

3 V.S.A. § 116a (Maintenance of inventory of State boards and commissions)

Tanya Marshall, State Archivist & Chief Records Officer
Vermont State Archives & Records Administration, Office of the Secretary of State

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3 V.S.A. § 116a

With the exception of legislation passed in Act 2 of 2018 (Special Session), the Secretary of State's Office has no statutory mandates or requirements in relation to board and commissions, their appointees or their terms. As a result, there are no existing functions or processes within the Office or its divisions that can be easily augmented or adapted to meet this mandate. Likewise, there are no specific personnel to whom the tasks associated with 3 V.S.A. § 116a can be readily assigned.

With this mind, the Secretary of State's Office, through the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), intends to implement a single portal using an existing State of Vermont enterprise application, SharePoint. SharePoint, which is accessible to most state employees, will allow boards and commissions to appropriately report and track their appointments and terms. This same information, which constitutes the inventory specified in 3 V.S.A. § 116a, can then be made available and published through the state open data portal. Both SharePoint and the open data portal offer the most effective and efficient method for boards, commissions and the Secretary of State's Office to satisfactorily meet this new mandate.

Existing Appointee Tracking and Reporting Portal as Model

In February 2017, VSARA Records and Information Management (RIM) Specialists designed and implemented an appointee reporting and tracking portal for the Scott Administration using SharePoint. The impetus for this portal was a request for improved recordkeeping on the part of the Governor's Office, especially in terms of understanding and documenting active appointments made by the previous administration. Assistance was provided to the Governor's Office under VSARA's Targeted Assistance Program (TAP), which provides records management services to local and state public agencies.

Since implementing the portal, several board and commission administrators have asked for access to monitor the status of gubernatorial appointees for their respective boards and commissions. While the current portal was designed specifically for the needs of the Governor's Office, it can be expanded to include boards and commissions that do not have members appointed by the governor.

Reporting and Tracking Data Points

The existing portal collects the following information for each appointee:

- Appointee's Name
- Appointee's Title (e.g. Member, Director, Chair, etc.)
- Public Agency Name (e.g. Act 264 Advisory Board)

- Jurisdiction (where application, e.g. Windham County)
- Date Appointed
- Date Appointment Expires
- Date Recorded
- Indefinite Term (Yes/No)

This portal can be expanded to support 3 V.S.A. § 116a, which requires only one additional data point to be collected: appointing authority. Appointing authority is assumed to mean statutory citation.

Open Data Portal

The State of Vermont's existing open data portal is an ideal platform for providing the inventory of the State boards and commissions as required in 3 V.S.A. § 116a. While there are no known SharePoint to Open Data portal connections at this time, this ability is currently under development. Furthermore, VSARA has collaborative working relationship with Chief Data Officer, Andrew Laing, who oversees the open data portal and has offered his assistance in implementing 3 V.S.A. § 116a.

Data Integrity

VSARA, in its administration and implementation of the Statewide Records and Information Management Program under 3 V.S.A. § 117, manages the Vermont Functional Classification System (VCLAS). VCLAS includes several "master lists" for commonly needed sources of information. Each master list is governed by standards to assure information is accurately entered and formally approved prior to distribution for use in agency and state enterprise systems.

Some of VCLAS' lists, e.g. public agency names, are already being applied in the existing appointee tracking and reporting portal used by the Governor's Office. Additional "master lists" can be deployed to support the integrity and reliability of tracking and reporting data submitted by boards and commissions pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 116a(a)(2)(B): "Each State board and commission shall be responsible for providing to the Secretary of State this inventory information and any updates to it."

VSARA can provide the Commission with the data fields necessary to assure that a board or commission can be properly added to the VSARA's master list.

Dependencies

The most cost-effective method for meeting the requirements of 3 V.S.A. § 116a is to: (1) have boards and commissions directly enter their data into a portal using an application that is widely available to the agencies, departments or offices that do the most appointments; and (2) provide public access to the data through the existing data portal.

SharePoint has already proven to be a suitable application for the Governor's Office, which manages the most board and commission appointments. Should SharePoint not be accessible to an appointing official, the state agency or department to which a board or commission is

administratively attached will need to update the portal or request a partner account from the Agency of Digital Services (ADS).

Likewise, VSARA is dependent on ADS to provide a mechanism by which data collected in SharePoint can be connected to the open data portal to make the information readily accessible to the public. This “need,” however, is not unique to VSARA and is a desired feature of several state agencies and departments.

Recommendation

The Governor is the primary appointing authority for most state boards and commissions. As a result, the Governor’s Office has long been the source of information for appointee information for the majority of boards and commissions. While 3 V.S.A. § 116a(a)(2)(B) requires each state board and commission to provide the Secretary of State with inventory information and any updates, this would be very inefficient. For boards and commissions whose members are appointed by the Governor, we recommend the source of information for the inventory to be provided by the appointee reporting and tracking portal currently in use by the Governor’s Office. As already noted, this portal can be readily expanded to be used by any board or commission that does not have its members appointed by the Governor.