. The signature by the employee does not indicate agreement with the review, only that the review has been discussed with the employee.

#### **District Policies:**

District policies, in addition to those provided in the Conservation District Handbook, may be needed to provide guidance to employees for district-specific things that may not be included in position descriptions. This is especially valuable to newer employees.

*Examples:* Policy on how much money a district manager can expend on equipment repair without prior approval from the board. Policy on earning

and using compensatory time. Policy on how much time can be used assisting other agencies.

### **Recruiting and Hiring Employees:**

If your district has an employee that retires, resigns, or is terminated and you wish to fill that position, there are several steps that must be taken:

1. If the position is funded in whole or partially through an allocation from OCC, then a written request must be made to OCC for approval to fill the position. This request should outline the position the district wishes to fill, indicating whether it is a full-time or part-time position, with or without benefits, what duties the position will undertake, and should include a timeframe for hiring and the reimbursed salary requested. Once this letter of request is received, OCC will provide the district with a response. If the request is approved, the response will outline the next steps to take as well as provide the authorized salary and hire date.

*\* If an employee is paid 100% from locally earned funds, prior approval from OCC is not required to refill the position. However, OCC must be notified of all hires within 3 days of their beginning work so employment verification may be completed.*

2. When filling a vacancy, the district must make a reasonable effort to locate the best-qualified person for the position. The board should make a public announcement (newspapers, social media, etc.), of the position to for at least two weeks to give time to receive applications. The announcement should state the qualifications, duties, salary, location, and any special requirements (i.e. valid Oklahoma driver's license, ability to operate equipment). It should also include application requirements and submission method and contact information for applicants to receive additional information about the position if needed.
3. The board should review all applications, select the top applicants, and set up times for interviews.
4. Hiring a new employee or reinstatement of a former employee requires official action of the board. When that action is taken, the vote and conditions of employment as agreed upon by

the board and the employee should be recorded in the meeting minutes. The forms, Terms of Employment, form OCC-6A, and Notice of Personnel Action, form OCC-6B, must be completed for each new hire and will aid in ensuring that all employment conditions are properly established.

5. Upon hiring of a new employee, the district should notify the Commission immediately. OCC will provide the new hire packet which contains all necessary employment forms and benefit information, if applicable.
6. District boards should establish personnel files for the employee and keep them in a secure place. Only district board members should have access to personnel performance reviews and other documents that relate to the performance or conduct of an individual employee.
7. The board, or their designee, should discuss their expectations with a new employee and basic office rules, dress code, standards of conduct and ethics, and other such matters within the first three days of hire to ensure the employee gets off to a good start.
8. The board should conduct an initial review of an employee within 30 days of the hire date. During this review, the employee should be provided with a position description and performance standards. These should be reviewed with the employee, with copies signed and dated for documentation.
9. It is suggested that the board, using the position description and performance standards, review the employee's performance quarterly for the first year of employment and then annually thereafter.

### **Other Resources:**

Personnel Management section of the Conservation District Handbook and the District Resources section of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission website at [conservation.ok.gov](http://conservation.ok.gov)