ARC

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Personnel Policy Manual

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ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Contents

Introduction

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the Atlanta Regional Commission. We are pleased that you are part of the organization and hope you'll find your employment here challenging and rewarding. ARC is dedicated to creating a superior living environment for all citizens of the Atlanta Region, and we take pride in the fact that our employees share this commitment. As an employee of ARC, you are joining a team of knowledgeable, hardworking professionals. We welcome you and wish you much success in your employment with us.

Purpose, Vision and Mission

Purpose — to serve the citizens of the region, local governments and the broader regional community by providing services, support and leadership on issues that cross jurisdictional lines and require comprehensive regional solutions.

Vision — the Atlanta Regional Commission is the Regional Leader in identifying Values, developing Policies and executing Plans that matter to residents and communities, ensure Competitive Advantage and preserve long-term Sustainability and Livability.

Mission — the Atlanta Regional Commission will demonstrate professional and forward-looking leadership to ensure sustainable growth, livability and competitive advantage by focusing and balancing Environmental Responsibility, Economic Growth and Social Needs.

ARC's Organizational Ideals

Creative Problem-Solvers: We anticipate potential challenges and develop creative solutions based on professional knowledge, public involvement and collaboration with other partners.

Public Service-Oriented: We are accountable to our constituents, try to exceed their expectations and exhibit the highest standard of ethical conduct.

Continuous Learners: We constantly seek new information, knowledge and skills to better serve the Atlanta region.

Leadership Builders: We serve as a catalyst for the development of regional leaders who understand and act on regional challenges and opportunities.

Team Players: We work with each other internally, with other community partners and with citizens of the region in a concerted effort to build the highest quality of life for our region.

ARC — Regional Impact + Local Relevance

1.2 Purpose of Manual

The purpose of this Manual is to provide you with general information regarding the personnel guidelines of ARC. Neither this Manual nor any provision of this Manual is an employment contract or any other type of contract or guarantee. The guidelines set out in this Manual may not apply to every employee or in every situation. ARC may rescind, modify, delete, or deviate from these or other guidelines, policies, practices, or procedures relating to employment matters from time to time as it considers necessary in its sole discretion, either in individual or Agency-wide situations, with or without notice. This Manual supersedes and replaces all prior published or unpublished policies, manuals, or other publications or representations relating to personnel matters.

The information contained in this Manual is designed as an advisory guide to assist the Agency and our supervisors with the effective management of personnel. The provisions and guidelines contained in this Manual are not binding on the Agency and may be changed, interpreted, modified, revoked, suspended, terminated, or added to by the Agency, in whole or in part, at any time, at the Agency's sole option, and without prior notice to employees. This Manual is not intended to cover every situation which may arise or to create specific policy to be applied in every instance. Instead, this Manual is intended only to give on-site management general advice concerning personnel decisions.

Interpretation of these policies and procedures contained in this Manual is governed by, and is the responsibility of the Board of the Commission acting through the Executive Director or designee. Whenever clarification or assistance in interpretation is required, managers should contact the Executive Director.

Nothing contained in this Manual is intended to create, comprise or define, nor should it be construed to constitute, any type of oral or written employment contract, promise, or guarantee, express or implied, between the Agency and any one or all of its employees. Nothing in the Manual is intended to provide any assurance of continued employment.

In the absence of a specific agreement to the contrary, authorized in writing by the Executive Director, employment with and compensation from the Agency are for no definite period of time and may be terminated by the Agency or the employee at any time, for any reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice. Any written or oral statements or promises to contrary are hereby expressly disavowed and should not be relied upon by prospective or existing employees.

1.3 Overview of the Atlanta Regional Commission

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-county area including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties, as well as the City of Atlanta. For 65 years, ARC and its predecessor agencies have helped to focus the region's leadership, attention and resources on key issues of regional consequence.

ARC is dedicated to unifying the region's collective resources to prepare the metropolitan area for a prosperous future. It does so through professional planning initiatives, the provision of objective information and the involvement of the community in collaborative partnerships.

The Atlanta Regional Commission is funded through a number of sources: local, state and federal government entities and private funds.

Georgia law stipulates a mandatory annual local funding formula. These funds from local governments are used to match federal and state funding dollars.

The Board membership of the Atlanta Regional Commission is composed as follows:

- Each County Commission Chairman in the region
- One mayor from each county (except Fulton County) chosen by a caucus of mayors
- One mayor from the northern half of Fulton County elected by a caucus of mayors within northern Fulton County and one mayor from the southern half of Fulton County elected in the same fashion
- The mayor of the City of Atlanta
- One member of the Atlanta City Council, chosen by the council
- Fifteen private citizens, one from each of the 15 multi-jurisdictional districts of roughly equal population, elected by the 23 public officials; and
- One member appointed by the Board of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

History

Cooperation among local governments in the Atlanta region is a long-standing tradition. ARC and its predecessor agencies have coordinated the planning efforts in the region since 1947, when the first publicly-supported, multi-county planning agency in the United States was created. At that time, the **Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC)** served DeKalb and Fulton counties and the City of Atlanta. Since then, ARC membership has grown to its current size of 10 counties and 70 municipalities.

Organizational Structure

Office of the Director

The Office of the Executive Director is responsible to the ARC Board for the overall leadership and management of the Atlanta Regional Commission through administrative operations. In addition, the Office is responsible for ARC Board policy coordination and Commission support and the building of civic partnerships. The Office of the Executive Director also has the responsibility for positioning the agency to respond effectively to changing economic, social, and political environments. This is done in a public entrepreneurial framework that emphasizes innovation, creativity, collaboration, implementation, and performance outcomes. Components of the Office of the Executive Director include legal counsel, strategic plan implementation, strategic initiatives, and agency capacity building.

Center for Business Services

The Center for Business Services provides the agency's information systems and financial business services, including accounting, budgeting, grants administration, purchasing, payroll, and general services management, including the day to day management of ARC office space and agency office equipment. Business Services also provides the agency's information technology and related technical services including user training, applications support, network management, and internet services. The Center also manages Talent Management and staff development. Talent Management operates as a strategic partner within the agency to drive changes in culture, leadership, talent acquisition and retention, performance, reward and recognition, policy, and personal and professional development in support and achievement of the overall strategic goals of ARC.

Groups

- Financial Services
- General Services
- Information Technology Services
- Talent Management

Center for Livable Communities

The Center for Livable Communities integrates various aspects of physical planning and data resources to achieve a greater balance of consideration for each area in the Commission's plans and programs. Activities undertaken by the Center for Livable Communities include the development and maintenance of the Region's long-range development plan and other functional plans such as the regional transportation plan and water supply plan. The center also works closely with local governments in the development of regional plans and programs, review of local comprehensive plans and reviews of Developments of Regional Impact (DRI). In addition, the center is responsible for producing much of the demographic data used both for ARC's planning activities as well as throughout the Region.

Groups

- Community Development
- Community Partnerships
- Mobility Services
- Natural Resources
- Research and Analytics
- Transportation Access and Mobility

Center for Strategic Relations

The Center for Strategic Relations is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of a comprehensive communications program to support the goals of ARC and develop an understanding of its programs and purposes.

The center is responsible for the coordination of strategic initiatives and for building and implementing a community engagement plan. The center is also responsible for state and congressional legislative coordination and the building of civic partnerships.

Groups

- Communications
- Corporate & Community Engagement
- Creative
- Digital Strategy
- Government Affairs

Center for Community Services

The Center for Community Services provides assistance to local governments, community groups and citizens of the Region in order to build and maintain their civic infrastructure. The center is responsible for insuring its constituents have access to information, data and management expertise, and to serve as a resource towards active community involvement in the planning process. This is accomplished through the efforts of staff work at various levels of governmental and community involvement. The center is on-call as facilitators and organizers of community and local government efforts

Groups

- Aging & Independence Services
- Homeland Security and Recovery
- Workforce Solutions

Employment Practices

2.1 Equal Employment Opportunity

The Agency is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of inappropriate or unlawful conduct. In keeping with this commitment, we will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, or the unlawful treatment of employees by anyone, including any supervisor, coworker, client or customer of the Agency.

Prohibited Conduct

Harassment, discrimination and/or improper conduct consists of misconduct that includes unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), color, race, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetics or other protected group status or activity (e.g. opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in the statutory complaint process) as provided for by law. This includes conduct by someone to another of the same gender. The Agency will not tolerate conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. No supervisor or Agency employee has authority to engage in such conduct. If you feel you've been subject to the type of conduct described in this policy, you must report this conduct.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal or visual conduct based on sex constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision; or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Sexual harassment may include explicit sexual propositions, sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, sexually oriented "kidding" or "teasing", "practical jokes", jokes about gender-specific traits, foul or obscene language or gestures, displays of foul or obscene printed or visual material, and physical contact, such as patting, pinching or brushing against another's body.

Complaint Procedure

All employees are responsible for helping to assure that we avoid any form of unlawful treatment. If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed harassment, discrimination or unlawful treatment, you are to notify immediately in writing (preferably within 24 hours) the Manager of Talent Management or any Center Director. If you are not contacted promptly about your complaint, you are to refile it with the Manager of Talent Management and send a copy to the Executive Director. The Agency forbids retaliation against anyone who has made a complaint or provides information related to a complaint.

The agency will undertake an objective and appropriate review of any complaint. To the extent practicable and appropriate, the Agency will keep any complaint and the terms of their resolution confidential. The Agency will take corrective action as appropriate, including such discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment. The Agency will undertake corrective action to stop inappropriate conduct before it rises to the level of an unlawful action. You will be notified as to the outcome of your complaint. If you have any questions about the status of your complaint, you should contact the Manager of Talent Management.

The Agency recognizes that intentional or malicious false accusations of misconduct can have a serious effect on innocent men and women. Individuals falsely accusing another of misconduct will be disciplined in accordance with the nature and extent of his or her false accusation. The Agency encourages any employee to raise questions he or she may have regarding misconduct or this policy with the Talent Management Manager or higher-level officer.

Each employee should be aware that they have the right to file a charge of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEOC) or other state agency as provided by law. According to the EEOC, the deadline for filing any such charge runs from the last date of unlawful harassment, not from the date that the complaint to the Agency is resolved.

2.2 Recruitment Policy

The Atlanta Regional Commission is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. The Agency is committed to providing equal employment opportunity regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected class.

Request for Personnel

When the need to fill a vacancy exists, a completed Position Requisition Form (PRF) from that group and/or center must be submitted to Talent Management. This form must be completed in detail, including appropriate signatures of approval. Also, a General Labor Classification code obtained from Financial Services verifying position approval in the budgeting process must be included on this form. Instructions and forms can be obtained from Talent Management.

Applicant Processing

Talent Management is responsible for coordinating the recruitment process which includes advertising, interviewing, reference checking and hiring.

It is the Agency's policy to only accept resumes and/or applications for current vacancies. All resumes and applications for employment must be submitted online through ARC's website.

Job Posting/Advertisement

Talent Management will post vacancy announcements on the agency intranet for a minimum of five days once the Position Requisition Process has been completed. Posting of Center Director positions is at the discretion of the Executive Director. While a vacancy may also be advertised externally, it is not required. Every effort will be made to hire qualified internal candidates. Job posting requirements do not apply to temporary appointments.

Recruiting Expenses

The Agency may pay certain expenses that an applicant may incur during the interviewing process (i.e., airline tickets, mileage reimbursement, meals and lodging). However, Center Director approval must be obtained in writing prior to the initial interview.

Relocation Expenses

The Agency may, at its discretion, pay some or all of the newly hired employee's relocation expenses if he or she is relocating to the Atlanta area from out of state. These expenses should be approved in advance of the employee relocating by the Center Director. However, if an employee resigns or is terminated from the Agency before he or she completes one (1) year of service, he/she will be responsible for reimbursing the Agency the amount of relocation expenses paid by the Agency. The fact that relocation expenses may be paid for a newly hired employee should not be construed as a guarantee that employment will continue for any specific duration after relocation.

Use of Employment Agencies and Fees

Talent Management is responsible for all contact with employment agencies. This ensures the appropriate agencies are being utilized and maximizes Talent Management's ability to negotiate appropriate fees in an effort to minimize recruitment costs. No employee shall contact any recruitment source directly without prior approval from Talent Management.

2.3 Introductory Period

All new employees will complete a six-month introductory period. New employees serving their introductory period are not entitled to certain employee benefits. This introductory period shall be used to closely observe the employee's work performance. During this period, an employee may be removed for any reason, with or without cause. At the end of the introductory period, the employee's performance will be evaluated to determine if he or she is recommended to be retained in the position. If so, the employee's status will then be classified as regular. If not, the appropriate supervisor will notify the employee of such removal. The Executive Director may extend the introductory period of a new employee up to an additional three (3) months. The employee shall be notified in writing of such an extension.

2.4 Employee Status

To ensure uniform standards for benefits eligibility, application of policies, and conditions of employment, all employees will be classified in one of the following categories:

Regular, full time employee—this is an employee who has successfully completed the required introductory period and who usually and consistently works a minimum of 37 1/2 hours per week for ARC. This type of employee is eligible for all employee benefits.

Regular, part time employee—this is an employee who has successfully completed the required introductory period and who usually and consistently works less than 37 1/2 hours per week for ARC. This type of employee may be eligible for certain employee benefits.

Temporary employee—this is an employee who is hired for a limited duration or for completion of a specified project or event to fulfill a temporary need. This type of employee is not eligible for any employee benefits.

2.5 Promotions

An employee can be promoted by filling a vacancy that allows them to advance from one position to a position in a higher pay grade. Employees who are promoted will receive a salary increase upon promotion. That increase will be based on the employee's qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the higher classification, with the new salary being at least at the minimum of the salary range for that classification. The employee will be eligible for a salary increase based on performance one year after the date of promotion.

2.6 Reclassification

Reclassification means the substantial changing of duties, responsibilities and functions of a job. An employee may be reclassified to a position in either a higher classification or a lower classification. However, only regular employees who have completed their introductory period are eligible for reclassification to a position in a higher classification.

To be reclassified to a position in a higher classification, the employee must complete and submit a Position Classification Questionnaire to Talent Management with the appropriate approvals. Talent Management will review and analyze the questionnaire based on current classification procedures. A recommendation will be made by Talent Management to the Business Services Director and/or r Executive Director for final approval. Employees who are reclassified to a higher position will receive a pay increase upon reclassification. That increase will be based on the employee's qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the higher classification, with the new salary being at least at the minimum of the salary range for that classification. The employee will be eligible for a salary increase based on performance one year after the date of reclassification.

Reclassification to a position in a lower classification, which may be either voluntary or involuntary, does not require the completion of a Position Classification Questionnaire. The salary for employees who are reclassified to a lower position will be reduced based on the employee's qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the lower classification and shall not exceed the maximum salary of the salary range for that classification. The date of the employee's next performance evaluation will remain the same as it was prior to the reclassification.

2.7 Transfer

Transfer means an action to change an employee from one position to another position within the same salary range. All employees (whether in regular or introductory status) may apply for a transfer. No salary increase or decrease shall be associated with the transfer.

2.8 Nepotism

It is the policy of the Agency to refrain from employing any member of an ARC employee's or ARC Board member's immediate family into a full-time, part-time or temporary position. Immediate family members include spouse, parent, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparent, and may be of a step, in-law and foster or adoptive relationship.

However, if two employees marry each other subsequent to their employment, they may continue their employment provided they do not work in the same Group or in a position in which one of them will either be supervising the other or influencing their activities at work. One spouse must be transferred to another Group to comply with this policy. If a transfer cannot be arranged, either person may resign. If neither person chooses to resign, the less senior employee shall be separated from his/her employment.

In addition, if a member of an ARC employee's immediate family becomes a member of the ARC Board subsequent to the employee's hiring, then the employee may retain his/her employment.

2.9 Rehiring Former Employees

A regular employee who resigned in good standing may be eligible for rehire. The Agency will not consider for rehire any former employee who was discharged for cause, or whose personnel file otherwise indicates that the individual is ineligible for rehire. Eligible former employees will be given consideration for rehire along with all other candidates for the position for which the former employee is being considered and must meet the minimum qualifications that are relevant to the training, experience, and standards required for the job. A person who is rehired shall be required to serve an introductory period as provided in Section 2.3. The rehiring may make full allowances for salary increases previously earned. Former employees who are rehired within 90 days of the date of their previous termination will be reinstated with no loss of prior service for the purpose of determining sick and annual leave accruals, credited service for the retirement plan, and date of performance evaluation; they will not serve an introductory period.

Classification

3.1 Allocation of Positions

A comprehensive classification plan for all positions shall be established and approved by the ARC Board. The maintenance of the classification plan shall be subject to the provisions of these policies. The plan shall be based on investigation and analysis of the duties and responsibilities assigned to each position, and each position shall be assigned a grade. The plan shall be developed after consultation with the Center Directors and supervisory officials in the centers, and other persons technically familiar with the character of the work. When complete, the classification plan shall include for each job an appropriate title, description of duties, responsibilities, and the education, training, experience and other qualifications necessary to perform each job.

Whenever a new or additional job is authorized or created, or the duties and responsibilities of an existing job are substantially changed, the Executive Director shall allocate or reallocate the jobs affected in the same manner as original allocations are made. Review of allocations may be made by the Executive Director upon request of a Center Director or upon the employee's own motion.

3.2 Class Specifications

Class specifications are descriptive and explanatory and are not restrictive. They are designed to indicate the nature of work performed and the minimum qualifications required. The use of an individual expression or illustration as to duties or responsibilities shall not be regarded as excluding assignment of other duties not mentioned which are of similar kind or quality. The language of the class specification is not to be construed as limiting or modifying the authority of the Agency to take from, add to, eliminate entirely, or otherwise change the duties and responsibilities of a job, to assign duties or to delegate responsibilities to employees and/or to direct and control their work.

3.3 Revisions to Classification Plan

The Executive Director may make revisions to the classification plan that include the establishment of new jobs, new job descriptions and changes to existing job descriptions for existing positions or newly allocated positions in the Agency.

Compensation

4.1 Establishment of Compensation Plan

After consultation with Center Directors, the Executive Director shall prepare and recommend to the Board a compensation plan for all jobs of the Agency. The plan shall provide salary schedules consistent with the classification plan. Such salary schedules shall include pay grades assigned to each position in the classification plan, and each pay grade will have established pay ranges with the minimum and maximum pay rates provided.

Upon adoption by the Board, the compensation plan shall constitute the official compensation schedule for all positions. Uniform regulations supplementing these policies shall provide for the administration of the plan.

4.2 Revisions to Compensation Plan

The Executive Director may make revisions to the compensation plan that include the assignment of new jobs to pay grades, the deletion of jobs from pay grades, and changes to existing salary schedules.

4.3 Exempt and Non-Exempt Employees

In compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Agency classifies its employees into the following two categories:

Non-exempt—those employees who are eligible for overtime pay in accordance with the overtime provisions of applicable federal and state wage and hour laws.

Exempt—those employees who are excluded from the overtime pay provisions of applicable wage and hour laws. The job duties and compensation for these employees must meet the criteria established by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

4.4 Pay Periods

Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis, one week in arrears, on Fridays. If a regularly scheduled payday falls on an Agency-observed holiday, employees will normally be paid on the last workday preceding the holiday.

4.5 Overtime

ARC complies with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act and any applicable local law with respect to wages and hours. All non-exempt employees will be paid overtime at the rate of one and one-half (1.5) times their hourly rate for hours actually worked in excess of 40 hours in each workweek. Exempt employees, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, are not eligible for overtime pay. Paid non-working time (which may include, but is not limited to, lunch hours, breaks, annual leave, and sick leave) shall not be considered time actually worked for purposes of calculating overtime. Exempt employees are subject to deductions from their salaries only for lawful reasons. If an employee feels he has been subject to an improper salary deduction as defined by the Fair Labor Standards act, the employee should utilize the complaint procedure set forth in our EEO policy (policy 2.1)

All scheduled overtime must be approved by the employee's supervisor in advance of the overtime being worked. It shall be the policy of the Agency to authorize overtime work for emergency purposes and for non-emergency situations when all other scheduling options have been exhausted.

4.6 Employee Loan and Advances

The Agency expects all employees to manage their own financial affairs. It is the policy of the Agency not to loan money or advance salary to any employee.

4.7 Performance Management and Development Program

The Agency has implemented a Performance Management and Development Program to help employees develop professional and personal performance objectives, receive feedback to help assess their achievement of these performance objectives and determine appropriate compensation in recognition of these achievements. The performance management and development program is a continuous, year-round process that's designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Provides a means of identifying what ARC and the supervisor expect of employees, of communicating it to them, and of holding them accountable for meeting expectations.
- Provides employees with critical feedback they can use to improve performance.
- Creates an opportunity to develop and discuss professional goals and objectives.
- Documents employee performance and provides support for merit increases.

At the beginning of the performance period the employee and his/her supervisor will mutually develop performance objectives for the upcoming performance period. During the performance period, the employee's supervisor will monitor the employee's performance and provide continuous feedback and coaching. At the end of the performance period, a formal performance evaluation meeting will then take place. If appropriate, an increase in compensation, based on the overall rating contained in the Performance and Management form, shall be awarded. The amount of the merit increase that corresponds to the overall rating in the Performance Management and Development form shall be determined by the Agency on an annual basis and may be modified or changed at its discretion.

4.8 Merit Increases

Employees may be eligible for merit increases annually on their anniversary date. The agency will make a determination on an annual basis as to whether funds are available for merit increases. The amount of any merit increase will be based on job performance as outlined in Section 4.7 and may not exceed the maximum pay increase established by the Agency as part of its Performance Management and Development Program. Merit increases may not result in a salary above the maximum of the salary range for the position the employee holds. Employees who are at the maximum of their salary range may be given a merit stipend, based on job performance as outlined in Chapter 4.7, up to $3,500 annually.

4.9 Outstanding Performance Incentive

An Outstanding Performance Incentive is a special from of pay granted to a regular employee whose performance, achievements, and contributions to the Agency are of such high quality above that ordinarily found in the type position concerned that special pay recognition is warranted. An Outstanding Performance Incentive may consist of either an increase to the employee's salary or a lump sum.

An Outstanding Performance Incentive may be given independently of a merit increase. An employee may receive no more than one Outstanding Performance Incentive in a one-year period. An Outstanding Performance Incentive must be approved in advance by the Executive Director and will be granted within the limit of available funds.

An Outstanding Performance Incentive is used to recognize an employee's exceptional efforts and high level of performance on projects or special assignments. It is based on a supervisor's judgment of performance and is discretionary in nature. Written justification must show that the employee demonstrated exemplary performance above and beyond that expected of the position, such as:

- Making extraordinary contributions to a project or program
- Successfully assuming responsibility for a new or complex initiative, program or project
- Providing exceptional customer service
- Significantly improving work processes
- Making a considerable contribution to increased Group or unit productivity
- Completing a special project or a unique or exceptional work assignment in a superior manner
- Obtaining additional funding for new or existing programs

Employee Benefit Plans and Programs

5.1 Health Benefits

ARC provides a comprehensive health benefits package to eligible employees. Employees will be responsible for a portion of the benefit premium. All coverages are subject to terms, conditions, restrictions, and other eligibility requirements as set forth in the plans. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details of coverages offered.

5.2 COBRA (The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985)

This act allows employees the opportunity to continue health benefits for specific periods of time upon the occurrence of a qualifying event. This applies to all employees and their eligible dependents who are covered under the Agency's group health insurance plans. If COBRA is elected, the employee pays the full cost of the health insurance plus administrative charges of up to 2%. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.3 Holidays

The Atlanta Regional Commission normally observes 10 paid holidays per year. This benefit is for all full-time and part-time employees (whether in regular or introductory status). Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.4 Sick Leave

Full-time regular and introductory employees shall accrue paid sick leave at the rate of three (3) hours each pay period or a total of seventy-eight (78) hours per year. Part-time regular and introductory employees working at least 20 hours per week will accrue and accumulate a pro-rated portion (based on the number of hours worked per week). Temporary employees are not eligible for leave. A maximum of 525 hours of sick leave may be rolled over at the end of a calendar year. Any leave accrued above the maximum is applied toward length of service for retirement purposes. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.5 Annual Leave

Regular full-time employees are eligible to accrue annual leave with pay up to a maximum of 360 hours. Part-time regular employees working at least 20 hours per week will accrue and accumulate a pro-rated portion (based on the number of hours worked per week). Temporary employees are not eligible for leave. Any leave accrued above the maximum is applied toward length of service for retirement purposes. A regular employee, upon separation from employment, may receive compensation for unused accrued annual leave up to a maximum of 360 hours at the employee's regular rate of pay unless that employee has any outstanding financial obligation to the agency or has unauthorized possession of agency property. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.6 Leave Donation

An employee may donate accrued, unused sick or annual leave to an employee who has exhausted all available leave balances (annual and sick) and who would otherwise need to take leave without pay due to personal illness or injury of a serious, long-term nature, resulting in lengthy absences, or similar medical condition affecting qualified family members. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.7 Leave of Absence Without Pay

Leave of absence without pay for a period of more than two (2) weeks but not to exceed six (6) consecutive months may be granted to an employee upon the request of the employee and the approval of the Center Director and Executive Director. Leaves of absence without pay may be granted for personal reasons or for employees who have medical disabilities but are not eligible for or have exhausted the twelve (12) weeks of Family & Medical Leave.

Because the daily operations of the Agency must be maintained, the Agency in no way guarantees the employee a position upon his/her election to return to work following a leave of absence without pay. Depending upon job availability, the Agency will attempt to place the employee in the same position or a substantially equivalent position for which the employee is capable of performing. Failure to return from a leave of absence without pay on the first scheduled workday after the end of the approved period may be considered a voluntary resignation.

No accrual of privileges or benefits are allowed for an employee who is on leave of absence without pay. Thus, employees on leave of absence without pay will not accrue sick leave, annual leave, or time counted toward credited service for retirement purposes; their performance evaluation date will be adjusted to reflect periods of leave; and the Agency will not pay for health insurance coverage during leaves of absence without pay. Employees wishing to retain their health insurance coverage during leave must arrange to make payment in advance to the Agency.
(See Talent Management for payment arrangements)

5.8 Family & Medical Leave

Eligible employees are permitted to take up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave during a twelve (12) month period measured forward from the date the employee's first FMLA leave begins for the following reasons: (1) for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or child birth; (2) to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care; (3) to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition or; (4) for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job. Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12 weeks leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered servicemember during a single 12-month period.

Leave taken under this policy may be taken intermittently, in separate blocks of time. If an employee's 12 weeks of Family & Medical Leave are exhausted within a twelve (12) month period, any further unpaid leave will be considered as Leave of Absence Without Pay as described in Chapter 5.7. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details and administrative procedures.

5.9 Jury and Witness Duty

Any regular or introductory employee who is subpoenaed by any court to serve as a juror or witness, shall be entitled to a leave of absence from duties. This leave of absence shall be with pay, without loss of time, and without effect on performance rating during this time. This pay is in addition to any other compensation that the employee may receive from the court. The employee must furnish evidence of such service signed by the appropriate authority indicating the time served.

Temporary employees shall be eligible for leave of absence without pay for jury duty.

5.10 Military Leave

The Atlanta Regional Commission is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of unlawful treatment of employees for conduct protected by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act ("USERRA") and all other applicable federal and state laws pertaining to military leave.

Eligibility for Military Leave of Absence

Eligibility for military leave of absence shall be governed by and subject to the limitations and restrictions set forth in USERRA and other applicable federal and state laws.

Notice Requirements

Employees must give advance notice to their supervisor of their military leave, unless impossible, impracticable or because of military necessity.

Compensation for Military Leave

Regular employees will be paid for up to 18 days in a federal fiscal year (October 1st–September 30th) of ordered military duty during which they engage in the performance of duty or training pursuant to orders issued by competent state and federal authority. In the event the Governor declares an emergency and orders employees to active duty, the employee, while performing such duty, will be paid for up to 30 days in a federal fiscal year. In addition, any employee ordered to military active duty due to a local, state or federal emergency, a threat to national security, or time of war will be paid the difference between the employee's regular pay from ARC and the employee's military compensation for a period of up to 365 calendar days from the date the employee exhausts the period of paid leave listed above. The employee must provide satisfactory evidence of the employee's total military compensation.

An employee may charge military leave only for the hours the employee would have worked to receive pay. Affected employees are not required to use accrued annual leave in lieu of unpaid military leave; however, they may elect to use accrued annual leave at their discretion. Employees must notify ARC in writing, in advance of their leave, of their request to use accrued annual leave during their military leave of absence.

Reemployment Rights

Subject to the limitations and restrictions set forth in USERRA and other federal and state laws, including exclusions for service personnel who receive either a dishonorable discharge or bad-conduct discharge, or who are separated from service under "other than honorable" conditions (as defined by USERRA), ARC will promptly reinstate employees returning from active service. ARC is not obligated to reemploy an employee if ARC determines that circumstances have so changed that reemployment is impossible or unreasonable or would impose an undue hardship. Employees who are returning from a covered military leave of absence and seek reinstatement with ARC must submit an application for employment.

Employee Obligations

This policy shall be read in conjunction and consistent with USERRA and all other applicable federal and state laws governing military leave. Employees are responsible for compliance with their obligations under these laws and failure to do so may result in the loss of any right afforded the employee.

5.11 Tuition Reimbursement Program

This program is available to all regular full-time employees after successful completion of the six (6) month introductory period. ARC will pay 80% of actual costs for successful completion of educational courses up to a maximum of $2,000 per year. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for details.

5.12 Workers' Compensation

Employees are covered under the provision of the Workers' Compensation Act. If an employee is injured while on the job, such an injury must be reported to his/her supervisor immediately. The supervisor should ensure that the injured employee receives any required first aid or emergency medical treatment. The Agency has posted a panel of physicians and facilities that must be used for any job-related illness or injury. After medical treatment is administered, Talent Management must be notified immediately with all pertinent information so that a claim may be submitted within 24 hours of the accident or illness.

An employee who becomes temporarily disabled, with the disability covered by Workers' Compensation, will be entitled to whatever medical and income benefits are provided under the Workers' Compensation Program. Any time (excluding the day of the accident or illness) the employee is out of work due to this disability (including doctor appointments) will not be paid by the Agency; however, the employee may use his/her accrued but not used sick leave. Employees who are absent from work one (1) or more days as a result of a serious job-related injury or illness should not be permitted to return to work until the employee submits a statement from one of the panel of physicians posted by the Agency indicating the employee is able to resume all essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation.

All injuries should be reported to the employees' immediate supervisor and the Talent Management Group; employees may lose the right to receive compensation if an accident is not reported within 30 days.

Workers' Compensation posters are located on bulletin boards on each floor. These notices include instructions on workers' compensation procedures and a list of physicians. Employees should contact a physician from the panel of physicians posted on bulletin boards. One change of doctor from the list may be made without permission. Further changes require the permission of the employer or State Board of Workers' Compensation.

Medical and rehabilitation expenses, as well as lost wages, will be paid within the limits of the law.

5.13 Employee Recognition Program

As part of its benefits program, ARC recognizes employees and their contributions in an effort to foster morale and reward employee longevity. Forms of recognition include length of service awards, special events and activities. Please see the Employee Benefits Manual located on the Intranet for more details.

5.14 Bereavement Leave

Regular and introductory employees are eligible to take up to three days of bereavement leave upon a death in their immediate family. The purpose of the leave is to provide paid time away from work to grieve, attend a funeral, and/or handle related matters. Immediate family members include spouse, son, daughter, parent, brother, sister and grandparent, including those of an in-law or step relationship.

Group Managers may grant an employee an extension of this leave based on extenuating circumstances.

5.15 Voting – Time Off

ARC complies with Georgia Law (Code 21-2-404), which states that each employee is allowed up to two hours to vote. However, as stated in the Code, if the employee's work hours begin at least two hours after the opening of the polls or end at least two hours prior to the closing of the polls, then time off is not available – they can vote either before or after work. However, if someone's personal circumstances do not allow them to get to the polls in the two hours before their work hours begin or in the two hours after their work hours end, the supervisor can use their discretion whether to allow them some additional time off during the day to vote (for example, coming into the office late, leaving the office early, or taking an extended lunch hour). Anyone whose work hours don't begin at least two hours after the opening of the polls or end at least two hours prior to the closing of the polls should be given up to two hours to vote.

Workplace policies

6.1 Flextime

The Agency's business hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. However, employee work schedules may vary as long as each employee adheres to a 37.5-hour workweek. Employees can arrive as early as 7:30 a.m. and as late as 9:30 a.m. pending immediate supervisor approval. Core hours of operation during which all employees must work are 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Flexible working schedules must not interfere with the normal operation of the individual Group and/or department.

6.2 Teleworking

The Atlanta Regional Commission recognizes teleworking as a viable work option that benefits the employer, the employee, and the community. ARC will utilize teleworking arrangements as appropriate to achieve its annual work program; to demonstrate commitment to the environment; and to promote employee satisfaction, quality of life, efficiency and productivity. Teleworking is a voluntary agreement between an employee and the supervisor. It is not an entitlement or a right. It is a workplace strategy when eligibility requirements are met.

General Provisions

- Teleworking is entirely voluntary and made available only to regular employees and may be terminated by the employee or ARC at any time for any or no cause. Decisions involving teleworking are not appealable.
- The teleworker is covered by and will adhere to all policies, rules and regulations of ARC while teleworking. The agency's Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) relating to the use of technology still apply even when working from home or any alternate work site.
- Employees may be allowed to telework when there are tangible benefits to ARC. This arrangement may be continued as long as all expectations of the position continue to be fully met and the job responsibilities of the position can be satisfactorily performed away from the primary work site.
- A "Teleworking Agreement" form must be completed and signed by the employee and supervisor/manager prior to the start of teleworking. This form will be kept in the employee's personnel file.
- Teleworkers and supervisors of teleworkers (telemanagers) must be trained in all aspects of teleworking prior to the employee beginning teleworking.
- Teleworkers must be mindful of the image presented during the teleworking day and must not be involved in activities during the workday that will reflect negatively on ARC

Eligibility

- Employees must have been employed with ARC for at least six months to be eligible for teleworking and have successfully completed their introductory period.
- Employees considered for teleworking are those who have a history of reliability, self-motivation, self-discipline and time management skills.
- Employees must also have consistently met established performance standards and received, at a minimum, an overall rating of "Solid Performance" on their most recent performance evaluation to be considered eligible for teleworking.
- Jobs considered appropriate for teleworking are those that require concentration; need little face-to-face contact with supervisors or co-workers; require no specialized on-site equipment; need little or no staff support; can be performed without close supervision; and have clear timelines, objectives or other measures of accountability. This evaluation is the sole responsibility of the supervisor or manager of the position.

Scheduling

- Teleworking days will be scheduled in advance with the informed consent of the supervisor and teleworker. Normally, teleworking will not be approved when requested the same day the teleworker wishes to work from a remote site.
- Teleworking schedules should avoid conflicts with ARC agency, center or Group staff meetings or any other meeting as required by the supervisor/manager.
- A teleworker may be required to come in to the office on a day which they normally telework when such conflicts or circumstances warrant.
- Teleworkers should have an established work schedule with a beginning time and ending time.
- Regular teleworking schedules are generally not approved for more than 1-2 days per week. Non-typical telework requests will be evaluated by the supervisor based on work load and production needs.

Performance

- Teleworking cannot increase workloads for coworkers, supervisors, managers or any other employees or ARC partners.
- The teleworker agrees that, if any activity at the alternate work location interferes with their ability to do their ARC work, leave will be taken for the appropriate number of hours.
- Teleworking should not be used as a substitute for dependent care. However, in instances when the teleworker provides limited dependent care and can successfully fulfill all work responsibilities while doing so, teleworking may be approved on a limited basis by the supervisor. Again, the teleworker may need to take appropriate leave for time devoted to non-work activities.

Communications

- The teleworker must be accessible to their supervisors, coworkers and others during their agreed upon regular business hours, regardless of work location. A sign in the teleworker's office or workstation is recommended to inform others that they are teleworking and providing instructions on how they can be contacted.
- ARC voice mail is recommended for teleworkers, rather than the number being forwarded to the employee's home or alternate work location because home answering machine/service messages do not generally reflect the professional demeanor of the office voice mail system. The teleworker can pick up and return calls from any location and the following guidelines apply:
    - Messages should be retrieved at regular intervals (to be determined by supervisor).
    - The teleworker is encouraged to make and return long distance calls from ARC. At the discretion of the supervisor, expenses for work-related long-distance calls and cell phone calls, which must be made while away from the office, may be reimbursed with appropriate documentation.
    - Voice mail messages should not announce that the teleworker is at home or at another location. Teleworking should be seamless. External callers should not be able to tell that the teleworker is not in the office.
- Use of e-mail communications is also recommended. So that teleworking appears transparent to others, the teleworker should not use the Outlook "Out of Office Assistant" feature.

Equipment and Technology

- Teleworkers are expected to have access to computer, printer, telephone lines, furniture and other equipment on their own as needed for the performance of their job. ARC does not provide such equipment and technology. In some situations, teleworkers may be approved to telework who do not have access to a computer or other office equipment.
- In the situation that permission is given for certain equipment to be checked out and used at the alternate work site on a temporary basis, the teleworker will complete a Property Removal Form and is responsible for ensuring that ARC equipment is maintained in a safe and secure manner. All equipment, material, and/or other property will be immediately returned upon completion of assignment or period in which equipment was checked out. Equipment will also be returned immediately upon request, termination of participation in the teleworking program and/or termination of employment. ARC equipment is not authorized for personal use.
- Remote access to employees' computers is an option available to teleworkers. A signed acknowledgement of ARC's Acceptable Use Policies must be on file in Talent Management.
- ARC will provide technical support via telephone or e-mail during normal business hours for the ARC computer and connection - not for hardware, software or communications problems relating to the setup at the remote site.
- IT staff will not provide on-site technical support for ARC staff when teleworking or working at any alternate work location.
- If a teleworker requires technical support provided by an outside firm and does not feel comfortable being alone with that company's representative, it is the teleworker's responsibility to have someone else there.
- ARC is not responsible for any contracts entered into by the teleworker regarding equipment and technology at their alternate work site, regardless of the status of their teleworking agreement. Long-term agreements should not be entered into by the teleworker based solely upon the employee being approved for teleworking.
- Some job-specific, specialized software may be made available to employees on an individual basis upon request and approval of the supervisor and provided by IT.

Home Office, Work Environment and Supplies

- Teleworking work space should provide an atmosphere that is conducive for work. Workspace must be well-lit, safe and free from hazards. The area should be comfortable, properly ventilated and as quiet and free from distractions as possible.
- Supplies required to complete assigned work at the home work location should be obtained from ARC. The use of ARC materials at the home work location is subject to the same regulations as their use in the on-site office.
- Expenses not specifically covered by ARC (such as returning a long-distance phone call which cannot wait until the teleworker returns to ARC) will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- If there will be others at the remote work location, ground rules must be established relating to interruptions, noise and activity levels in the area being used by the teleworker.
- Background noise is not permitted in the work space and should never be audible over the telephone.

Worker's Compensation and Liability

Employees injured in the "course and scope of employment" are eligible for workers' compensation benefits. Thus, injuries to teleworkers working at home are covered by workers' compensation laws. ARC's position is that employees are protected when they are working in their designated remote work location and during the agreed upon work hours and not, for example, when they are in their yards. When an injury occurs during teleworking work hours and in the teleworker's workspace, the employee shall immediately report the injury to the supervisor/manager. The employee and supervisor/manager should follow ARC's policies regarding the reporting of injuries for employees injured while at work.

Security and Access to Information

The teleworking employee is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and security at the alternate work site, just as the employee would at the primary work place. The employee must protect the security and integrity of data, information, paper files and access to the agency network and computer systems. Any compromise of data, records or other information must be immediately reported to the employee's supervisor/manager.

Grounds for Termination of a Teleworking Agreement

- Teleworking is an entirely voluntary benefit made available only to regular employees and may be terminated by the employee or ARC at any time for any or no cause. Teleworking is not a right. Decisions made by a supervisor or manager about teleworking are not appealable.
- "Inability to get the job done" is a major reason for terminating a teleworking agreement. This is determined by the supervisor or manager and there are no grounds or means for appeal.
- Reports from clients or co-workers that they are unable to reach or be contacted by a teleworker within timeframes established by the supervisor are also grounds for a supervisor or manager to terminate teleworking privileges without recourse.
- Reports from clients, co-workers or supervisors of background noise from children, television, radios, etc., are grounds for a supervisor or manager to terminate teleworking privileges without recourse.
- Security breaches of data, network or other computer resources will result in termination of remote access and possibly termination of teleworking privileges without recourse.

6.3 Compressed Workweek

ARC provides eligible employees the opportunity to participate in a compressed workweek schedule. With a compressed workweek schedule, an employee will work 75 hours in nine days, rather than ten days, in a two-week period. A compressed workweek program can benefit both employees and ARC. For employees, it allows them more flexibility to manage work and personal time; reduces the number of commute trips to work; and allows them to have regular three-day weekends. For ARC, it enhances employee recruitment and retention; reduces employee absences due to medical appointments and personal responsibilities; and reinforces its role as a regional advocate for reducing traffic congestion and air pollution and promoting commute options.

Eligibility

- Participation in the Compressed Workweek program is entirely voluntary and made available only to regular employees who have been employed with ARC for at least six months. However, some positions may not be eligible to participate due to the nature of their work; these positions will be identified by each Group Manager.
- Participating in the Compressed Workweek Program requires Group Manager approval.

General Provisions

- Participation in the program is not an entitlement or right. It is a workplace strategy when eligibility requirements are met.
- Participation in the program may be terminated by the employee or ARC at any time for any or no cause. Decisions involving compressed workweek are not appealable.
- Employees participating in the compressed workweek program will work nine days in a ten-day period that coincides with ARC's biweekly pay periods. Friday will generally be their weekday off during the ten-day period, although an alternate day of the week may be approved based on business needs. The supervisor will determine which day of the ten-day period the employee does not work. During the five-day week of the pay period, employees will work eight hours per day, and during the four-day week of the pay period, they'll work eight and three-quarter hours per day. Some examples are:

Example #1	**Example #2**
Five-day week: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm	Five-day week: 7:00 am – 4:00 pm
Four-day week: 8:15 am – 6:00 pm	Four-day week: 7:00 am – 4:45 pm

- Employees will have the flexibility, with supervisory approval, to select individual starting and ending times between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm. Core hours of operation during which all employees must work are 9:30 am – 4:00 pm.
- When selecting a work schedule, an employee's starting time, ending time, and weekday off will stay constant from pay period to pay period.
- Supervisors can require that an employee change schedules if needed.
- Employees may need to adjust their work schedules to meet agency needs. Adjustments may be needed for scheduled meetings, training and other work activities which do not fit the employee's compressed workweek schedule. The agency's needs supersede the employee's ability to take their scheduled day off. In the event an employee works on their regularly scheduled day off, the supervisor may allow the employee to take another day off in compensation within the same pay period.
- If an employee's compressed day off falls on an agency holiday, they may either (with supervisory approval):
  - Work a non-compressed schedule during the pay period in which the holiday occurs (i.e., 7.5 hours per day) or
  - Work a compressed schedule, but take another day off during the pay period in lieu of their normal day off

- Full day absences from work will result in the use of the number of hours of leave (sick or annual) for which the employee was scheduled to work.
- It is strongly recommended that employees schedule any personal appointments during their compressed day off.
- Employees will be expected to maintain the same level of performance and professionalism required of them when working a non-compressed workweek schedule. Failure to do so will result in termination of an employee's participation in a compressed workweek schedule.
- Employees will be required to sign an agreement which states that they have read, understood, and agreed to the guidelines and stipulations for their compressed workweek schedule.

6.4 Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, the Executive Director will decide whether to close the office or open late. ARC will notify staff with an agency wide email as early as possible. For those employees who cannot access their ARC email remotely, an email will be sent to their personal email address. In order for this to occur, they'll need to provide their personal email address to ARC's General Services Manager. In addition, the recording on ARC's main telephone number will indicate that the office is closed. If there is no email notification or no recording on ARC's main telephone number, the office will be open. In all instances concerning inclement weather, staff should use judgment and determine if it's safe to travel to work.

It is important to note that while the ARC office is closed, business operations should continue to the extent possible and practical. As such, employees who are able to work from home are expected to do so. The procedure is:

- When the office closure is due to inclement weather or an emergency that was predicted far enough in advance to allow sufficient time to prepare to work from home, employees are expected to work remotely as follows:
    - Employees who have remote access to ARC's computer system from home are expected to work from home and will receive their regular pay for the period of time that the office is closed.
    - Employees who do not have remote access to ARC's computer system will be given the opportunity to take home work that can be completed without such access when inclement weather is predicted. These employees will receive their regular pay for the period of time that that the office is closed.
    - Employees who do not have remote access to ARC's computer system and who are not able to take work home, or choose not to take work home, must take annual leave for the period of time that the office is closed.
    - Managers are responsible for identifying which of their employees have remote access to ARC's computer system, which of their employees don't have remote access but are able to take work home, and which of their employees don't have remote access and are not able to take work home.
- When the office closure is due to inclement weather or an emergency that was not predicted far enough in advance to allow sufficient time to prepare to work from home, employees will receive their regular pay for the period of time that the office is closed. However, those employees who are able to work from home are still expected to do so to the best of their ability.
- Employees who are on annual leave, or were scheduled to take annual leave, when the ARC office is closed for inclement weather or an emergency must still take annual leave for that period of time.
- If an extended power outage occurs that prevents employees from productively working from home, they will still receive their regular pay.
- If the ARC office is not closed or opening is not delayed, employee absences will be charged to the appropriate type of leave.

6.5 Bulletin Boards

To provide an avenue of effective communications between the Agency and employees, the Agency maintains bulletin boards on each floor of the Agency. Talent Management has the responsibility for keeping the bulletin boards up to date. Agency bulletin boards will be used for communication of Agency policy, Agency business and announcements, and official government notices. Literature, printed and written materials, or notices of any kind are prohibited from being posted on Agency bulletin boards without prior approval of Talent Management.

There are also message boards located on each floor available for employee communications. Postings must not be of a religious or political nature, or be perceived to be discriminatory, inflammatory, in poor taste, offensive, illegal, or otherwise detrimental. Periodic inspections of these boards will be conducted by Talent Management.

6.6 Dress Code

When attending Agency meetings that involve the general public, public officials, or other business and community partners, employees are expected to dress in Business attire. On Board and Committee meeting days, all employees (even those who are not attending these meetings) are expected to dress in Business attire. Some examples of Business attire are: dresses, skirts, suits, dress pants, collared dress shirts, ties, dress shoes.

At all other times, employees may dress in Business Casual attire. Some examples of acceptable Business Casual attire are: polo shirts, shirts with collars, turtleneck shirts, sweaters, casual pants (such as khakis) and casual shoes (flats, loafers, dressy sandals). Some examples of unacceptable Business Casual attire are: jeans, leggings/stirrup pants, t-shirts, sweatshirts, midriff-baring shirts, sneakers/tennis shoes, casual sandals.

On Fridays, employees may dress in Casual attire. Some examples of acceptable Casual attire are: jeans (no holes, frayed cuffs or obvious signs of wear), capris, casual tops, polos shirts, sneakers/tennis shoes, casual sandals, t-shirts and sweatshirts that are in good condition and don't have logos, slogans or advertising on them. Some examples of unacceptable Casual attire are: shorts, jogging suits, athletic attire, midriff-baring shirts, flip-flops, badly worn or torn clothing. However, even on Casual Fridays, employees are expected to dress in Business attire if they are attending meetings as described in the first paragraph.

Employees should use good judgment and discretion about what is appropriate to wear in the work setting. A professional, well-groomed appearance is required at all times. Supervisors are responsible for regulating this dress code and may send an employee home or take other appropriate disciplinary action at their discretion, if an employee is dressed in a manner deemed inappropriate for the workplace.

6.7 Vehicle Use Policy

Agency vehicles are available for use by staff to accomplish official ARC business during normal business hours and on the occasion that business extends beyond normal business hours. Staff use of agency vehicles requires a valid driver's license and should have a clean driving record. Due to the high demand for agency vehicles, there may be occasions when an agency vehicle is not available. In instances in which a vehicle is not available and transit is a viable option, the General Services Manager maintains a MARTA Breeze card that is available for check-out and use by staff only for business-related travel only.

Vehicles in the pool may be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis in the following priority:

- For use during normal business hours in the Atlanta region by mass transit riders and carpoolers.
- For use during normal business hours in the Atlanta region by all others.
- For travel out of region when other modes of transportation are not feasible.

If transit is not a viable option, staff members are encouraged to use a rental car if the cost of renting a car, including mileage, fees, fueling, and staff time, is less than mileage reimbursement. It is the responsibility of staff to determine the most cost-efficient method to travel in the event that an agency vehicle is not available and transit is not an option. Through ARC's corporate account with Enterprise, rentals are available at discounted rates and include unlimited mileage and damage waiver.

ARC's Corporate Account may be accessed by one of three ways:

- Option 1. Call the rental branch and reference the account number 03HARC1.
- Option 2. Go to www.enterprise.com or www.nationalcar.com. Enter location, dates and times, then enter your account number (03HARC1) at the bottom of the page. Enter the PIN number "GAA" and make your selections.
- Option 3. Use the customized link with the account number automatically built in: http://www.enterprise.com/car_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=002&cust=03HARC1

As with fleet vehicles, staff must plan ahead to ensure that a rental is secured prior to the time the vehicle is needed. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that adequate arrangements have been made regarding travel to the rental branch. Enterprise has three downtown locations, including:

- 116 Ted Turner Drive SW Atlanta, GA 30303
- 303 Courtland Street NE Atlanta, GA 30303
- 450 Capitol Avenue Atlanta, GA 30312

If it is more reasonable to secure a vehicle from a location closer to the staff member's residence, doing so is encouraged. In all cases, vehicles are to only be used for business travel and rentals should not extend beyond 24 hours unless prior written authorization is received from the appropriate Manager or Center Director. Proof of authorization must be forwarded to the General Services Manager in all cases involving rental cars so that approvals can be reconciled with billing documentation.

Use of a staff member's personal vehicle is appropriate only when all other options have been exhausted or are not reasonable or cost-effective.

Usage Guidelines

- Staff must operate vehicles in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia (and any other state in which the vehicle is driven for the conduct of official ARC business).
- Vehicle reservations must be made via the Vehicle Booking Calendar module on the agency's intranet site.
    - When reserving a vehicle, a valid ARC business-related matter must be entered in the "Title" field on

the reservation form. The requestor's name or generic terms such as "Meeting" or "Appointment" are not valid entries in this field. Failure to enter the appropriate information in the Title field may result in delayed approval (until additional information regarding the request is obtained) or denial of the request.

  - Additional details regarding the purpose of the reservation can be entered in the "Details" field of form if the "Title" field does not allow adequate explanation of the intended use.
  - The Alternate Phone Number field must contain a number at which the requestor can be reached while in possession of the vehicle.

- Vehicles are not to be kept overnight unless the business being conducted extends beyond a time at which it is unreasonable or unsafe to return to the office. Vehicles kept overnight MUST be returned to the office by 6:30AM the following morning.
- Weekend use of vehicles is allowed for staff whose duties require coordination of, or participation in, events such as expos, fairs, educational or recreational or similar gatherings or events. In such instances, ARC must have a direct role in the execution of these events; either as the host or as an invited guest/vendor for the purpose of performing outreach or providing education on topics relevant to ARC. For these purposes, when reserving a vehicle, affected staff may factor the time necessary to load and unload materials. Keeping the vehicle overnight or for the duration of the weekend is acceptable in these instances, however, the vehicle must be returned to the agency by 6:30AM on the next business day. At no time is personal use of the vehicle during the weekend allowable.
- Vehicles are not to be reserved for personal appointments of any kind and any such requests will be denied. In the event that it is discovered that false information is used for the sake of reserving an agency vehicle, usage privileges will be suspended and further disciplinary action may occur.
- Smoking is not allowed in agency vehicles.
- Vehicles must be returned with no less than a half tank of gas. Fuel purchasing cards are checked out at the time the vehicle keys are picked up. Fuel P-Cards must comply with the P-Card provisions of the "Purchasing and Procurement Policy." Each transaction must have a corresponding receipt. Expenses submitted without an itemized receipt, must be reimbursed to ARC by the staff member responsible for the expense at the time the statement is due.

A purchase of a prohibited expense on a P-Card will result in the immediate and permanent termination of the staff member's vehicle rights. Staff may also be subject to additional employee discipline.

- 1st P-card policy violation – Verbal warning from direct supervisor to the cardholder. This is considered a warning but can be elevated to a personnel action depending on the severity of the offense.
- 2nd P-card policy violation – Written warning (memo) from Center for Business Services Director to the cardholder, their direct supervisor, and applicable Center Director.
- 3rd P-card policy violation – Center for Business Services will impose a minimum one-month account suspension and submit a letter to the personnel file of the Cardholder and of their direct supervisor.

PER O.C.G.A. § 16-9-30 ET. SEQ., VIOLATION OF THE P-CARD POLICY MAY RESULT IN CRIMINAL CHARGES PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OF UP TO $ 5000.00 OR UP TO 3 YEARS IMPRISONMENT.

- Notwithstanding the aforementioned, staff are required to adhere to the policy requiring refueling of the vehicle if the fuel level decreases to half of a tank or less during possession of the vehicle. Returning the vehicle with less than half a tank of fuel will result in enforcement of the same consequences stated above.
- Vehicle use restrictions are non-negotiable and will be strictly enforced. During the restriction period, the affected employee is not allowed to operate any agency vehicle for any purpose. Attempts to reserve a vehicle on behalf of a restricted employee are prohibited and will result in disciplinary action for all involved parties.
- Upon return of the vehicle, the user should remove all waste/trash and any personal items. Reasonable attempt(s) will be made to return personal items that may be left in vehicles if the items are delivered to the General

Services Manager or the Receptionist, however, ARC assumes no responsibility if such items are not returned to the owner.

- In case of an accident, users should take all reasonable action to ensure personal safety as well as the safety of any other involved parties. In such instances, the operator of the vehicle should, as soon as possible, alert the General Services Manager of the occurrence. ARC staff should also contact Talent Management staff for information regarding worker's compensation. Staff who are ticketed for a vehicle violation, or for an "at-fault" accident are subject to losing vehicle use privileges. In the event that staff lose such privileges, privileges to use the ARC Enterprise account would also be restricted. Staff found to have poor driving records or multiple issues in ARC vehicles, may be restricted from traveling while on agency duty.
- Any maintenance-related or operational issues with vehicles should be reported to the General Services Manager upon discovery.

In the event an employee's personal vehicle is damaged while on official travel (both in and out of the region), and that employee is not found to be at fault for the damage, he or she will be reimbursed the cost of repairing such damage up to a maximum of $500, provided the damage was caused through no fault of the employee and provided the employee was driving their personal vehicle with the approval of their supervisor. The employee must notify his/her supervisor of the accident immediately or as soon as practical. A police report or insurance accident investigation report stating, at a minimum, the date, time, and location of the accident as well as who was at fault, will be required before reimbursement can be made. Personal vehicles driven on Agency business by employees must be insured by the owner to hold harmless the Agency from any and all claims arising from such use.

All vehicle use is subject to location monitoring and verification by the General Services Manager.

6.8 Travel and Personal Mileage Reimbursement

Each ARC employee required to travel in the performance of their official duties ("Official Travel") shall be entitled to reimbursement for all legitimate and reasonable expenses incurred as a result of that travel. An employee who must travel outside the Atlanta Region shall obtain prior written approval for such travel in a manner as specified by the Center for Business Services Director. A Center Director or designee, or higher authority must approve a Business Travel Authorization (BTA) Form prior to staff booking travel outside the Atlanta Region. The approver should determine the appropriateness and reasonableness of expenses. Executive Director travel/expense reimbursements in any form are required to have final approval from the ARC Board Chairman. Travel within the Atlanta Region will not require prior approval unless such travel involves extraordinary expenses which would require prior approval under these policies if associated with out-of-region travel.

Certain expenses associated with official travel may be paid directly to a vendor or service provider, or advanced to the employee in accordance with these policies. All other expenses shall be reimbursed to the employee upon return from travel status.

The Center for Business Services Director of ARC shall have final authority to interpret the provisions of ARC Travel and Reimbursement Policies, including allowableness of expenses and required documentation and justification of expenses.

The most cost-effective method of transportation that will accomplish the purpose of the travel should be selected. Staff should use their own discretion when determining the most cost-effective ground transportation. Among the factors to be considered should be length of travel time, employee's salary, cost of operation of a vehicle, cost and availability of common carrier services, etc. Common carrier shall be used for out-of-state travel unless it is documented that utilization of another method of travel is more cost-efficient or practical and approved in accordance with these regulations.

Reimbursement for expenses associated with the use of personally-owned vehicles for official travel shall be at the rate per mile approved for use of personally-owned vehicles on Agency business. In computing mileage for reimbursement for a trip beginning or ending at the employee's residence, the normal "commute" distance to and from the employee's residence and the Agency shall be deducted from actual mileage driven if no commute trip to and from the Agency was made. Reimbursement shall be for actual miles in the performance of official duties, and shall be computed by the most direct route from the point of departure to the destination. Any personal mileage shall be deducted in computing mileage for reimbursement. Please see the ARC "Travel and Reimbursement Policy" for additional details.

Directors receiving a Vehicle Allowance under section 6.9 of this Policy may not request additional mileage reimbursement.

6.9 Vehicle Allowance

This Vehicle Allowance Policy provides direction and authority for granting monthly automobile allowances to designated senior management of ARC. This Policy is not intended to guarantee that any individual is entitled to receive a monthly automobile allowance or any level of such allowance.

- Director level positions (Executive Director and Center Directors) shall receive a cash automobile allowance in the amount set forth in his or her employment or other written agreement with ARC or, if the Director does not have such an agreement, as determined annually by the Executive Director.
- All automobile allowances shall be subject to applicable federal, state and local tax and withholding requirements. Automobile allowances that are considered wages shall be taken into account for the various employee benefit programs maintained by ARC in accordance with the terms and conditions of those programs.
- Monthly automobile allowances are intended to cover the fixed and variable costs incurred by a Director in the use of his or her personal automobile in the performance of services for ARC, such as all or a portion of loan or lease payments, depreciation, maintenance, repairs, fuel costs, insurance, license and registration fees, and personal property taxes. Each Director, however, is responsible for the purchase/lease, maintenance, insurance, licensing and operation of his or her automobile, and ARC is not responsible for any costs associated with a Director's automobile other than the monthly automobile allowance the Director receives.
- A Director shall not be required to substantiate the expenses incurred with respect to his or her automobile or the use thereof, although a Director shall provide ARC with such information as is reasonably requested in order for ARC to determine the appropriate amount of the monthly automobile allowance for that Director.
- A Director who receives a monthly automobile allowance shall not be eligible to receive mileage reimbursements for local or out-of-region travel pursuant to the mileage reimbursement policies of ARC in effect, except as otherwise agreed upon by ARC and the Director in writing. A Director shall, however, be eligible to be reimbursed for parking fees and toll expenses incurred by the Director in the performance of his or her services for ARC. Such reimbursements shall be made in accordance with the Travel and Reimbursement policies of ARC.

6.10 Smoke Free Workplace

The ARC is committed to a clean smoke free environment. Smoking will not be allowed in any areas inside the building, including restrooms and lounges. If you wish to smoke, you must go outside and away from the entrances of the building.

6.11 Drug Free Workplace

In accordance with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, it is the intent of the Agency to provide a working environment as free from the use of non-prescribed drugs as reasonably possible. Given the potential risk of harm to employees and others if they are attempting to perform their duties while using or having used drugs, the Agency has adopted the following policy. We ask for your full cooperation in implementing this policy and, just as important, in educating other employees and the general public regarding the risks associated with substance abuse.

Any employee who feels he or she has developed an addiction to, dependence upon, or problem with alcohol or drugs is encouraged to seek assistance. Assistance may be sought by verbal request or by writing in confidence to your immediate supervisor or the Talent Management Group. The same benefits and insurance coverages that are provided for all other illness under the established benefit plan will be available for individuals who accept medical treatment of alcohol or drug dependency in accordance with the group health care plan.

Covered Substances

The following substances are covered by this policy:

(a) Controlled and/or illegal drugs or substances which include all forms of narcotics, hallucinogens, depressants, stimulants, and other drugs whose use, possession, or transfer is restricted or prohibited by law.

Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited while an employee is on the Agency's premises or performing work under a publicly funded grant:

(a) The manufacture, possession, use, sale, distribution, dispensation, receipt, or transportation of any controlled substance or illegal drug;

(b) The consumption of alcoholic beverages, except at Agency sponsored events as allowed below, where such consumption is authorized in advance, provided, however, that excessive consumption rendering one under the influence of alcohol is expressly prohibited under any circumstances;

(c) Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or substances in any manner during business hours whether or not consumed on Agency premises and whether or not consumed outside of or during working hours; this includes being impaired by lawfully prescribed drugs that have been abused; and

(d) Performing duties while under the influence of alcohol or controlled and/or illegal substances or drugs regardless of whether the employee is on or off the premises of the Agency.

An employee who engages in such conduct is engaged in misconduct and subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal or, as a condition of continued employment, may be required to participate in and successfully complete drug or alcohol abuse counseling or a rehabilitation program if necessary.

Off-Premise Use of Alcohol, Drugs, or Substances

ARC may host off-site special events wherein the purchase, consumption and distribution of alcoholic beverages has been pre-approved as special purchase under the guidelines of the "Purchasing and Procurement Policy." Such events may only be authorized with the use of private funds in compliance with those purchasing guidelines. ARC staff attending such events must comply with this Drug-Free Workplace Policy.

The following actions, although not occurring on Agency premises, are considered to endanger the Agency's reputation for honesty, integrity, and safety:

(a) Indictment or conviction for criminal offenses related to the manufacture, possession, use, sale, distribution, dispensation, receipt, or transportation of any controlled substances or illegal drugs; and

(b) Any other actions involving alcohol, controlled and/or illegal drugs, or lawfully prescribed drugs or substances that, in the opinion of management, endanger the Agency's reputation for honesty, integrity, and safety.

Such off-premise actions may occur while an employee is performing Agency business on non-working hours and/or on non-Agency premises. An employee who becomes the subject of such actions may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal.

Employees who are indicted for or convicted of controlled substance-related violations under state or federal law or who plead guilty or nolo contendere (i.e., no contest) to such charges must inform the Agency in writing within five (5) days of such conviction or plea. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Testing and Searching

An employee may be requested to undergo a blood test, urinalysis, "breathalyzer" test or other diagnostic test when there is reason to believe, in the opinion of the Agency, that an employee is under the influence of or impaired by alcohol or drugs (prescribed or non-prescribed) while on Agency property, during working hours, or while on duty, or that an employee has reported to work with a measurable quantity of drugs in the blood or urine.

Where there is reason to believe, in the opinion of the Agency, that an employee is under the influence of or is impaired by alcohol or drugs, or is in possession or control of alcohol, drugs, or equipment, products and materials which are used, intended for use or designed for use with such substances, or has reported to work with a measurable quantity of drugs in the blood or urine, the Agency may search any Agency property and/or an employee's personal property which has been brought onto Agency property (including but not limited to vehicles, handbags, briefcases, etc.) and the employee may be requested to submit to a search by Agency representatives of his/her person and/or property.

The Agency property covered by this policy includes property of any nature owned and controlled by the Agency, including but not limited to parking lots, offices, desks, file cabinets, lockers and vehicles.

6.12 Guidelines for Use of Information Technology

The Atlanta Regional Commission views technology, including Information Technology Services (ITS) and other technology areas, as an important means of achieving its mission and mandated responsibilities. For this reason, ARC supports access to the agency's computer system, which includes desktop computers, network servers, databases, output devices and Internet connections. At the same time, ARC recognizes that telecommunications greatly increases the agency's exposure to security risks and other potential liabilities.

Therefore, the agency has implemented Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) concerning its computer system. The intent of ARC's AUP is to define a safe, secure and reliable environment for using state-of-the-art technology in all areas. ARC's policies require that staff use its network and information technology resources in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner. ARC's AUP is an extension of the ARC Information Security Policies and provides a critical means of limiting ARC's liability and ensuring that its users are aware of relevant issues.

Each person who uses ARC's computer network must read the AUP and accept the policies and conditions outlined in this document. The AUP is available from Talent Management and must be reviewed and completed prior to any employee receiving computer access privileges. Acceptance involves personal responsibility for complying with the AUP and for reporting any unacceptable use. These reports should be made immediately to the ITS Manager or the Center for Business Services Director. Violation of ARC's AUP may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

All computer software and hardware is the ARC's property; as such, the Agency has the right to monitor e-mail communications. Employees have no right of privacy in any documents or other materials they write, receive, or send through the computer system.

6.13 Direct Deposit

It is the Agency's policy to provide Direct Deposit for employees. Your pay check will be deposited to your designated bank or savings account usually within two pay periods of the initial employment. Manual checks will be issued until this paperwork is processed. You may utilize up to 9 separate accounts or institutions.

Benefits to direct deposit include payroll confidentiality, immediate access to funds, elimination of wasted lunch hours, no loss or theft of pay checks, and uninterrupted deposit of funds when away from work on pay day. Funds are available in your account by noon on Friday of the pay week.

The "Automatic Payroll Deposit Authorization" form (available in Talent Management or on the Intranet) is required to be completed to establish payroll deposit. This form should also be completed if an existing employee wishes to make a change in his/her deposit or deposit arrangements. You should never terminate your old account until the new account has been processed and verified (except in emergency situations).

6.14 Office Keys and Access Cards

Office keys and access cards can be obtained from the General Services Manager and will be given to all regular employees upon employment. Employees in a long term temporary status will be given keys and cards with immediate supervisor approval. If keys or cards are lost or stolen, they must be reported to the General Services Manager immediately. Upon termination of employment, keys and cards should be returned to Talent Management during the exit interview process; if they are not returned, the cost to replace will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck.

6.15 Office Equipment Usage

Agency telephones, postage machines, copiers, and fax machines are for official business only. If you must use the telephone to make a long-distance personal call, please charge the call to your home number or calling card. If you have an emergency and need to place a toll call direct from your office telephone, please inform the General Services Manager so the charge may be recouped from you when the bill is received.

6.16 Disclosure of Business Transactions

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated 50-8-63 requires employees of all regional development centers and their related nonprofit corporations to disclose to the ARC Board certain information regarding business transactions with local governments during the calendar year. Specifically, it requires that any employee, members of an employee's family, or business in which the employee or family member has a substantial interest who transacts business with a local government shall disclose the transactions annually. Therefore, the Agency will request this information from employees on an annual basis so as to report it to the appropriate entity.

6.17 Records

The classification and compensation plans, the roster of employees, and these policies shall be considered public records. Records consisting of confidential evaluations or examinations prepared in connection with the appointment or hiring of a public officer or employee shall not be open to the public. Records consisting of materials obtained in investigations related to the suspension, firing, or investigation of complaints shall not be open to the public for ten (10) days after presentation to the Agency or the action is concluded or terminated.

Requests made to the Open Records Officer for the above-mentioned records will be provided within three (3) working days from date requested. A fee will be charged, according to Georgia law, for any and all copies made.

It is the policy of the Agency to comply with the Georgia Public Records Law (Georgia Code Section 50-18-70 et. Seq.). The Center Directors shall have access to the personnel records pertaining to employment and job-related matters provided that nothing herein shall be construed so as to impair the confidential nature of such records. Individual employees shall have the right to review their personnel records. All records must be reviewed in the Talent Management offices.

Records and files of persons hired shall be kept at least ten (10) years after termination of employment or during the employee's tenure with the Agency. All such information shall be part of the personnel file of persons hired.

Records pertaining to examinations of persons not hired, including correspondence, applications and examination papers, shall be preserved for at least one (1) year after the position which was being sought by an applicant has been filled.

6.18 Fees and Rewards

Such fees and rewards received by any employee by reason of the performance of any act required of such employee in the discharge of the employee's duties, whether paid by an individual or by public authority, shall be deemed the property of the Agency and no employee shall accept for private use and benefit from any such fees or rewards. Excepted from the above will be such rewards recommended by the Center Director and approved by the Executive Director and shall be documented in the official Agency personnel records.

6.19 Standards of Ethical Conduct

The Agency has established standards of ethical conduct for Board members and Agency employees. These standards can be found on the Agency's website at: http://atlantaregional.org/arc-standards-of-ethical-conduct

6.20 Outside Employment

No employee shall engage in any outside employment which might result in a conflict, or apparent conflict, between the private interest of the employee and his/her official commission duties and responsibilities. Any outside employment must be approved in writing by his/her Group Manager, Center Director, and the Executive Director, and a copy of the written approval placed in the employee's personnel file. The standards used for approval or disapproval of outside employment shall be based on whether the outside employment will or can cause a conflict of interest and whether it might cause interference with the efficient performance or impartiality of an employee's duties with the Agency.

In most instances, approval of the outside employment will depend on the nature of the specific ARC job duties. However, there are some forms of outside employment that are prohibited for all ARC employees, no matter what their specific job is, due to the nature of ARC's business and the type of information to which employees are privy. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Real estate or land development
- Actively licensed real estate agent
- Free-lance or consulting work for any local government or state agency
- Working for any vendor that provides services to ARC

To request approval of outside employment, an employee must write a memo to their Group Manager. The memo should contain the following information: (1) type of employment and scope of work; (2) name of outside organization; (3) nature of relationship; (4) duration of relationship (start and end dates). Approval will be based on the following factors: whether or not the outside employment conflicts with, or appears to conflict with, an employee's ARC job duties; whether it may interfere with the performance of those duties; and whether it is judged as not being in the best interest of ARC.

Failure to get approval for outside employment, or continuing to engage in outside employment that was not approved, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

6.21 Workplace Ergonomics

It is the policy of ARC to provide all employees with a healthy and safe workplace. In doing so, ARC is committed to improving our employees' comfort and well-being by identifying and correcting ergonomic risk factors on the job. An ergonomically sound work environment maximizes employee comfort, productivity and efficiency while minimizing risk of work related injuries and disorders.

The agency's goal is to prevent the occurrence of work-related injuries and disorders by controlling or eliminating the risk factors which cause them. This program ensures that all affected employees are aware of job-related risk factors and provides information and solutions to address them.

Employees are encouraged to immediately report to their supervisor any symptoms of discomfort that may be associated with their job duties. The supervisor is responsible for determining whether an ergonomic change is necessary. To make this determination, he or she should consult with ARC's General Services Manager and Manager of Talent Management for assistance in evaluating the situation and determining appropriate action. A worksite evaluation may be conducted to assess ergonomic risk factors and solutions. In determining solutions and priority of implementation, the criteria to follow for consideration include:

- Priority will be given to requests as follows:
    - Employees requiring reasonable accommodations due to a disability (determined by an approved medical provider) to accomplish the essential functions of his or her job
    - Employees requesting modifications, equipment or furniture who do not have a disability as determined by an approved medical provider but who are receiving medical treatment for an ergonomically related injury or disorder (a doctor's note certifying such treatment may be required)
    - Employees requesting modifications, equipment or furniture as a preventive measure to mitigate or eliminate a future ergonomic risk factor (supervisor approval required)
    - Employees requesting modifications, equipment or furniture for personal preference (supervisor approval required)
- Simple modifications and adjustments will be implemented as soon as possible. More complex modifications and adjustments requiring significant financial or manpower resources will require longer-term planning.
- Factors such as work schedule/number of days the employee is in the office each week, workplace constraints, implementation schedule, and cost/benefit will be taken into consideration when determining appropriate modifications.
- Sufficient funds must be available to accommodate the workstation modification and must not cause undue hardship for ARC.
- Employees have a responsibility to follow workplace ergonomics policies and practices, to use all equipment and furniture properly, and to attend ergonomics training if required.

6.22 Political Activity Guidelines

ARC employees are covered by the provisions of The Hatch Act, which regulates the political activity of individuals principally employed by state and local governments/agencies who work in connection with programs financed in whole or in part by federal loans or grants.

The following political activities are permitted by The Hatch Act:

- Be a candidate for public office in a partisan election (EXCEPTION: employees whose salaries are paid for entirely by federal funds – those employees may NOT be a candidate for public office in a partisan election)
- Be a candidate for public office in a non-partisan election
- Register and vote as you choose
- Assist in voter registration drives
- Express opinions about candidates and issues
- Contribute money to political organizations
- Take an active part in political campaigns outside of working hours, including:
  - attending political fundraising functions
  - attending and being active at political rallies and meetings
  - signing and circulating nominating petitions
  - campaigning for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments and/or municipal ordinances
  - campaigning for or against candidates in partisan elections
  - making campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
  - distributing campaign literature in partisan elections
- Join and be active members of a political party or club
- Campaign for and hold office in political clubs or parties

The following political activities are prohibited by The Hatch Act:

- Using official authority to influence, interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination
- Directly or indirectly coercing, attempting to coerce, commanding, or advising 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
- For employees who are a candidate for partisan political office, they may not:
  - Use agency resources to advance their candidacy
  - Request, encourage, suggest, or imply that subordinate employees assist in their campaign efforts

Discipline and Termination

7.1 Disciplinary Procedure

The rules and procedures set out in this policy are intended to inform employees of some of the Agency's expectations and to provide guidelines to supervisors regarding disciplinary actions which may be appropriate in the case of certain infractions. These rules are not, nor are they intended to be, all-inclusive nor will they apply in every circumstance. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be administered for behavior or conduct not specifically discussed in this policy. Similarly, due to the variations necessary to accommodate individual situations and to deal with aggravating or mitigating circumstances, the guidelines, procedures and possible discipline described in this policy may vary in the sole discretion of the Agency as the circumstances warrant. The Agency retains the right to treat each situation on its individual merits and to apply, not apply, or modify any or all of these guidelines, procedures or possible discipline in individual or Agency-wide situations at its sole discretion. It should be noted that more severe penalties may be issued than those set out as possible discipline in this policy where this is deemed appropriate by the Agency.

Individuals employed by the Agency are expected to perform their assigned job tasks in an efficient and proper manner. Employees are expected to:

- Perform their assigned duties at or above satisfactory levels;
- Maintain a satisfactory record of attendance;
- Be aware of and comply with all Agency policies, rules, and directives, whether stated in the Personnel Policy Manual or elsewhere, and/or conveyed orally or in writing;
- Refrain from engaging in any action or becoming involved in any matters that interfere with or detract from the performance of their duties; and
- Accept responsibility for their actions.

An employee may be reduced in pay or position, suspended or have their employment terminated for, among other things, incompetency, inefficiency, dishonesty, insubordination, discourteous treatment of the public, unacceptable attendance, neglect of duty, violation of rules established by the Agency and management personnel or any other failure of good behavior and/or misfeasance, malfeasance or nonfeasance in the office. This list is provided for illustrative purposes only. It is not exhaustive and is not intended to cover all situations in which disciplinary action may be taken, but merely provides examples of the types of acts that may warrant disciplinary action. The Agency retains sole discretion to determine when disciplinary action, up to and including termination, is appropriate.

Progressive Discipline

When corrective or disciplinary action is deemed necessary, the type of discipline will be determined by the nature and circumstances of the violation. Corrective or disciplinary action may take place in several forms. Repeated violations will result in an escalation of discipline. When progressive action is determined to be appropriate, the steps may include some, but not necessarily all, of the following steps of discipline:

A. Verbal Warnings or Counseling Sessions may take place in situations that are less serious in nature and are not recurring. Efforts to determine and resolve the cause of the problem should be made at this stage.

B. Written Reprimands are generally used to address situations that are less serious in nature but have recurred, even after a verbal counseling session, and in situations that are more serious in nature than those warranting only a verbal warning or counseling session. Copies of written reprimands should be distributed to the employee and to Talent Management for inclusion in the employee's file.

C. Suspensions Without Pay are more severe actions that should be used for the constructive improvement of employees. Suspensions should be issued when it is determined that an additional warning or reprimand is not appropriate or when an incident is too severe for a warning, but not sufficiently severe for demotion or dismissal. Copies of suspensions without pay should be distributed to the employee and to Talent Management for inclusion in the employee's file.

D. Demotions are corrective or progressive disciplinary actions that result in a change of the employee's assignment from a position in one classification to a position in another classification with a lower pay grade. Demotion may be used when an employee is unable to successfully perform in his/her current position, but may be capable of performing satisfactorily in another position. Demotion may also be appropriate for other serious or recurring conduct and/or performance deficiencies. Copies of demotion letters should be distributed to the employee and to Talent Management for inclusion in the employee's file.

E. Dismissals should result when the employee commits an extremely serious offense(s) or fails to perform a critical duty for which immediate discharge is warranted; or when other disciplinary measures have been attempted but failed; or when the employee is unfit to perform his/her assigned duties; or when the employee abandons his duties or position; or where the employee's continued employment poses a threat to the security and well-being of the Agency or its employees. Examples of conduct that will ordinarily result in immediate dismissal are: violation of the Drug Free Workplace policy; fighting or attempting to injure another employee on Agency property; carrying or possession of illegal drugs, firearms, alcoholic beverages, explosives or weapons on Agency property at any time without proper authorization; violation of the Agency's EEO policy; theft or embezzlement; falsification of records; making false statements, or intentionally giving misleading information to supervisors, officials, or the public; threats or acts of violence; gross insubordination; unacceptable neglect in the performance of assigned duties; destruction or misuse of agency property; and violation of the Agency's Acceptable Use Policy. Copies of dismissal letters should be distributed to the employee and to Talent Management for inclusion in the employee's file.

Before imposing written reprimands, suspensions without pay, demotions or dismissals, the supervisor should consult with Talent Management.

Adverse Action

This is an action taken by the supervisor or Center Director that results in a disciplinary suspension without pay, a disciplinary salary reduction, a disciplinary demotion, or a disciplinary dismissal.

A. Suspension without pay: an employee may be suspended without pay for a violation of accepted policies governing performance and/or conduct. The suspension without pay shall not exceed thirty (30) working days in one (1) calendar year.
B. Disciplinary salary reduction: an employee's salary may be reduced a minimum of 5% for disciplinary purposes. This does not constitute a reduction in salary range.
C. Disciplinary reclassification to a position in a lower classification: an employee may be reclassified to a position in a lower salary range for disciplinary reasons. A disciplinary reclassification must include a decrease in salary as outlined in Chapter 2.6.
D. Dismissal: an employee may be dismissed when it is necessary to remove the employee from the workplace.

The adverse action must be given in writing to the employee with a statement informing the employee of the opportunity for Review of Adverse Action (if required) in person with the Executive Director or designee before the action is effective.

Review of Adverse Action

All employees hired prior to July 1, 2003 are eligible for a review of adverse action. Employees hired after July 1, 2003 must successfully complete their six-month introductory period to be eligible for a review of adverse action.

During the review of adverse action, the employee is given the opportunity to refute the charges and reasons for the adverse action. The Executive Director or designee makes a determination as to whether the employee successfully refuted the charges and notifies the employee of the decision within two (2) working days after the hearing. For employees hired after July 1, 2003, the decision of the Executive Director or designee reviewing the adverse action is the final decision of the Agency. Employees hired prior to July 1, 2003, may request an appeal to the appeal hearing panel (see Chapter 7.3).

7.2 Emergency Action

The Executive Director may take immediate action against an employee under emergency situations. The immediate action will be to suspend the employee with pay until an investigation can be conducted. If discipline is appropriate, the procedure described in Chapter 7.1 will be followed under normal circumstances. If the employee is unable to communicate or respond, the employee will be placed on leave without pay until it is determined that the employee cannot return to work or until the employee can respond. Examples of emergency situations include: crimes of moral turpitude, commission of a felony, injurious or dangerous behavior, or damage to or destruction of public property.

7.3 Appeal Process

An appeal is a formal review (requested by an affected regular employee hired prior to July 1, 2003), of an adverse action involving reclassification to a position in a lower classification or dismissal taken by a supervisor, Center Director, Executive Director, or designee. An appeal to the appeal hearing panel can only be filed as a result of an adverse action involving demotion or dismissal taken against a regular employee who was hired prior to July 1, 2003. Employees hired after July 1, 2003 are not eligible for an appeal of an adverse action. A regular employee must respond to the adverse action procedures outlined in Chapter 7.1 before it can be appealed.

An employee must file an appeal in writing with the Agency within three (3) working days of the final decision of the Executive Director or designee involving demotions or dismissal. The appeal shall contain a statement describing what is being appealed. The Executive Director will determine if the case is appealable, with merit, and properly filed.

If the adverse action is appealable, then the chairperson of the Agency's Board will appoint three (3) members of the Board to serve as the appeal hearing panel. The chairperson of the Agency's Board will also select a chairperson from the three-member panel to conduct the appeal hearing. The appeal hearing shall be held within ten (10) working days after the appeal is filed. The Executive Director or designee will notify the employee of the date, time, and place of the appeal hearing. The appeal hearing is administrative in nature. It is intended to be less formal than a court hearing. For example, formal "rules of evidence" shall not apply. The appeal hearing will be conducted by the designated chairperson of the appeal hearing panel. The duty of the panel is to compile evidence, make determinations based on facts, and issue a decision to the Executive Director. The decision will be determined by a majority of the three (3) members.

Both the Agency and the employee may represent themselves at the appeal hearing, or either may choose to be represented by an attorney. The appeal hearing panel shall submit its decision to the Executive Director within five (5) working days after completion of the hearing, and the Executive Director will notify the employee of the final action to be taken within three (3) working days after receiving the appeal hearing panel's decision. The decision of the appeal hearing panel will be the final decision of the Agency.

7.4 Resignation

Employees who plan to resign should notify the Agency in writing. Two (2) weeks shall be the standard period of notification that an employee should provide the Agency regarding their resignation. The Agency may, at its discretion, choose not to have the employee work out his/her notice and may accept the resignation immediately.

7.5 Constructive Resignation

Any employee who, without valid reason, fails to report to work for three (3) consecutive days without authorized leave, may be considered a constructive resignation.

7.6 Reduction in Force

The Executive Director, subject to Board approval, may affect a reduction in force by reason of shortage of funds or other material change in duties or organization. Regular full-time employees who meet acceptable performance standards as defined in the Performance Management and Development Program on their most recent performance evaluation and who are in positions that are eliminated due to a reduction in force will have the option to apply for any open position for which they may be qualified or to transfer to an occupied position in the same pay grade or lower for which they are qualified if it is occupied by an employee who is in a newly hired introductory status. If the employee transfers to a position in a lower pay grade, then the "Reclassification" policy (Section 2.6 of the Personnel Policy Manual) applies. If there are no open or occupied positions for which they are qualified or wish to apply or transfer, they will be terminated from employment.

Any introductory, temporary, and part-time employees who meet acceptable performance standards as defined in the Performance Management and Development Program on their most recent performance evaluation and who are in positions that are eliminated due to a reduction in force will have the option to apply for any open position for which they may be qualified. If there are no open positions for which they are qualified or wish to apply, they will be terminated from employment. Introductory, temporary, and part-time employees are not eligible to transfer to an occupied position in the same pay grade or lower.

If two or more employees eligible to apply for open or occupied positions are equally qualified to perform the duties of a specific open or occupied position, seniority and job performance will be the deciding factors in determining who is selected for the position.

Separation pay upon elimination of a position due to a reduction in force is discretionary and is based on a number of factors, including but not limited to, the financial resources and funding of the Agency. No employee is entitled to separation pay upon elimination of position.

7.7 Exit Interviews

It is the policy of the ARC to ensure that all employees in the process of terminating (except those being discharged) receive an exit interview. Once notification of termination of employment is received by Talent Management, an exit interview will be scheduled and conducted by Talent Management. The purpose of the exit interview is to determine why the employee is leaving and to attempt (in the case of resignation) to retain desirable employees whenever possible. A confidential exit interview survey will be forwarded to terminating employees prior to the exit interview. This survey is designed to help us identify the employee's reasons for leaving and to obtain suggestions for improving Agency operations. Any information obtained during the exit interview requiring investigation will be handled by Talent Management.

Also, explanation of any applicable benefit continuation rights and conversation privileges will be discussed, as well as any financial obligations, Agency property, final payment and any other relevant matters.

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

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