



STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Legislative Management Oversight Committee
From: Luke Martland, Director and Chief Counsel;
Mike Ferrant, Deputy Director, Operations
Date: September 2, 2019
Subject: HR functions within the Office of Legislative Council

The General Assembly has five staff offices, each of which develops and implements its own policies and procedures concerning hiring, evaluations, time and attendance, and other matters. As a result, each office handles at least some Human Resource (HR) functions.

The Office of Legislative Council has approximately 60 employees. The Deputy Director of Operations, Mike Ferrant, handles HR related functions for not only these employees, but also for staff who work for the Speaker of the House and for the President Pro Tempore, as well as for all 180 members of the General Assembly. Therefore, the Operations unit of Legislative Council provides a range of HR related services for both employees and members. This memorandum will summarize those functions, broken down into five categories.

I. Recruitment and Hiring

The Operations unit, like all of the units within the Office of Legislative Council, follows a hiring process that normally includes: i) advertising widely to maximize the applicant pool; ii) minimizing position requirements to increase the size and hopefully diversity of the applicant pool; iii) having a panel composed of unit supervisory and non-supervisory staff screen applicants and conduct first-round interviews; iv) having a second panel conduct a more in-depth interview of the finalists; v) giving each finalist a “test” or asking for work product to measure his or her technical skills; and vi) conducting a reference check.

For the Operations unit, Mike coordinates and leads this process, including reviewing and posting the job opportunities, monitoring the incoming applications, overseeing the first-round selection process, participating in the interview process (first and/or second round), participating in the final selection, and then proceeding with the on-boarding activities as described below.

II. On-boarding, Orientation, and Termination of Employment

As to newly hired employees of the Office of Legislative Council, newly hired employees of the Speaker and President Pro Tempore, and for all newly elected Representatives and Senators, Mike and his team fulfill the following duties:

- Facilitate and supervise the entry of all required information in the VTHR system to complete the hiring process.
- Facilitate and supervise the entry of any position, salary, status changes in the VTHR system to ensure employees are compensated and coded appropriately.
- Facilitate the orientation (and exit) process for all employees, including:
 - ❖ Mailing new employee packets complete with all HR forms, legislative information (picture/bio booklets, synopsis of departments, parking information, etc.), welcome memos, and employment letters to new employees prior to start date.
 - ❖ New Member Orientation of newly elected legislators after the election and prior to the start of their first Legislative Session. All new members are “hired” using the same forms and process in the VTHR system as other State of VT employees. The Operations unit reviews, processes, and enters this information as well as creates a personnel file for each legislator. The reverse process is true for those members who do not return.
 - ❖ Facilitate the termination process for employees and legislators who do not return to service, including ensuring that IT access is revoked, badges and parking passes returned, payroll systems processed, and benefits stopped in accordance with VTHR policies and guidelines.

III. Continuous HR Support

Once a person has been hired (or elected) and on-boarded, Mike and the Operations unit provides the following on-going HR support:

- Process bi-weekly timesheets and enter appropriate per diem entitlements to ensure timely approvals in accordance with VTHR timelines.
- Process expense reimbursement reports from 180 legislators during the session, various conferences and trainings in the off-session, employee travel for trainings and committee supports services, and processing cash advance options when appropriate for expenses.
- Advising employees concerning benefit changes, fringe benefit opportunities, and other VTHR announcements worth distribution.
- Creating a memo each session that outlines legislator pay rates, reimbursement rates, pay dates, and other important information.
- Providing a “one-stop shop” for miscellaneous questions regarding employment, pay, benefits, etc. that arise during the busy session and during the off-session when contact is less frequent. Very often someone will have a question and they will call Mike and say, “I’m sure you’re not the person that I need to talk to, but you’re the person who can help me find who that person is,” and Mike or other Operations staff will assist that person.

IV. Staff Morale, Welfare, and Support Functions

Other functions performed by Mike and his staff and that relate to HR include facilitating functions such as retirement ceremonies, annual parties (the December holiday party and the Legislative Council BBQ after the session ends), staff meeting logistics, and other miscellaneous functions that encourage teamwork, comradery, and improve staff morale.

In addition, for the Operations unit, Mike serves when necessary as a mediator in staff disputes, personnel conflicts, supervisor conflicts and other issues that arise. He also assists in maintaining the Office of Legislative Council Employee Manual, which is updated and reissued each year to all employees, and that describes employment practices, expectations, processes, and policies. Finally, Mike took a large role in researching and developing the salary comparables used by the Office of Legislative Council prior to the NCSL report to set salaries.

V. Training

The Office of Legislative Council conducts both in-house training (for example, CLE courses for attorneys and training for all staff on the sexual harassment policy and related issues) and also uses State resources and other programs to provide training to staff.

For the Operations unit, Mike supervises and oversees the training of all new employees, “orientation day” of returning temporary employees, and coordinates team-building training with the State of VT CAPS program. For all Legislative Council employees, he coordinates and disseminate upcoming training schedules, opportunities, online courses, etc. Finally, Mike has facilitated the Supervising in State Government training that all Legislative Council supervisors have taken or will take, and he is scheduled to attend the 2019 NCSL HR seminar.