

## AGENDA

### APO POLICY BOARD MEETING

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025 - 4:30 P.M.  
GREAT RIVER REGIONAL LIBRARY – BREMER ROOM  
1300 W. ST. GERMAIN ST., ST. CLOUD, MN 56301**

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Introductions
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Public Comment Period
5. Approve Consent Agenda Items (*Attachments A – C*)
  - a. Approve Minutes of November 13, 2025, Policy Board Meeting (*Attachment A*)
  - b. Approve November Bills List (*Attachment B*)
  - c. Approve Changes to Personnel Policies to Comport with Minnesota Paid Leave (*Attachments C1 & C2*)
6. Consider Changing APO Lobbyist (*Attachments D*), *Brian Gibson, Executive Director*
  - a. **Suggested Action: Approve an APO Lobbyist Effective January 2026**
7. Consider Regionalizing Lobbyist Efforts (*Attachment E*), *Brian Gibson, Executive Director*
  - a. **Suggested Action: No Staff Recommendation**
8. Other Business & Announcements
9. Adjournment

## **English**

The Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) fully complies with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and related statutes and regulations. The APO is accessible to all persons of all abilities. A person who requires a modification or accommodation, auxiliary aids, translation services, interpreter services, etc., in order to participate in a public meeting, including receiving this agenda and/or attachments in an alternative format, or language please contact the APO at 320-252-7568 or at [admin@stcloudapo.org](mailto:admin@stcloudapo.org) at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting.

## **Somali**

Ururka Qorsheynta Deegaanka ee Cloud Cloud (APO) wuxuu si buuxda u waafaqsanahay Cinwaanka VI ee Xuquuqda Xuquuqda Rayidka ee 1964, Cinwaanka II ee Sharciga Naafada Mareykanka ee 1990, iyo qawaaniinta iyo qawaaniinta la xiriira. APO waa u furan tahay dhammaan dadka awooda oo dhan. Qofka u baahan dib-u-habeyn ama dejin, caawimaad gargaar ah, adeegyo turjumaad, adeegyo turjubaan, iwm, si uu uga qeyb galo kulan dadweyne, oo ay ku jiraan helitaanka ajendahaan iyo / ama ku lifaaqan qaab kale, ama luqadda fadlan la xiriir APO. 320-252- 7568 ama at [admin@stcloudapo.org](mailto:admin@stcloudapo.org) ugu yaraan toddobo (7) maalmood kahor kulanka.

## **Spanish**

La Organización de Planificación del Área de Saint Cloud (APO en inglés) cumple plenamente con el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, con el Título II de la Ley sobre los Estadounidenses con Discapacidad de 1990), y los estatutos y reglamentos relacionados. La APO es accesible para todas las personas de todas las capacidades. Una persona que requiere una modificación o acomodación, ayudas auxiliares, servicios de traducción, servicios de interpretación, etc., para poder participar en una reunión pública, incluyendo recibir esta agenda y/o archivos adjuntos en un formato o idioma alternativo, por favor, contacta a la APO al número de teléfono 320-252-7568 o al [admin@stcloudapo.org](mailto:admin@stcloudapo.org) al menos siete (7) días antes de la reunión.

**SAINT CLOUD AREA PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD  
Thursday, November 13, 2025 – 4:30 PM**

A regular meeting of the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board was held on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. Chair Jared Gapinski presided with the following members present:

Jake Anderson	City of Saint Cloud
Scott Brodeen	City of Saint Cloud
Mike Conway	City of Saint Cloud
Dottie Seamans	City of Sauk Rapids
Tim Elness	City of Sartell
Frank Theisen	City of Waite Park
Joe Perske	Stearns County
Raeanne Danielowski	Sherburne County
Michael Kedrowski	Metro Bus [Alternate for Ryan Daniel]

Also in attendance were:

Vicki Johnson	Saint Cloud APO
Alex McKenzie	Saint Cloud APO
James Stapfer	Saint Cloud APO
Trina Ness	Saint Cloud APO

Absent:

Adam Scepaniak	City of Saint Joseph
Jeff Westerlund	Le Sauk Township

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. INTRODUCTIONS**

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

***Mr. Theisen motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Brodeen seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

No members of the public were present.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

- a. Approve Minutes of October 9, 2025, Policy Board Meeting
- b. Approve October Bills List
- c. Approve Amendment to 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- d. Approve Resolution regarding Vision Zero Policy Commitment
- e. Receive Q3 Budget-to-Actual Report

- f. Receive Staff Report from October 30, 2025, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting
- g. Receive Staff Report from October 2, 2025, Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP-3)

***Ms. Seamans motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Mr. Theisen seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

## **6. CONSIDER FY 2027-2030 HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP) PROJECTS**

Ms. Johnson explained the HSIP solicitation including the funding split (90/10) and the maximum award (\$750,000) for eligible projects. The 2027-2030 HSIP solicitation kicked off in early September and applications are due to MnDOT's Office of Traffic Engineering (OTE) by Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025.

Benton County has indicated their intent to apply for this solicitation with the following projects:

- **REACTIVE:** Installation of a single-lane roundabout at the intersection of Benton County CSAH 1 (Mayhew Lake Road NE) and Osauka Road NE.
- **REACTIVE:** Installation of a single-lane roundabout at Benton County CSAH 1 (Mayhew Lake Road NE) and Tower Road.

Ms. Johnson went on to present each of the Benton County projects.

***Mr. Perske motioned to Approve the Ranking for FY 2027-2030 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Projects as follows: CSAH 1/Mayhew Lake Road NE and Tower Road ranked first, CSAH 1/Mayhew Lake Road NE and Osauka Road NE ranked second. Mr. Theisen seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

## **7. CONSIDER 2026 SAFETY PERFORMANCE TARGETS**

Mr. Stapfer reviewed the background of required Performance Measures. MnDOT and the APO are required to set performance measures to assess a range of factors. The targets must improve or at least maintain current performance. If statewide targets are not met MnDOT must transfer funds to address shortfalls. Currently, no funding consequences are mandated if the APO fails to meet its performance targets.

PM 1 Targets are set to track Transportation Safety.

Mr. Stapfer went on to review the five safety performance measures that comprise the PM 1 Target. Each performance measure is reported using a five-year rolling average:

- Number of fatalities.
- Rate of fatalities (per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (100 MVMT)).
- Number of serious injuries.
- Rate of serious injuries (per 100 MVMT).
- Number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries.

Mr. Stapfer reviewed the APO's responsibilities when setting targets, stating that the APO

must either support state targets or develop their own before Feb. 28, 2026. Mr. Stapfer indicated his proposal for the region’s 2026 PM 1 Targets:

<b>PM 1: Performance Measure</b>	<b>APO 2026 Proposed Target (Five-Year Rolling Average)</b>
<b>Fatalities</b>	7.6
<b>Fatality Rate (100 MVMT)</b>	0.596
<b>Serious Injuries</b>	23.0
<b>Serious Injury Rate (100 MVMT)</b>	1.946
<b>Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries</b>	6.2

Mr. Stapfer also provided a comparison to the actual data reported (2024), the 2025 PM 1 Targets, and MnDOT’s 2026 Targets.

***Mr. Conway motioned to Approve the 2026 PM1 Safety Targets. Mr. Theisen seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Gapinski, Mr. Perske, Mr. Anderson, and Ms. Johnson updated the Policy Board members on the annual Washington, D.C. lobbying trip. The four indicated the trip was a good experience with adequate time to meet with legislative staffers to discuss the APO’s regional priorities. Overall, the group felt the presentation of the region’s priorities as a truly regional collaborative effort was impactful and well received. Ms. Johnson stated the group received positive feedback from our lobbyist regarding how to better position our cause for future trips including prioritizing the asks into categories (1-3 years, 3-5 years, and 10+ years). Mr. Gapinski indicated the need for local officials to meet with legislators on a more frequent basis – three to four times a year – to further promote our regional priorities.

Mr. Perske stated his frustration with the uncertainty of Congressionally Directed Spending as CDS funds are critical for the region to jump start (or complete) several important projects.

Mr. Gapinski indicated that while out in D.C., the APO delegation met with a different lobbying firm to discuss the possibility of switching from David Turch & Associates to Larkin Hoffman Public Affairs. Mr. Gapinski stated he had received a draft proposal from Larkin Hoffman about services the firm could provide to the APO – including having a presence in both D.C. and in Saint Paul. Mr. Gapinski also posed to the Board the idea of regionalizing lobbying – bringing together all independent lobbying contracts from jurisdictions under one roof (housed by the APO). This would allow for a larger lobbying contract with more focus on the region and its needs. Additionally, he proposed having other municipalities that currently do not have independent lobbying contracts to consider buying into this regional pool to address their needs.

Board members discussed the need to begin addressing the lobbying contract for the APO as well as the regionalization of lobbying prior to the start of 2026. Board members indicated the desire to have a December board meeting and invite county and city administrators to attend.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

***Mr. Gapinski adjourned the meeting at 5:36 p.m.***

**Transaction List by Vendor**  
**St Cloud Area Planning Organization**  
November 1-30, 2025

DATE	AMOUNT	ACCOUNT FULL NAME
Abdo LLP		
11/01/2025	5,118.00	6602 Accounting Services
<b>Total for Abdo LLP</b>	<b>\$5,118.00</b>	
Adobe Creative Cloud		
11/08/2025	59.99	6609 IT Support & Software
11/11/2025	59.99	6609 IT Support & Software
11/17/2025	21.59	6609 IT Support & Software
11/21/2025	21.59	6609 IT Support & Software
<b>Total for Adobe Creative Cloud</b>	<b>\$163.16</b>	
AFLAC		
11/07/2025	1,326.28	2150 Payroll Benefits Payable:2150.5 Aflac Payable
11/16/2025	1,326.28	2150 Payroll Benefits Payable:2150.5 Aflac Payable
<b>Total for AFLAC</b>	<b>\$2,652.56</b>	
City of St. Cloud - Water/Sewer		
11/04/2025	158.74	6606 Utilities and Maintenance:6606.1 Utilities
<b>Total for City of St. Cloud - Water/Sewer</b>	<b>\$158.74</b>	
David Turch & Associates		
11/06/2025	4,000.00	902 Ineligible Fed Reimbursemt:902.10 Washington Lobbyist
<b>Total for David Turch &amp; Associates</b>	<b>\$4,000.00</b>	
Delta Dental		
11/11/2025	306.75	6560A Wages and Benefits:6600 Employee Benefits:6600.5 Health/Dental/Life Insurance
<b>Total for Delta Dental</b>	<b>\$306.75</b>	
Google Inc.		
11/30/2025	112.00	6609 IT Support & Software
<b>Total for Google Inc.</b>	<b>\$112.00</b>	
HealthEquity		
11/01/2025	4.00	6560A Wages and Benefits:6600 Employee Benefits:6600.6 HSA Account
<b>Total for HealthEquity</b>	<b>\$4.00</b>	
Loffler Companies		
11/03/2025	109.60	6608 Multifunction Copier
<b>Total for Loffler Companies</b>	<b>\$109.60</b>	
Mailchimp.com		
11/02/2025	20.00	6605 Printing & Publishing
<b>Total for Mailchimp.com</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>	
Metro Sales Inc		
11/03/2025	1,342.58	6609 IT Support & Software
<b>Total for Metro Sales Inc</b>	<b>\$1,342.58</b>	

**Transaction List by Vendor**  
**St Cloud Area Planning Organization**  
 November 1-30, 2025

DATE	AMOUNT	ACCOUNT FULL NAME
Planetizen Courses		
11/10/2025	899.80	6610 Dues & Subscriptions
<b>Total for Planetizen Courses</b>	<b>\$899.80</b>	
Premium Waters, Inc.		
11/17/2025	21.48	6601 Office Supplies
11/30/2025	14.00	6601 Office Supplies
<b>Total for Premium Waters, Inc.</b>	<b>\$35.48</b>	
Principal Mutual Life Insurance		
11/01/2025	299.51	6560A Wages and Benefits:6600 Employee Benefits:6600.5 Health/Dental/Life Insurance
11/15/2025	299.51	6560A Wages and Benefits:6600 Employee Benefits:6600.5 Health/Dental/Life Insurance
<b>Total for Principal Mutual Life Insurance</b>	<b>\$599.02</b>	
Quill.com		
11/21/2025	142.93	6601 Office Supplies
11/26/2025	109.72	6601 Office Supplies
<b>Total for Quill.com</b>	<b>\$252.65</b>	
Schneider Electric		
11/03/2025	70.00	6609.1 Equipment & Hardware
<b>Total for Schneider Electric</b>	<b>\$70.00</b>	
Shutterstock.com		
11/09/2025	29.00	6605 Printing & Publishing
<b>Total for Shutterstock.com</b>	<b>\$29.00</b>	
Stearns Electric Association		
11/05/2025	160.73	6606 Utilities and Maintenance:6606.1 Utilities
<b>Total for Stearns Electric Association</b>	<b>\$160.73</b>	
Summit Fire Protection		
11/26/2025	92.43	6606 Utilities and Maintenance
<b>Total for Summit Fire Protection</b>	<b>\$92.43</b>	
Weisman Cleaning Inc		
11/30/2025	150.00	6606 Utilities and Maintenance:6606.2 Maintenance
<b>Total for Weisman Cleaning Inc</b>	<b>\$150.00</b>	
West Central Sanitation, Inc		
11/01/2025	53.71	6606 Utilities and Maintenance:6606.1 Utilities
<b>Total for West Central Sanitation, Inc</b>	<b>\$53.71</b>	
Xcel Energy		
11/07/2025	66.77	6606 Utilities and Maintenance:6606.1 Utilities
<b>Total for Xcel Energy</b>	<b>\$66.77</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,396.98</b>	



1040 County Road 4, Saint Cloud, MN 56303-0643

*T. 320.252.7568 F. 320.252.6557*

**TO:** Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board  
**FROM:** Brian Gibson, Executive Director  
**RE:** Consider Changes to Personnel Policies to Comport with Minnesota Paid Leave  
**DATE:** December 2, 2025

The APO maintains a set of personnel policies to provide structure, clarity, and fairness for APO employees, and to provide some legal protection to the APO as an organization.

In the past, the APO provided short-term disability insurance to staff through AFLAC. However, with the implementation of Minnesota Paid Leave (MPL), we are switching to paying into the MPL system.

Attached is a red-lined version of the proposed changes to the personnel policies to comport with MPL.

Also included are some minor language clarification changes, including a proposal to change the APO's maximum contribution to each employee's Health Savings Account from the current limits of \$1,500 for single coverage and \$3,000 for family coverage to up to 50% of the allowable IRS contribution limit (for 2026, \$4,400 for single coverage and \$8,750 for family coverage). This will allow our participation to keep up with inflation and the allowable IRS contribution limits.

**Suggested Action:** Approve Proposed Changes to APO Personnel Policies.

# Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization

## Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies

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Approved by the Policy Board on XXXX, 2026

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to orient new employees with the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) and to maintain a uniform and equitable system of personnel administration for employees of the APO. It provides direction and guidance to all employees regarding the APO's expectations of them and defines the rights of each party in the employer-employee relationship.

The APO Board reserves the right to make changes to these policies and procedures at any time, with or without notice, and to interpret these policies and procedures at its discretion.

The effective date of these policies is XXXX, 2026 and they supersede all policies distributed prior to that date.

### 2. GOALS, CULTURE, AND STRUCTURE

Welcome to the Saint Cloud APO! We are happy to have you as a team member!

The APO is a cooperative interjurisdictional organization formed by agreement among the units of government that constitute our membership. The stated mission of the APO is:

*"The Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization is a voluntary association of townships, cities and counties in the Saint Cloud Area. We, as an advisory body, are committed to coordinated long-range planning, in a fair and mutually beneficial manner, on select issues transcending jurisdictional boundaries, for the betterment of the entire Saint Cloud Area. We provide technical assistance to members and facilitate problem solving through constant, cooperative, intergovernmental communication."*

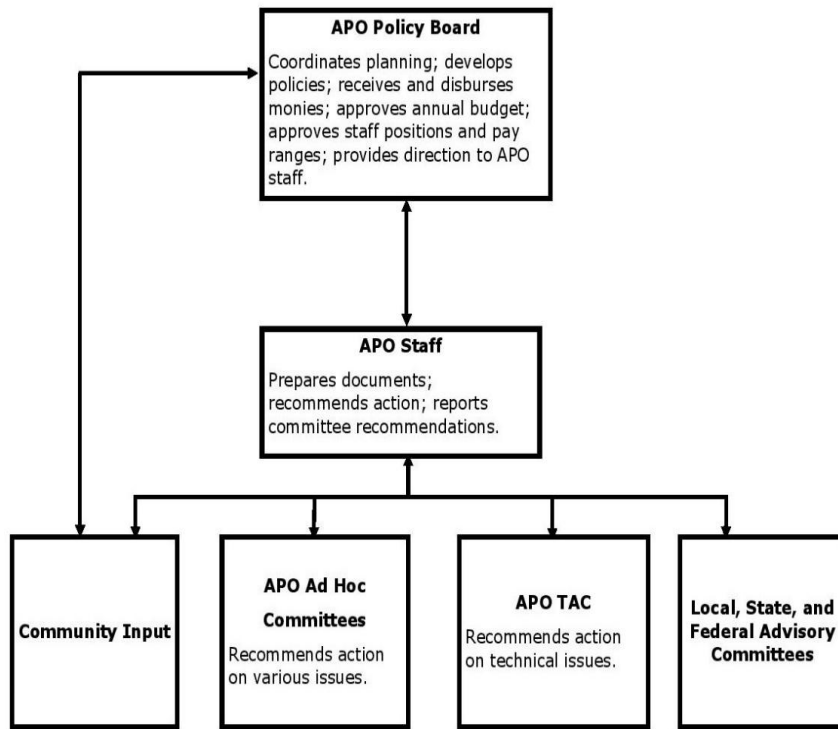
The APO is actually a Board, composed of elected and appointed representatives from the member governments. The Board is the decision-making body of the APO. The APO is the Federally-required<sup>1</sup> metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Saint Cloud metropolitan area. There are many Federal regulations and requirements that govern what the APO must do and how it must be done<sup>2</sup>.

The Board hires an Executive Director to support the Board, and authorizes the Executive Director to hire additional staff members to ensure that all needs and requirements are met. The role of staff, including the Executive Director, is to do the work, understand the relevant issues, and to advise the APO Board by making recommendations to them. Staff is intended to be a knowledgeable, reliable, trustworthy advisor to the APO Board.

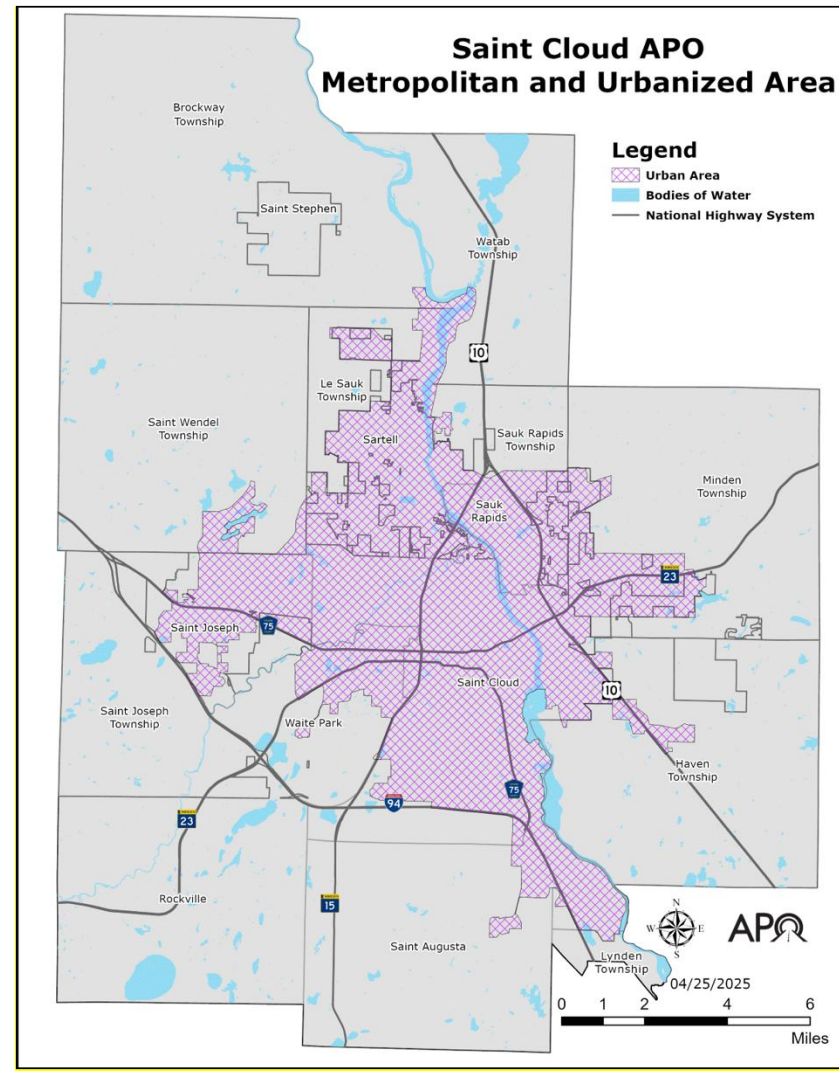
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<sup>1</sup> See 23 United States Code §134

<sup>2</sup> See 23 Code of Federal Regulations §450, Subpart C

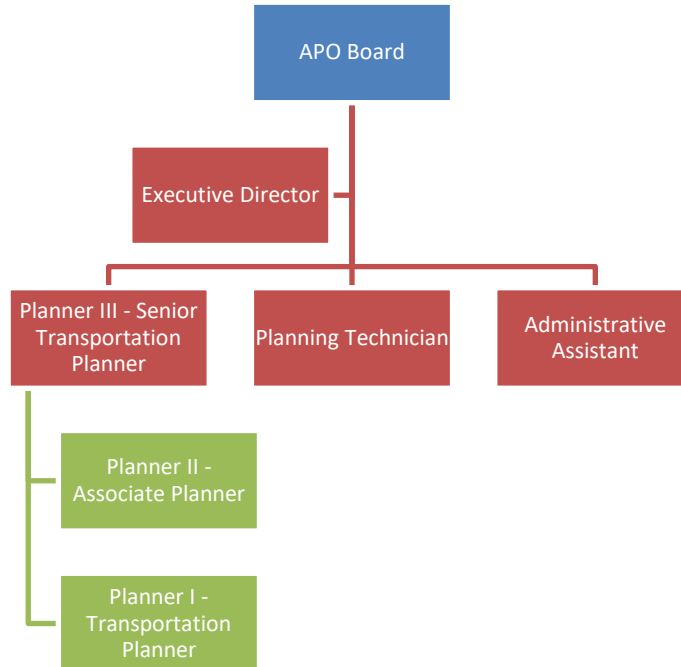


**Figure 1. APO Organizational Structure**



**Figure 2. APO Planning Area**





**Figure 3. APO Staff Organizational Chart**

### A. The Hiring Process

To achieve the goals and objectives of the APO, the Executive Director shall recommend staff positions to the APO Board and develop job descriptions and salary ranges for each. The APO Board shall consider staff positions and salary ranges as recommended by the Executive Director and shall approve those it deems appropriate and worthy. For each approved staff position (or combination thereof), the Executive Director shall appoint all employees. In no event shall there be any discrimination toward applicants on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, political, religious, or union affiliation, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability.

## 3. AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT

These Personnel Policies do not constitute or imply a contract between the employee and the APO Board. Any and all employment is at will, meaning either the employee or the APO can terminate the employment relationship at any time for any lawful reason.

Honorably discharged veterans, as defined by Minnesota Statute 197.447 shall be terminated only in accordance with the provisions of Minnesota Statute 197.46, as amended.

An employee may be laid off without pay through the abolition of their position, shortage of work or funds, or other reasons outside of the employee's control which do not necessarily reflect discredit on the employee's service. Notice of layoff shall be given at least five (5) days before the effective date. In the case of probationary employees (see Subpart A of this section), notice is not subject to the five (5) day requirement.

Any employee who wishes to leave the employment of the APO shall file with the Executive Director a written resignation stating the effective date. The resignation shall be made to the Executive Director or APO Board Chair at least ten (10) days before the effective day.

In the case of the Executive Director, she/he shall give no less than a thirty (30) day written notice to the APO Board Chair.

Resignation includes, but is not limited to, voluntary termination and retirement.

#### A. Probationary Period

Every person appointed to a full-time or part-time position with the APO shall serve a probationary period of six (6) months from the time of original appointment. During this time it will be possible for the APO to assess the individual's abilities, qualifications, and future potential. During and after the probationary period, the at-will employment designation shall not be altered in any way.

### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

The Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to administer the personnel program as provided herein and they shall recommend to the APO Board from time to time such changes or revisions as they feel are necessary to keep the Personnel Policies current. The Executive Director shall develop and keep such records as are necessary to administer the personnel program. The APO Board shall, with the assistance of the Executive Director, periodically review the Personnel Policies to determine the need for revisions or amendments.

In general, the Executive Director shall be responsible for hiring, managing, directing, coaching, developing, evaluating, disciplining, and, if necessary, terminating all other APO employees. The APO Board shall have the same responsibilities for the Executive Director.

### 5. DEFINITIONS

- A. **"Employee"** means a person who routinely receives a paycheck for wages or salary from the APO.
- B. **"Full-time"** refers to a position or employee scheduled to work at least forty (40) regular hours per week.
- C. **"Part-time"** refers to a position or employee scheduled to work less than forty (40) regular hours per week.
- D. **"Regular employee"** means an employee who has successfully completed a probationary period.
- E. **"Probationary employee"** means an employee who is being temporarily evaluated in order to determine if they are able to handle the duties and challenges associated with a new position. Probationary periods are typically six (6) months in length.
- F. **"Temporary employee"** means a person who may be hired to work less than sixty (60) hours in a two (2) week pay period or for a period not to exceed nine (9) months in any twelve (12) month period.
- G. **"Benefit-eligible employee"** is a regular employee scheduled to work thirty (30) or more regular hours per week.
- H. **"Exempt Employee"** means an employee that is exempt from the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Exemption from the FLSA is based upon job duties and salary. Most positions at the APO are exempt from FLSA.
- I. **"Just Cause"** is misconduct of an employee, or some other event relevant to the employee, sufficient to warrant disciplinary action.

- J. **"Leave of Absence"** is time off from work under unusual circumstances or for an extended period of time, generally more than five (5) working days. A Leave of Absence may be paid or unpaid.
- K. **"Controlled Substance"** means a controlled substance in Schedules I through V of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812)

## 6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT & NON-DISCRIMINATION

The APO is an equal opportunity employer and does not unlawfully discriminate against employees or applicants for employment on the basis of an individual's race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetics, marital status, veteran status or any other status protected by applicable law. This policy applies to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment, including recruitment, hiring, placement, compensation, promotion, discipline, and termination.

### A. Physical Accommodations

In the administration of these policies, the APO will provide reasonable accommodations to employees with a disability and/or to employees based on their religious tenets. The need for and the extent of physical accommodations shall be determined by the APO in accordance with its interpretation of the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act and Title VII of the Civil Right Act of 1964 and the Minnesota Human Right Act, as amended, even if such accommodations may be in conflict with another part of these Personnel Policies. This provision shall be interpreted in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

#### i. Requesting a Physical Accommodation

It is the goal of the APO that all employees be safe, healthy, and productive in their work. A few examples of when an employee may need a physical accommodation or a policy change to remain safe, healthy, and productive would be a medical condition or disability (either temporary or permanent), a religious practice, mothers who are nursing, or others. If an employee requires or desires an accommodation, they shall bring the request to the attention of their supervisor. Both the supervisor and the employee requesting the accommodation shall communicate in good faith regarding the request in order to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. The supervisor will ask questions about a medical condition, disability, religious practice or other personal matter **only to the extent** that it is job-related and consistent with business necessity.

The steps the supervisor will take to evaluate the request include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- a. With the employee present, review the job description of the employee;
- b. Ensure that the job description is complete and accurate (update if necessary);
- c. Determine if the difficulty is related to the employee's job functions, and, if so, discuss accommodation options;
- d. Determine if information is needed from the employee's physician - such a request shall be limited to information **required only as a business necessity** to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations;

*Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies – Approved XXXX, 2026*

- e. When an appropriate and reasonable accommodation is agreed upon by both parties, seek appropriate purchase approvals as per the adopted Procurement Policies;
- f. Once the accommodation has been implemented, follow-up with the employee to ensure that the accommodation is effective;
- g. Document the process in a written report and provide it to the Executive Director who shall place it in the employee's file.

## 7. NON-HARRASSMENT & NON-VIOLENCE POLICY

### A. Offensive and Discriminatory Behavior

The APO is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace that is free of offensive behavior, harassment, and discrimination. Behavior that is considered inappropriate includes, but is not limited to, conduct or communication that interferes with an employee's well-being, work performance, or creates an atmosphere that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive. Offensive behavior prohibited by this policy also includes, but is not limited to, requests to engage in illegal, immoral, or unethical conduct or retaliation for making a complaint. Such harassment is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Minnesota Human Rights Act, as amended.

Offensive behavior by any employee, manager, supervisor, or non-employee is not acceptable. All employees will be expected to comply with this policy and take appropriate measures to ensure that such conduct does not occur.

#### i. Sexual Harassment

One specific kind of offensive and discriminatory behavior is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a violation of state, federal, and local laws. The Minnesota Human Rights Act (Minnesota Statute 363.01 et. Seq., as amended) provides a legal definition of sexual harassment as follows: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature may constitute sexual harassment when:

- a. Submission to such conduct or communication is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor for employment decisions affecting such individual;
- c. Such conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's psychological well-being, work performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment and the employer knows or should know of the existence of the harassment and fails to take timely and appropriate action;

Examples of inappropriate conduct include but are not limited to: unwanted physical contact, unwelcome sexual jokes or comments, sexually explicit posters or pinups, repeated and unwelcome requests for dates or sexual favors, sexual gestures or any indication - expressed or implied - that job security or any other condition of employment depends upon submission to or rejections of unwelcome sexual requests or behavior.

## ii. Workplace Violence and Threats

Another type of offensive and discriminatory behavior is physical violence, including the threat of physical violence. The APO is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe work environment. The organization has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment, or other threats of (or actual) violence that may occur during business hours or on its premises.

- a. All employees, including supervisors and temporary employees, should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees are expected to refrain from fighting, “horseplay”, or other conduct that may be dangerous to themselves or others.
- b. Regarding firearms, Minnesota Statute 624.714, as amended, allows individuals to carry certain firearms in public – either concealed or in the open – with a properly obtained permit. However, the law also allows employers, both private and public, to restrict the ability of employees to carry firearms while on duty. APO employees are strictly forbidden from carrying any firearm, weapon, or other dangerous or hazardous device or substance on the premises of the APO, and while on duty even if the employee is not on the APO premises. Additionally, members of the public are prohibited from carrying weapons and dangerous or hazardous devices or substances not covered by Statute 624.714 on the premises of the APO.
- c. Employee conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, or a member of the public at any time, including off-duty periods, will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes all acts of harassment, including harassment that is based on an individual’s sex, race, age, or any characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.
- d. All threats of (or actual) violence, both direct and indirect, must be reported as soon as possible to the Executive Director or any APO Board Member. This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by citizens, vendors, solicitors, or other members of the public.

## B. Reporting and Redress of Offensive and Discriminatory Behavior

Any employee who feels that he or she has been subjected to offensive or discriminatory behavior or is a victim of a threat, workplace violence, or sexual harassment or any employee who is aware of such behavior is encouraged to object to the behavior at the time it is occurring and also should report the behavior to any of the following:

- Executive Director
- APO Board Chair
- Any APO Policy Board member

It is the goal of this policy to ensure that all complaints of offensive behavior will be promptly, thoroughly, and respectfully handled. To attain that goal, all employees are hereby informed that:

- i. Employees are encouraged to bring minor disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of the Executive Director promptly,

- before the situation potentially escalates into an act of offensive or discriminatory behavior;
- a. The APO is eager to assist in the resolution of disputes, and will not discipline employees for raising such concerns in good faith.
  - ii. Reports of offensive or discriminatory behavior must be made in a timely fashion to support the investigative procedures of the APO;
  - iii. All suspicious activities, even if offensive or discriminatory behavior is not actually witnessed, should be reported as soon as possible;
  - iv. When making a report, employees should make every attempt to be as specific and detailed as possible;
  - v. The APO will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports;
  - vi. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as is practical and permissible by law;
  - vii. Complaints, investigations, and resolution will be handled as discreetly as possible, with information being shared only with those who have a need to know, and as may be required by law;
  - viii. Retaliation against any person who complains, reports, or testifies about offensive or discriminatory behavior, or participates in an investigation of an offensive or discriminatory behavior complaint is not acceptable;
  - ix. In order to maintain a safe workplace and to protect the integrity of the investigation, the APO may suspend an employee, with or without pay, pending the outcome of the investigation;
  - x. A violation of the policies described in any part of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination;
    - a. An act of violence or threat of violence made in self-defense may be a bona fide mitigating circumstance and defense of such act.

Regarding offensive and discriminatory behavior, including threats, workplace violence, and sexual harassment, the APO stands committed to providing information and training to all employees as needed. All employees are expected to treat each other and the general public with respect and to assist in fostering a work-place that is free of offensive or inappropriate behavior. Violations of this policy may constitute just cause for discipline, up to and including termination.

Additional information regarding offensive or discriminatory behavior, threats, workplace violence, or sexual harassment may be obtained from the Executive Director.

## 8. DRUG-FREE / ALCOHOL-FREE ENVIRONMENT

The APO is concerned with controlled substances<sup>3</sup>, alcohol, and illegal drug use which interferes with an employee's job performance and/or threatens any employee's personal safety. It is the policy of the APO to provide a safe, productive workplace that is free of the

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<sup>3</sup> "Controlled substance" means a controlled substance in Schedules I through V of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812)

use and influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances, which are identified in federal and state laws.

Employees are hereby advised that it is unlawful to manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use alcohol or any illegal drugs or controlled substances in the workplace, or while on duty as an employee of the APO.

Furthermore, the APO prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs or controlled substances by an employee during the times such employee is on duty or may be perceived by the public to be on duty or is taking a rest break or meal break and is expected to return to duty. Under this policy, the terms “use” and “possession” include being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug or controlled substance, or having any alcohol, illegal drugs, controlled substances, or their metabolites in their body, alone or in normally chemically combined state with other body chemicals.

Violation of these policies will result in actions against the employee, up to and including mandatory drug rehabilitation and other possible disciplinary actions (see Section 18, Subpart G). In addition, the APO may take other steps as required or permitted by law.

The APO, as mandated by Federal law, will require all employees to certify prior to their employment that they are cognizant and will abide by the Drug-Free Work Place Act (see certification in Appendix A).

## 9. SMOKING AND DRESS CODE

Pursuant to the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act (Minnesota Statutes §§144.411 to 144.417, as amended) smoking is not permitted anywhere within the APO premises.

The APO maintains a business casual working environment. All employees should use discretion in wearing attire that is appropriate for a professional office, interaction with the public, and interactions with representatives of the APO’s member jurisdictions, both elected and staff members.

## 10. COMPENSATION

The APO recognizes that its employees are its most important assets. A proficient and professional staff is the most important contribution to the organization’s effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, it is the APO’s desire to compensate employees fairly in relation to the prevailing market rates. Fair compensation – both direct (e.g., wages, salaries, and performance-incentive pay), and indirect (e.g., insurances and benefits) – is a critical factor in the recruitment, motivation, and retention of knowledgeable, capable, and professional employees. Resources for outside expertise such as consultants and contractors will always be necessary, but the APO shall strive to build and retain a proficient and professional staff such that not more than 30% of the organization’s annual budget will be needed for outside consultants and contractors.

The APO pay period is bi-monthly. There are twenty-four (24) pay periods per year. Paydays are on the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month.

### A. Executive Director Compensation

Salary for the Executive Director is established solely by the Policy Board. The salary range and steps for the Executive Director shown on the table on page 11 are provided as market-based guidance to help inform salary decisions, but need not be followed.



The proficiency and performance of the Executive Director shall be evaluated by the Officers of the APO Board at their discretion, but shall occur no less than annually.

## B. Compensation for the Rest of Staff

Salary step increases and performance-incentive pay for employees are based on two (2) factors – proficiency and performance. “Proficiency” is the level of expertise and efficiency that the employee exhibits in their position. Proficiency is normally gained over time with more experience. “Performance” is the extent to which the employee consistently strives to achieve excellence and to go above and beyond the minimum work necessary to complete their work proficiently. Performance is a function of the individual’s drive and desire to be outstanding (for more details, see Section 18).

The Executive Director shall evaluate each employee’s proficiency and performance no less than annually (see Proficiency and Performance Review Forms in Appendix B). Employees who achieve an Overall Performance Rating of “5” or better will move to the next salary step for their position as noted in the “APO Annual Salary Step Table”, subject to the availability of funds.

A performance-incentive bonus is a one-time award given to those employees who have demonstrated exceptional performance in the preceding year as documented in the employee’s proficiency and performance evaluation. The awarding of performance-incentive bonuses is subject to the availability of funds. Performance-incentive pay does not change the employee’s salary or wages. Performance-incentive pay shall be paid to the employee within two (2) pay periods following the completion of the employee’s proficiency and performance evaluation.

The APO Salary Ranges & Step Table shall be reviewed periodically by the Executive Director to ensure that it remains competitive within the marketplace. The Executive Director may recommend adjustments to the APO Board from time-to-time based on relevant labor market conditions. Adjustments to the table become effective only after the APO Board has approved them.

**APO Salary Ranges & Step Table**  
**September 2023**

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
<b>Executive Director</b>	\$90,216	\$95,616	\$101,016	\$106,416	\$111,816	\$117,216	\$122,616	\$128,016	\$133,416	\$138,816
<b>Planner III - Senior Transportation Planner</b>	\$73,200	\$77,520	\$81,840	\$86,160	\$90,480	\$94,800	\$99,120	\$103,440	\$107,760	\$112,080
<b>Planner II - Associate Planner</b>	\$56,640	\$60,000	\$63,360	\$66,720	\$70,080	\$73,440	\$76,800	\$80,160	\$83,520	\$86,880
<b>Planner I - Transportation Planner</b>	\$50,496	\$53,496	\$56,496	\$59,496	\$62,496	\$65,496	\$68,496	\$71,496	\$74,496	\$77,496
<b>Planning Technician</b>	\$56,496	\$59,856	\$63,216	\$66,576	\$69,936	\$73,296	\$76,656	\$80,016	\$83,376	\$86,736
<b>Admin Assistant (Hourly)</b>	\$16.86	\$18.36	\$19.86	\$21.36	\$22.86	\$24.36	\$25.86	\$27.36	\$28.86	\$30.36



## 11. OFFICE HOURS AND WORK SCHEDULES

Except when special conditions apply, the APO office shall be open for business from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. To meet this objective at least one employee must be in the office and on duty during those times.

Employees do have the flexibility to work-from-home within the following constraints:

- Employees are expected to attend weekly staff meetings in-person in the APO office.
- Employees are expected to complete their work accurately and in a timely manner. If working from home interferes with their ability to work quickly and accurately, they may be required to work in the office more frequently.

The APO understands that an appropriate work/life balance is important to the health of each employee. The APO offers flexible scheduling of each employee's standard work schedule within certain constraints. Employees are expected to establish an individual standard working schedule that facilitates their desired work/life balance, while still allowing for the efficient execution of their job responsibilities. Each employee must declare their standard work schedule in writing to the Executive Director and is expected to adhere to it. To facilitate workforce stability and accountability, standard work schedules, which are composed of a combination of standard work days and standard work weeks, shall not be adjusted more than twice in any calendar year.

### A. Standard Work Days

Full-time employees may set the start of their standard work day anytime between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m., and may set the end of their standard work day anytime between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., subject to the other constraints within this policy.

All employees shall have a fifteen (15) minute paid rest period during each one-half day to be taken at the middle of such one-half work day whenever feasible. All employees shall be granted an unpaid lunch period for each workday of eight (8) hours or more. Lunch periods shall not be less than 30 minutes in length. Employees shall declare their standard lunch period to the Executive Director when they declare their standard work schedule.

### B. Standard Work Weeks

All full-time employees shall set a standard work schedule such that they work forty (40) hours in each pay period, except for special circumstances such as holidays, Earned Sick and Safe Leave (ESSL), vacation, etc.

Three standard work weeks are permitted:

- i. Five (5) work days per week with eight (8) working hours each work day;
- ii. Four (4) work days per week with (9) working hours each work day and one work day of four (4) working hours;
- iii. Four (4) work days per week of ten (10) working hours each work day.

The Executive Director shall have final approval for any standard work schedule, keeping in mind the need to have at least one employee on duty during normal business hours. The Executive Director shall work with part-time employees to establish their standard working schedule.

A few possible standard work schedules are shown below as examples:



## Example A – Five Days of Eight Hours (One Hour Lunch):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Start</b>	9 a.m.	7 a.m.	9 a.m.	7 a.m.	9 a.m.
<b>Lunch Period</b>	Noon – 1 p.m.	11 a.m. – Noon	Noon – 1 p.m.	11 a.m. – Noon	Noon – 1 p.m.
<b>End</b>	6 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.
<b>Work Hours</b>	8	8	8	8	8

## Example B – Four Days of Ten Hours (Half Hour Lunch):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Start</b>	6 a.m.	6 a.m.	6 a.m.	6 a.m.	
<b>Lunch Period</b>	11 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	11 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	11 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	11 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Off
<b>End</b>	4:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	
<b>Work Hours</b>	10	10	10	10	0

## Example C – Four Days of Nine Hours and One Day of Four Hours (Two Hour Lunch):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Start</b>	7 a.m.	7 a.m.	7 a.m.	7 a.m.	10 a.m.
<b>Lunch Period</b>	Noon – 2 p.m.	Noon – 2 p.m.	Noon – 2 p.m.	Noon – 2 p.m.	N/A
<b>End</b>	6 p.m.	6 p.m.	6 p.m.	6 p.m.	2 p.m.
<b>Work Hours</b>	9	9	9	9	4

Employees will be evaluated for their adherence to their standard work schedule. Keeping regular working hours is essential to the APO's efficient operation and is a necessary condition of continued employment. When employees are absent and/or fail to complete their work, schedules and commitments fall behind, and other employees must sometimes assume the added workload. Employees are expected to work as scheduled. If unanticipated circumstances make it impossible to report for work as scheduled, employees must notify the office Administrative Assistant, providing as much notice prior to their absence as possible.

### C. Standard Work Schedule Variances, Overtime, and Compensatory Time Off

From time to time, it may be necessary for an employee to work outside of their standard working schedule. This may include attending evening meetings or other events or travel during non-standard times. It may also include working additional hours in order to meet project deadlines.

Overtime shall only be paid to full-time or part-time employees who are non-exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), as amended. The Executive Director must approve all overtime work in advance. Employees appointed to professional full-time or part-time positions and who fall within the definition of an exempt employee under FLSA

are not entitled to overtime compensation. All non-exempt employees approved for overtime shall be compensated at the rate of one and one-half times the base rate pay for all time worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a week.

Upon their request, and with the approval of the Executive Director, non-exempt employees may be compensated for overtime with compensatory time off at the rate of one and one-half times the amount of overtime worked. Accumulated compensatory time may be used upon request of the employee and approval of the Executive Director prior to the date of the requested use. Total accumulation of compensatory time shall not exceed twenty (20) hours at any one time.

Upon their request, and with the approval of the Executive Director, exempt employees may be compensated for time worked in excess of forty (40) hours per week with compensatory time off at the rate of one hour off for each hour worked in excess of forty (40). Compensatory time off may be used upon request of the employee and approval of the Executive Director prior to the employee taking the time off and must be used within the same pay period as the compensatory time off was earned. Compensatory time off that is not used within the same pay period in which it is earned is lost. Accumulation of compensatory time off is not permitted for exempt employees. With the approval of the Executive Director, compensatory time off may be taken prior to the employee exceeding forty (40) work hours in a week if the employee's standard work schedule would normally result in the employee working more than forty (40) work hours in that week.

All APO employees requesting the use of compensatory time off must complete an "Earned Time Request" form and provide it to the Executive Director for her/his approval and signature.

## 12. HOLIDAYS, VACATION TIME, AND EARNED SICK & SAFE LEAVE

### A. Holidays

The following days shall be standard paid holidays for all APO employees:

- i. New Year's Day – January 1<sup>st</sup>
- ii. Martin Luther King Day - 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in January
- iii. President's Day – 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February
- iv. Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
- v. Juneteenth – June 19<sup>th</sup>
- vi. Independence Day – July 4<sup>th</sup>
- vii. Labor Day – 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in September
- viii. Veteran's Day – November 11<sup>th</sup>
- ix. Thanksgiving Day – 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in November
- x. Friday After Thanksgiving Day – 4<sup>th</sup> Friday in November
- xi. Christmas Day – December 25<sup>th</sup>

When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding workday will be the recognized APO holiday, and when they fall on a Sunday, the following workday will be the recognized APO holiday.

In addition, all employees of the APO as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year may declare two additional floating holidays to be taken on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. Employees who are initially appointed to their position after January 1<sup>st</sup>, but before July 1<sup>st</sup>, may declare one floating holiday to be taken on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. Employees may declare their floating holidays at any time in advance of taking the time off. The floating holidays may be used as each employee sees fit. Unlike vacation days, floating holidays cannot be carried-over from year-to-year if they are not used. Employees will not be compensated for any unused floating holidays.

Part-time employees shall be paid for all above holidays based on the number of hours they would work on the holiday pursuant to their standard working schedule. Should a holiday occur while an employee is on vacation or ESSL, that day will not be charged against earned vacation or ESSL.

For full-time employees, eight (8) hours of holiday pay will be provided for each holiday, whether standard or floating. For full-time employees who work a compressed work week, such as nine (9) or ten (10) work hours per day, each holiday will count for only eight (8) hours of paid time off. If a standard APO holiday falls on a day that would normally be the employee's day off, the employee may take off eight (8) paid holiday hours on the day immediately before or after the APO recognized holiday. For employees who work a compressed work week and who would normally work on the holiday, they may handle the holiday in one of the following ways:

- i. Take off eight (8) paid holiday hours on the holiday, but work any remaining hours that would normally comprise their working day, or
- ii. Take the full holiday off by taking eight (8) paid holiday hours and using paid vacation hours for the remaining working hours that would normally comprise that day, or
- iii. Take the full day off by taking eight (8) paid holiday hours, and make up the remaining work hours on another day within the same pay period.

## B. Paid Vacation

Paid vacation time is accrued from the date of hire and is prorated each pay period. However, vacation cannot be taken during the first six (6) months of employment.

Years of Service shall be defined as those years of employment with the APO plus any years of employment with a jurisdictional member of the APO. Part-time employees working thirty (30) hours per week or more shall be granted paid vacation leave on a prorated basis to full-time employees. Part-time employees working less than thirty (30) hours per week shall not be granted paid vacation leave. The Executive Director must approve vacation periods. Total vacation hours accrued may not exceed one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the annual accrual rate. Upon termination an employee shall be paid for the balance of hours of accrued vacation time.

Vacation Time Accrual Rates			
Years of Service	Annual Vacation Time Accrual	Vacation Accrued per Pay Period	Maximum Accrual
<b>0 – 3 years</b>	10 days	3.33 hours	120 hours
<b>4 – 9 years</b>	15 days	5 hours	180 hours
<b>10 – 14 years</b>	20 days	6.66 hours	240 hours
<b>15+ years</b>	25 days	8.33 hours	300 hours

### C. Earned Sick and Safe Leave (ESSL)

Pursuant to Minnesota state law, ESSL may be used for:

- the employee’s mental or physical illness, treatment, or preventive care;
- a family member’s mental or physical illness, treatment, or preventive care;
- absence due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking of the employee or a family member;
- closure of the employee’s workplace due to weather or public emergency or closure of a family member’s school or care facility due to weather or public emergency; and
- when determined by a health authority or health care professional that the employee or a family member is at risk of infecting others with a communicable disease.
- any temporary disability caused or contributed to by pregnancy, miscarriage, or childbirth

Medical treatment include medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatments.

Family members include:

- the employee’s child, including foster child, adult child, legal ward, child for whom the employee is legal guardian or child to whom the employee stands or stood in loco parentis (in place of a parent);
- the employee’s spouse or registered domestic partner;
- the employee’s sibling, stepsibling or foster sibling;
- the employee’s biological, adoptive or foster parent, stepparent or a person who stood in loco parentis (in place of a parent) when the employee was a minor child;
- the employee’s grandchild, foster grandchild or step-grandchild;
- the employee’s grandparent or step-grandparent;
- a child of a sibling of the employee;
- a sibling of the parents of the employee;
- a child-in-law or sibling-in-law;
- any of the family members listed in 1 through 9 above of an employee’s spouse or registered domestic partner;

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- any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship; and
- up to one individual annually designated by the employee.

**For Full-Time Employees:**

Full-time employees will accrue ESSL at the rate of eight (8) hours per month, and may accumulate up to a maximum of 960 hours.

After 960 hours of accumulation, 75% of unused ESSL accumulations will be paid into the employee's Post Employment Health Care Savings Plan (see Section 15, Subpart G), or up to a maximum of 72 hours annually. The remaining 25% of unused ESSL will be forfeited.

Upon the death of a full-time employee, the cash equivalent of 100% of the employee's unused ESSL will be paid to the employee's estate or designated beneficiary, up to the maximum of 960 hours.

Upon retirement or the total and permanent disability of a full-time employee (as defined by PERA and the Social Security Administration), 50% of unused ESSL accumulations will be paid to the employee or the employee's Post Employment Health Care Savings Plan, up to a maximum of 480 hours.

There shall be no ESSL payout following resignation or termination of a full-time employee.

**For Part-Time Employees:**

Part-time employees shall accrue ESSL at a rate of one (1) hour for every twenty (20) hours worked and may accumulate ESSL up to a maximum of 480 hours.

Upon resignation, retirement, termination, or any other separation, all unused ESSL for part-time employees will be forfeited.

**For All Employees:**

Employees shall have deducted from their ESSL accumulation the actual number of work hours (in whole numbers, not fractions) during which they are on leave. ESSL must be accrued to be used.

Upon agreement of both parties, ESSL can be transferred from one employee to another. The Executive Director must be notified of any agreement to transfer ESSL between employees. ESSL privileges shall begin to accrue the month employment begins.

When an employee needs ESSL, they shall notify the Executive Director and/or Chair of the APO as soon as possible. A doctor's verification may be required after three (3) consecutive business days of absences. All ESSL policies shall be subject to conformance with applicable Minnesota State Statutes.

### 13. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

A leave of absence ("LOA") is defined as a pre-approved absence from work for a specific length of time for any of the reasons described below. All requests for LOAs shall be submitted in writing (exceptions may be made for Military Leave and Voting; see below) by the employee to the Executive Director for approval or denial. If the Executive Director



wants to request an LOA, she/he shall submit a request for an LOA to the APO Board Chair. The APO Board shall approve or deny requests for an LOA from the Executive Director.

LOAs may be paid or unpaid; see specifics listed in each subsection below. Holidays, paid vacation time, and ESSL shall not accrue during an approved LOA that is unpaid. After an approved LOA, the employee shall be returned to the position they held at the time when the LOA was requested, or to a similar position.

### A. Military

Every employee shall be entitled to up to fifteen (15) days of paid military leave as provided in Minnesota Statute 192.26, as amended. Military leave shall not be deducted from the employee's accrued ESSL or paid vacation time.

Unless military necessity prevents it or is otherwise impossible or unreasonable, an employee shall provide the Executive Director with notice of the need for leave as far in advance as is reasonable under the circumstances. Written notice is preferred, but not required under the law or this policy.

### B. Judicial

Any employee shall be granted an LOA with pay for service upon a jury, or appearance before a court legislative committee, or other body as a witness in a proceeding involving the federal government, the State of Minnesota, or political subdivision thereof in response to a subpoena or other direction by proper authority; or attendance in court in connection with their official duties as may be allowed under Minnesota Statute 593.50, as amended. In the case of jury duty, the employee's compensation from the APO during their LOA shall equal the difference between their regular compensation and compensation paid for jury duty. An LOA for the reasons described in this paragraph shall not be deducted from the employee's accrued ESSL or paid vacation.

### ~~C. Medical~~

~~An LOA for personal illness, injury, or temporary disability may be granted in advance of the employee's absence if the employee produces a physician's certificate before the requested LOA is to begin, specifying the condition, how this condition prevents the employee from performing the essential duties of the position, an expected date of return to work including limitation or restrictions, and the time anticipated before the employee is fully performing all aspects of the position description.~~

~~An employee may also take an LOA due to the illness or injury of the employee's child for such reasonable periods of time as the employee's attendance with the child may be necessary. The Executive Director and/or APO Board may require a physician's statement documenting the child's illness or injury whenever it is deemed necessary or reasonable.~~

~~An employee working an average of twenty (20) hours or more per week shall also be entitled to an LOA while undergoing a medical procedure to donate bone marrow. The combined length of the LOA to complete all procedures shall not exceed forty (40) work hours, unless the APO specifically agrees to a greater leave. The APO may require verification by a physician of the purpose and length of each leave requested by the employee to donate bone marrow.~~

~~For medical LOAs, seniority may continue to be accrued to the employee—up to a maximum of one (1) year—along with any benefits resulting from accrued seniority.~~

~~If the employee has accrued ESSL, the time of absence for any medical reasons listed in this subpart shall be deducted from the employee's accrued ESSL. Any required information (e.g., the reason for the requested absence, expected date of return, etc.) that is not included in the employee's written request for an LOA may be cause for not granting the leave, or for granting the leave without pay. If the time of the absence extends beyond the amount of time the employee has accrued in ESSL, the employee may, at their sole discretion, choose to use accrued vacation time to cover any or all of the remaining time of absence. Any time of absence not covered by ESSL or vacation time shall be unpaid.~~

~~Any employee who has no accrued ESSL and is mentally or physically unable to perform their duties, or who for any stated reason, including maternity, wishes to absent themselves from their duties, may be granted an LOA without pay. Except for pregnancy, such leave shall be granted only when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the APO and, except in the case of illness or disability, shall not exceed one (1) year in duration. If any medical LOA or portion of a medical LOA is unpaid, the employee has the option to continue their insurance coverages through the APO, but shall be responsible for paying 100% of the monthly premium. If the employee returns to work within one (1) year, they shall be reinstated in their position at the rate of salary that applied prior to their absence. During the time of the employee's absence, the APO may, as necessary, take steps to temporarily fill the position, either by temporary employee or by contractor.~~

#### ~~D. Parental~~ Minnesota Paid Leave

~~An employee, working an average of twenty (20) hours or more per week, and who has been an employee of the APO for at least one (1) year, is eligible for parental leave. An employee may take up to twelve (12) weeks of leave in conjunction with the birth or adoption of a child. The leave shall begin at the time requested by the employee, but must be within twelve (12) months of the birth or adoption of the child, or the date when the child is released from the hospital, whichever is later. This leave is available to natural and adoptive mothers and fathers. For more details, see Minnesota Statute 181.941, as amended.~~

~~The APO participates in the Minnesota Paid Leave (MPL) program, which is a state-run insurance program that provides payments and job protections when people need to care for themselves or their loved ones. All full- and part-time employees of the APO are eligible for MPL.~~

~~Employees who experience at least one of the qualifying events are eligible to take leave under MPL:~~

- ~~• A serious health condition~~
- ~~• Welcoming a new child~~
- ~~• Caring for a loved one~~
- ~~• Managing a family member's active-duty military service~~
- ~~• Safety concerns like domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking~~

~~Employees are eligible for up to 12 weeks of medical leave for themselves and eligible for up to 12 weeks of family leave. However, an employee who needs both family and medical leave is limited to taking up to 20 weeks of total combined leave during a benefit year. The benefit year is a 52-week period that starts on the first day the employee is absent from work for a qualifying reason.~~

Employees who wish to take leave under MPL should notify the Executive Director of their intentions. If the leave is not planned in advance, the employee should discuss it with the Executive Director as soon as possible.

MPL is not administered by the APO. It is administered by the state of Minnesota. Employees taking MPL will need to apply to the state of Minnesota, which can approve or deny the leave request.

The APO pays all of the required premium for the MPL program. Employees are not required to pay any part of the premium.

MPL reimburses employees for only a portion of their wages (check with MPL for the latest information). Employees may use accrued ESSL time to “top off” their paid leave time.

Employees who have worked for the APO for at least 90 calendar days will have their job protected while they are on leave, and will be able to return to their same job after their leave ends.

At their discretion, the employee may choose to have all or part of their leave time deducted from their accrued ESSL and/or vacation time. If the employee does not have sufficient accrued ESSL and/or vacation time to cover all of their leave time, or if they choose not to use their ESSL and/or vacation time during their leave, the leave will be unpaid. However, even if the leave is unpaid, the APO will continue to make insurance coverage available to the employee while on leave for the employee and any dependents. If the leave is unpaid, the employee shall be responsible for paying 100% of the required monthly premiums.

#### E.C. School Conference and Activities

To qualify for School Conference and Activities Leave, an employee must have worked an average of twenty (20) hours per week preceding the leave request. Employees who give proper notice shall be entitled to leave of up to sixteen (16) hours during the school year for the purpose of attending school conferences or classroom activities related to the employee’s child. The employee shall provide reasonable prior notice of the leave and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the APO. The leave shall be unpaid, but the employee may, at their discretion, use paid vacation time for any part of the leave requested for attendance of the school conference or school activity.

#### F.D. Voting

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 204C.04, as amended, every employee who is eligible to vote in an election has the right to be absent from work for the time necessary to appear at the employee’s polling place, cast a ballot, and return to work on the day of that election, without penalty or deduction from salary or wages because of the absence. Employees shall notify the Executive Director when they leave work to vote but need not request permission in writing.

#### G.E. Training, Education, and Professional Development

Training is an educational process that allows individuals to learn new information, re-learn and reinforce existing knowledge and skills, and consider how work processes may be improved or made more efficient. It is a goal of the APO that its employees be highly proficient and effective in their positions. Attendance for staff development to

professional and technical conferences, seminars, symposiums, college courses, and training sessions relevant to the respective staff positions is desired. The training leave will be with pay and the expenses of attendance shall be paid by the APO, subject to the availability of funds, and subject to the successful completion of such courses and conferences, under the following conditions:

- Attendance is authorized by the APO Executive Director
- Attendance is essential to furthering the goals and objectives of the APO, as determined by the APO Executive Director and/or APO Board.

#### H.F. Other Personal Leave

The APO may grant a personal leave of absence for unique or extraordinary reasons that may not apply to the other types of leave provided that the maximum amount of leave time has not been used. The maximum amount of time that can be granted for personal leave is six (6) weeks in any twelve (12) month period. The decision to grant personal leave will be based on the needs of the APO and the employee. At the discretion of the Executive Director, the leave may be paid or unpaid. At the discretion of the employee, accrued vacation time may be deducted for a personal leave of absence.

## 14. WEATHER RELATED ABSENCES

The APO recognizes that weather can occasionally create hazardous travel conditions. Generally speaking, when the Saint Cloud Area School District has canceled classes due to weather conditions and/or when the State of Minnesota has issued a “No Travel” advisory for roadways within the Saint Cloud metropolitan area, employees, with the consent of the Executive Director, may be excused from reporting to work in the office or may leave the office prior to the normal end of their scheduled workday.

If an employee is able to work from home, they may do so in lieu of reporting to the office.

For weather related absences, the time off shall be unpaid, unless the employee chooses to deduct the time from accrued vacation time or ESSL. Alternatively, the employee may choose to make up the hours they were absent by working an equal number of additional hours on another day within the same pay period.

Employees who are not able to report to work due to inclement weather are required to notify the Executive Director and report to work when safety permits.

## 15. BENEFITS

Insurance benefits are provided only to benefit-eligible employees. Amounts (where shown) are for full-time employees and shall be pro-rated for benefit-eligible employees who work less than forty (40) hours per week.

For each benefit-eligible employee, the APO shall pay 100% of the monthly premium cost for insurance coverages. For purposes of insurance, family coverage includes the employee, their lawful spouse, and any dependents to which coverage may be extended under the insurance policies.

### A. Social Security and Medicare

The APO provides Social Security and Medicare benefits consistent with 20 CFR, Parts 400-499.



## B. Health Insurance and Health Savings Account

The APO's health insurance plan is a high-deductible plan with an associated Health Savings Account ("HSA"). Health insurance premiums are established by the insurance provider, but, in general, are a function of the age of the person being covered. The cost of health insurance coverage is 100% covered by the APO - there is no monthly premium cost to the employee.

The HSA is administered through Fidelity and allows pre-tax withholding for the following:

- i. Health insurance premiums
- ii. Vision insurance premiums
- iii. Dental insurance premiums
- iv. Medical and orthodontic expenses
- v. Dependent care expenses

To help defray the costs of health insurance prior to reaching the deductibles noted above, in the first year of employment for all new employees, the APO will contribute \$1,500 to each employee's HSA with single coverage, or will contribute \$3,000 to each employee's HSA with family coverage. These payments shall be made:

- 50% immediately upon their start with the APO;
- 25% after 3 months of continuous employment; and
- 25% after 6 months of continuous employment

This benefit is limited to the employee's first year of employment only. Employees may also voluntarily contribute to their HSAs beyond the APO contribution.

Beginning with the second year of continuous employment and continuing each year of employment thereafter, the APO will contribute to each employee's HSA on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis to the employee's voluntary HSA contributions, up to a maximum of one-half of the total IRS contribution limits per year for either single or family coverage. ~~\$1,500 to those employees with single coverage and up to \$3,000 for those employees with family coverage.~~

Before the start of every calendar year, employees will elect their HSA matching contributions to be withdrawn equally from twenty-four (24) payroll periods for the upcoming year. Lump-sum employee contributions can also be made during the year. Employee HSA contributions can be made pre-tax via the APO's flexible benefits plan.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 62A.17, employees who are voluntarily or involuntarily terminated (other than for gross misconduct) may elect to continue either single or family health insurance coverage at their own expense for up to eighteen (18) months after termination.

## C. Dental Insurance

Dental insurance coverage is offered to all benefit-eligible employees. This coverage is provided at no cost to the employee. Premiums and coverages are set by the insurance provider. For more information, see <https://www.deltadentalmn.org/>.



## D. Vision Insurance

Vision insurance coverage is offered to all benefit-eligible employees. This coverage is provided at no cost to the employee. Premiums and coverages are set by the insurance provider. For more information, see

<https://www.bluecrossmn.com/healthy/public/personal/home/employers/small-groups/vision-plans>.

## E. Life Insurance

A \$50,000 term policy on the employee is provided without cost to the employee.

Optionally, a \$5,000 term policy on the employee's spouse and/or \$2,000 term policy on the employee's dependent(s) from six (6) months to nineteen (19) years of age may also be added. Premium amounts are set by the insurance provider, but, generally, are a function of the age of the person being covered.

Employees may also purchase a supplemental policy solely at the expense of the employee. Upon request, the APO will also provide for a payroll deduction for PERA Life Insurance for any employee that desires this option. The total cost of the PERA Life Insurance premiums shall be the responsibility of the employee requesting this option.

## F. Long-Term Disability

Long-term disability insurance coverage is offered to all benefit-eligible employees. This coverage is provided at no cost to the employee. Long-term disability coverage is provided with a maximum coverage of sixty percent (60%) of basic monthly compensation, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per month. There is a six (6) month benefit-waiting period.

## ~~G. Short-Term Disability~~

~~Short-term disability insurance coverage is offered to all benefit-eligible employees. This coverage is provided at no cost to the employee. Short-term disability coverage is provided for accidents or illness based upon the age of the employee and their annual income. There is a 7-day elimination period. For more information see: <https://www.aflac.com/prospecting/short-term-disability-insurance.aspx>.~~

## H.G. Post-Employment Health Care Savings Plan

Pursuant to Laws of Minnesota 2001, Chapter 352.98, as amended, the APO participates in the Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS) Health Care Savings Plan. This program authorizes the APO to establish individual employee savings accounts to pay medical expenses and/or health insurance premiums, as described by Internal Revenue Service Publication 502, after the employee has left public service. The APO has established the following policy for APO employees:

- i. Participation by all full-time APO employees is mandatory;
- ii. The MSRS Plan will remain in effect until such time as this policy is reviewed, and/or revised and renewed by the APO Board;
- iii. Funds deposited into individual employee savings accounts by the APO shall be tax-free and invested in employee directed investment options provided by the State Board of Investment;
- iv. Employee contributions to the MSRS Plan are established according to the following schedules:

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- Beginning the 1<sup>st</sup> year through the end of 10<sup>th</sup> year of employment – 1% of Gross Pay;
  - Beginning the 11<sup>th</sup> year through the end of 20<sup>th</sup> year of employment – 2% of Gross Pay;
  - Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> year through end of 30<sup>th</sup> year of employment – 3% of Gross Pay;
  - 31 plus years – 4% of Gross pay
- v. For all eligible employees that have accumulated more than 960 hours of unused ESSL and who continue to work at the APO, the APO shall contribute the cash equivalent of 75% of accumulated ESSL over 960 hours, or up to a maximum of 72 hours annually, into the MSRS Plan.
- vi. For all eligible employees that have unused ESSL accumulations, up to a maximum of 960 hours, upon their retirement, the APO shall contribute to the MSRS Plan the cash equivalent of 50% of their accumulated ESSL (i.e., a maximum of 480 hours).

For more details, see <https://www.msrs.state.mn.us/>.

#### I.H. Deferred Compensation

Deferred Compensation is a voluntary program that diverts a portion of a benefit-eligible employee's pre-tax pay into an investment account which can be withdrawn post-retirement. APO benefit-eligible employees may voluntarily contribute to the Minnesota State Deferred Compensation Plan (MNDCP) through Great West Life and Annuity. Various investment options are available. For more information, see <https://www.msrs.state.mn.us/mndcp>.

#### J.I. Pension

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 11A, 353, 353A, 353D, 353F, 356, and 356A, as amended, the APO participates in the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA). Contribution rates by the employee and the APO are set by PERA and may be changed periodically. For more details, see <http://www.mnpera.org/>.

#### K.J. Professional Organization Membership Dues

Because continuing education and professional development are an important aspect of building and maintaining professional skills among employees, the APO shall pay, with the approval of the Executive Director, the membership dues of APO employees for relevant professional organizations. Examples of relevant organizations include, but are not limited to:

- The American Planning Association
- The Institute of Transportation Engineers
- The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
- The American Public Transportation Association

This benefit shall not exceed \$350 per calendar year for any employee.

## 16. WORKER'S COMPENSATION

The Minnesota Worker's Compensation Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 176, as amended) requires the APO to report any and all injuries and illnesses that employees believe are work-related. When this occurs, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. The employee is required to report any and all work-related injuries and illnesses to the APO as stipulated in the Minnesota Worker's Compensation Act.
- B. The APO will submit injury/illness reports as required by the Minnesota Worker's Compensation Act.
- C. If the injury/illness is compensated under the Minnesota Worker's Compensation Act, the employee shall receive their full basic compensation as long as they have accumulated ESSL or vacation credits against which it may be charged. The APO shall receive the worker's compensation payments granted the employee, and in return shall credit the employee with ESSL in proportion to such payments. The APO shall pay the employee for days missed in ESSL pay. When a Worker's Compensation check is received by the APO, the APO shall keep the check and credit the employee back the amount of ESSL covered by the check (usually two-thirds of the employee's gross weekly wage).
- D. When the employee has no ESSL or vacation credits, an employee shall receive only the benefits and payments granted him/her according to the Worker's Compensation laws.
- E. Employees receiving Worker's Compensation must keep their supervisors updated on their medical situation.
- F. Physician statements regarding the employee's ability to work will be required.

For more information and resources, visit <https://mn.gov/oah/lawyers-and-litigants/workers-compensation/>.

## 17. TRAVEL

The APO recognizes that its employees may at times receive value from traveling in or out of the State for workshops, conferences, seminars, events, and other assignments. This policy sets forth the conditions under which travel and associated expenses will be reimbursed by the APO.

- A. For employees other than the Executive Director, out-of-state and overnight travel expenses must be approved in advance by the Executive Director. Employees shall complete and submit to the Executive Director a Travel Request form (see Appendix C). Out-of-state and overnight travel expenses for the Executive Director must be approved in advance by the APO Board by detailed motion. In evaluating whether to approve a travel request, the Executive Director or APO Board shall consider a number of factors, including but not limited to:
  - The relevancy of the training;
  - Available funding;
  - The potential value of the training to the APO, given its goals and objectives;
  - The professional development goals of the employee and the value they may provide to the APO;
  - Whether the employee is scheduled to speak, give a presentation, or other help facilitate the event.

- B. No reimbursement will be made for attendance at events sponsored by or affiliated with political parties.
- C. The APO may make payments in advance for airfare, lodging, and registration for pre-approved travel. Otherwise payments will be made as reimbursements to the employee(s).
- D. Mileage will be reimbursed at the GSA rate for all auto travel. If two or more employees travel together by car, only the owner of the car will receive reimbursement. The APO will reimburse the cost of renting an automobile if necessary to conduct APO business. Employees are encouraged to use public transportation, hotel shuttles, and other low-cost means of travel where available and reasonable in lieu of car rentals.
- E. Meals will be reimbursed at the current GSA rate for meals and incidental expenses at the location of the event. Any costs in excess of the GSA reimbursement rate are the responsibility of the employee.
- F. The employee(s) must use the most cost-efficient mode of travel available taking into consideration reasonable time constraints. Airfare and train fare will be reimbursed at the coach rate.
- G. Receipts are required for lodging, airfare, and meals and should accompany an expense report form. Lodging and meal costs are limited to those which are reasonable and necessary. The expense report form must be submitted to the Executive Director for payment.
- H. The APO will not reimburse for alcoholic beverages, personal telephone calls, costs associated with the attendance of family members, rental of luxury vehicles, meal expenses included in the cost of registration, or recreational expenses, including but not limited to activities such as golf or tennis.
- I. Limitations may be imposed on paying for expenses for an employee who has announced their intention to resign or retire, because the benefit of travel to the APO will be limited.
- J. The organization may request an oral or written report from the employee on the results of the trip.

## 18. PERFORMANCE AND DISCIPLINE

The Executive Director shall evaluate each employee's proficiency and performance no less than annually (see Proficiency and Performance Review Forms in Appendix B). The proficiency and performance of the Executive Director shall be evaluated by the Officers of the APO Board at their discretion but shall occur no less than annually.

A performance bonus is a one-time award given to those employees who have demonstrated exceptional performance in the preceding year as documented in the employee's proficiency and performance evaluation. The awarding of performance bonuses is subject to the availability of funds. Performance bonuses do not change the employee's salary or wages. Performance bonuses shall be paid to the employee within two pay periods following the completion of the employee's proficiency and performance evaluation.

Proficiency and performance of employees is evaluated on a ten (10) point scale. Performance bonuses are awarded based on the degree to which an employee has exceeded "Satisfactory" performance.



Overall Performance Rating	Performance Bonus
6	0.75% of Annual Salary
7	1.25% of Annual Salary
8	1.75% of Annual Salary
9	2.25% of Annual Salary
10	2.75% of Annual Salary

### A. Other Incentive Programs

The Executive Director, from time-to-time, may also implement other programs to incentivize performance excellence from APO employees.

### B. Employee Code of Ethics

Every employee appointed to a full-time, part-time, or temporary position with the APO shall adhere to the Code of Ethics.

Employees of the APO are public employees. They are bound by basic moral and ethical principles inherent in any position of public trust. Their conduct shall exemplify the highest standards of professional ethics in the APO's relationship to the public, the constituent governments of the APO, and all agencies and officials of local, state, and federal governments. To ensure adherence to these standards, the following code of ethics is established:

Staff shall -

- i. Endeavor to assure that the affairs of the APO are open to the public to the maximum extent encouraged and permitted by law and by duly adopted regulations of the APO and the constituent governments of the APO.
- ii. Be responsible in carrying out their duties for treating all persons fairly.
- iii. Engage in no occupation or trade that will detract from the faithful performance of his or her duties for the APO.
- iv. Not use their positions to influence public or private decisions from which they or their immediate family would gain personally, and fully disclose in advance to the APO Board any private or personal interest that may be affected by decisions of the governing body.
- v. Not engage in any activities that may prejudice or discredit the performance of the APO.
- vi. Not use their position to influence political activities except as provided in State and Federal law.
- vii. Endeavor to increase their knowledge and skills in their profession.
- viii. Endeavor to facilitate constant and close communication with the APO and the constituent governments of the APO.
- ix. Recognize the primacy of the APO Board in determining policies. They shall provide the APO Board with facts and advice on matters of policy as a basis for making decisions and setting goals and shall uphold and foster implementation of policies adopted by the APO.
- x. Act with integrity and openness in their relationships with policy officials, the public, and with other staff members.

Violation of this Code of Ethics shall result in disciplinary action up to and including the possibility of termination.

### C. Conflict of Interest Policy

A conflict of interest arises when an employee or any member of his or her immediate family has one or more financial interests that could influence or interfere with, or give the impression of influencing or interfering with, that employee's ability to perform their official duties. A conflict of interest also arises when there is a situation which may result in inappropriate financial gain by the employee or their immediate family. Both situations damage the credibility of the APO. Therefore, no employee shall take any official action directly or indirectly affecting:

- i. A business or other undertaking in which the employee has a financial interest; or
- ii. A private undertaking in which the staff member is engaged as an employee, counsel, advisor, consultant, or representative.

No employee shall acquire financial interests in any business or other undertaking which the staff member has reason to believe may be directly or indirectly involved in official action to be taken by the employee.

No employee shall assist any person or business or act in a representative capacity for an entity other than the APO before any Federal, State, or county agency for contingent compensation.

No employee shall disclose information or use information for personal gain which is not available to the public and which the employee acquired in the course of their official duties.

No employee shall use or attempt to use their official position to secure or grant unwarranted privileges, exemptions, advantages, contracts, or treatment for themselves or others, including, but not limited to:

- i. Seeking employment outside of the APO or contract for services for themselves or others by the use or attempted use of the employee's position at the APO;
- ii. Accepting, receiving, or soliciting compensation or other consideration outside of the APO for the performance of the employee's official duties or responsibilities;
- iii. Using work time, equipment, or other APO resources for personal or private business purposes;
- iv. Soliciting, selling, or otherwise engaging in a substantial financial transaction with a subordinate or a person or business who the employee supervises or managed in their official capacity.

If an employee fails to comply with this policy, disciplinary action may be taken, up to and including termination, and any other action permitted by law.

### D. The Federal Hatch Act

While the APO recognizes the rights of employees to exercise their first amendment rights, APO employees are primarily compensated by Federal funds and so are subject to the restrictions of the Hatch Act, as amended, which include:

- i. Abstaining from using their positions to coerce political campaign contributions or political support for any candidate running for public office;
- ii. Abstaining from playing an active part in any political campaign;

- iii. Abstaining from membership in any political organization which advocates the overthrow of our constitutional form of government;
- iv. Abstaining from running for public office.

## E. Communication Systems

The APO utilizes the internet, email, social media, apps, voicemail, telephone, computers and other communication methods (hereafter called “communication systems”) as a means to facilitate the increased efficiency and productivity of the organization. Therefore, the safety and security of the communications systems are of the utmost importance. All employees of the APO are to be familiar with the following issues and adhere to the directives contained herein.

The APO encourages the use of the communication systems because they make communication more efficient and effective. However, these communication systems are the property of the APO, and they are to be used primarily to facilitate APO business. No user should have any expectation of privacy when using APO owned communication systems. Even voice mail or email messages deleted or erased by the employee may not be permanently deleted from the APO’s systems, and the APO retains the right to access them for so long as the information may be obtained from any source. Every employee has a responsibility to maintain and enhance the APO’s public image and to use the APO’s communication systems in a productive manner. The APO has established the following guidelines for using the communication systems. Any unauthorized or improper use of the communication systems is not acceptable and will not be permitted. All other personnel policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines regarding ethical behavior apply to the use of the APO’s communication systems.

The APO’s communication systems may not be used for transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communications of a discriminatory or harassing nature or materials that are lewd, obscene, or pornographic. The APO’s harassment policy (see Section 7) applies in full to communication systems. Harassment of any kind that uses the APO’s communication systems is prohibited. No messages with derogatory or inflammatory remarks about an individual’s race, age, disability, religion, national origin, physical attributes, or sexual orientation may be transmitted or forwarded using the APO’s communication systems. Jokes and chain letters should not be forwarded. Communications that speak poorly of the APO or any other person or group should be avoided. Employees do not have a personal privacy right regarding any matter created, received, stored, or sent from or on the APO’s communication systems.

The APO’s communication systems also may not be used for any other purpose that is illegal, against, APO policy, or contrary to the APO’s best interests. Solicitation of non-APO business, commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations or any use of the APO’s communications systems for personal gain is prohibited. No employee may use the APO’s internet resources to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse, or trap-door code.

Each employee is responsible for the content of all text, audio, or visual image that he or she places on or sends over the APO’s communication systems. Employees may not hide their identities or represent that any email or other electronic communications were sent from someone else or someone from another agency/company. Employees must include their name on all messages communicated on the APO’s communication systems.

Any messages or information sent by the employee to another individual outside the APO via the APO's communication systems (including bulletin boards, online services, or internet sites) are statements that reflect on the APO. Despite personal "disclaimers" that may be included in electronic messages, any statements may be tied to the APO. Messages transmitted by communication systems should be courteous, professional, and business-like.

All communications sent by employees via the APO's communication systems must comply with all APO policies and may not disclose any confidential information.

If employees receive unsolicited email or voice mail from outside the APO that appears to violate this policy, the employee should notify the Executive Director immediately. Similarly, if any employee accidentally accesses an inappropriate website in the normal course of business, the employee should notify the Executive Director immediately.

To prevent the downloading of computer viruses that could contaminate the email or internet systems, no employee may download software from the internet without prior authorization from the Executive Director. Any and all software that is downloaded from the internet must be registered to the APO.

Copyrighted and trademarked material that does not belong to the APO may not be transmitted by employees on the APO's communication systems without permission from the holder of the copyright or trademark. Every employee who obtains access to other companies' or individuals' materials must respect all copyrights and trademarks and may not copy, retrieve, modify, or forward copyrighted materials, except with permission or as a single copy for reference only.

The APO reserves the right to routinely monitor and may conduct random checks of the system to determine how employees use the communication systems. All messages created, sent, or received over the APO's communication systems are the property of the APO and should not be considered private information. The APO reserves the right to access and monitor every message and file on the APO's communications systems. Despite the existence of any passwords, employees should not assume that any electronic communication is private. The distribution of electronic communications is difficult to control and routing mistakes can easily occur. Copies of electronic communications can be forwarded without the sender's knowledge or permission to unintended recipients. Therefore, electronic communications should be drafted and sent with at least the same level of care, professional judgement, and discretion as paper memoranda or documents. Highly confidential information or data should be transmitted in other ways.

Any employee who violates these rules or otherwise abuses the privilege of the APO's communication systems will be subjected to corrective action up to and including termination. If necessary, the APO also reserves the right to advise appropriate officials of any illegal activities.

## F. Outside Employment

The APO respects the right of employees to do as they wish outside working hours. However, the APO has the right to insist that activities outside working hours do not interfere with job performance. To the extent the law allows, as a condition of employment, the APO reserves the right to review any outside employment activities and require termination of any outside employment activities that may conflict with APO

employment activities or reflect unfavorably on the APO. The APO further has the right to require employees engaged in outside employment activities to furnish the APO a copy of worker's compensation insurance to provide coverage while he or she is engaged in outside employment activities.

### G. Disciplinary Action

The APO desires to develop and administer policies and procedures and disciplinary measures in a fair and consistent manner. The APO further recognizes the obligation of all employees to conform to rules that are applicable to their assignment.

Each employee shall be furnished with a copy of all evaluative and disciplinary entries into their personnel record and shall be entitled to have the employee's written response included therein if submitted in a timely fashion.

For disciplinary purposes, Just Cause relates to and affects the manner in which the employee performs his or her duties. The cause in question may occur on or off duty. The evidence showing the existence of reasons for disciplinary action must be substantial. These policies are not exhaustive and do not address all Just Cause circumstances within which discipline may be appropriate. Other actions not described herein which tend to lower discipline or morale within the APO or that adversely affect the rendering of prompt, courteous, and efficient service by the APO and its employees to the public or for any other reason shall be addressed by the Executive Director and/or APO Board on a case-by-case basis.

Initial minor infractions, irregularities, or deficiencies, as may be defined by the Executive Director, shall first be privately brought to the attention of the employee and, if corrected, shall not be entered into the employee's personnel record. If the Executive Director and/or APO Board have reason to reprimand an employee, it shall be done in a manner that shall not embarrass the employee before other employees or the public.

Disciplinary action or measures that are considered shall include but are not limited to the following:

- Oral Warning
- Written Warning
- Paid/Unpaid Suspension
- Termination

An employee who has been notified that they are being investigated for possible disciplinary action shall be informed, in writing, of the status of the investigation upon its conclusion.

Employees may receive an informal oral warning to help them correct an issue. Depending upon the severity of the issue, the Executive Director or the employee's immediate supervisor may keep a written record of the oral warning in their own files and provide a copy to the worker to document the discussion, but doing so is not mandatory. Documenting an oral warning can provide a paper trail in the event the worker fails to correct the problem.

A written warning is a formal statement to the employee which describes the offense, refers to any previous oral or written warnings, states desired goals or outcomes of this

action, and then outlines subsequent disciplinary action should the problem continue. All written warnings shall become part of the employee's personnel record.

The Executive Director and/or APO Board may place an employee on suspension without pay for Just Cause for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days. This action does not require the employee's consent. Prior to the suspension, or as soon after the suspension as possible, the employee shall receive a written statement indicating the length and terms of the suspension, reasons for the suspension, and the desired performance and consequences if not corrected. The employee's position shall be held open pending the employee's return to work upon expiration of the suspension.

The employee does not accrue salary or paid time off during the time of suspension, nor can they use paid time off while on suspension. At the end of the suspension, the employee shall be returned to the payroll at the same classification and salary as when they were suspended. Documentation regarding any wage garnishment action against the employee shall not be placed in the employee's personnel file.

The Executive Director and/or APO Board may also place an employee who is the subject of disciplinary investigation on paid administrative leave/paid suspension provided a reasonable basis exists to warrant such a leave. An employee on paid administrative leave/paid suspension shall continue to receive APO paid insurance benefits. If, as a result of the investigation, discipline is imposed on the employee, they may be required to reimburse the APO for the pay provided while on leave. Documentation regarding the investigation shall be maintained in accordance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act, as amended.

If the Executive Director and/or APO Board feels there is Just Cause for termination of an employee, the employee shall be notified, in writing, that they are discharged and shall be furnished with the reason(s) therefore and the effective date of the discharge. The employee may request an opportunity to hear an explanation of the evidence against them, and to present their side of the story at a pre-termination hearing. The right to such a meeting shall expire at the end of the scheduled workday of the employee after notice of discharge is delivered to the employee unless the employee and APO Board agree otherwise. The discharge shall not become effective during the period when the meeting may occur. The employee shall remain in pay status during the time between the notice of discharge and the expiration of the meeting. In no event shall a pre-termination hearing be scheduled later than five (5) business days after delivery of the notice of termination to the employee. However, if the employee was not in pay status at the time of the notice of discharge, the requirement to be in pay status shall not apply.

Termination of the Executive Director shall require action of the APO Board.

Any disciplinary action resulting in the intent to discharge a veteran must adhere to Minnesota Statute 197.455 Veteran's Preference Act, as amended. In essence, any veteran who has been notified of the intent to discharge themselves from their appointed position shall be notified in writing of 1) such intent, and 2) the veteran's right to request a hearing within sixty (60) days. A veteran cannot be removed from a position except for incompetence or misconduct shown after a hearing, upon due notice, upon stated charges, in writing. Failure of the veteran to request a hearing within the sixty (60) day period shall constitute a waiver of the right to a hearing. A request for a

hearing must be made in writing and mailed or personally submitted to the Executive Director and/or APO Board Chair. The Civil Service Board shall serve as the veteran's hearing board; appeals of the decision of the Board may be made to district court.

## H. Grievances

All APO employees shall work together in good faith to overcome barriers and achieve mutually identified goals. It is expected that in an atmosphere of trust, communication, and fairness issues can be addressed among staff so as to avoid conflicts and the filing of grievances.

A grievance is a dispute or disagreement raised by an employee or group of employees against the APO or its Executive Director because of an interpretation or alleged violation of the Personnel Policies contained within this document. The APO shall handle all grievances promptly and fairly. The grievance procedure shall be as follows:

- i. An employee shall present a grievance in writing to the Executive Director and/or APO Board Chair within five (5) working days after the event. The grievance notice shall contain:
  - The nature of the grievance;
  - The underlying facts, including the date of the grievable event;
  - The provision(s) of the Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies allegedly violated; and
  - The remedy requested by the grievant.
- ii. The Executive Director and/or APO Board Chair shall investigate the grievance, discuss the grievance with the employee and give the employee a written response within five (5) days of receipt of the grievance, wherever practicable. If the Executive Director and/or APO Board Chair require a time extension, the employee shall be given a date certain by which a response will be given.
- iii. A grievance not resolved by the first two (2) steps above may be appealed in writing to the APO Board. The employee shall give the Executive Director and/or Board Chair a copy of the grievance notice sent to the APO Board within ten (10) working days of receiving the grievance response from the first two steps (above). Upon receiving the request from an employee, the APO Board will hear the grievance at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The APO Board will make a written determination regarding the grievance within fifteen (15) working days.

The following are not grievable:

- Performance evaluations;
- Pay increases or lack thereof.

If a grievance is not presented in a timely manner as outlined above, it is waived.

## I. Personnel Files

The contents of an employee's personnel file shall be disclosed to the employee upon request, within a reasonable period of time. The file shall not be removed from the office by the employee. Former employees may review their file following separation by making an appointment with the Executive Director. In the event a grievance is initiated, the Executive Director shall provide a copy of any items from the employee's personnel file upon the request of the employee.

Upon the employee's request for consideration, the following documentation may be removed from the employee's personnel file upon the recommendation and/or approval of the Executive Director.

- i. A written reprimand provided that no further disciplinary action was taken against the employee;
- ii. A written record of a suspension provided that no further disciplinary action was taken against the employee;
- iii. A written requirement to provide a medical statement (and any such statements) due to suspected ESSL abuse.

A written request to remove a document from a personnel file under this section shall be made to the Executive Director for approval. The request shall not be placed in the file. If the requested removal is not approved, the employee may submit a written statement to the APO Board Chair explaining their positions on the disputed information, a copy of which shall be placed in the file.

## APPENDIX A

# EMPLOYEE CERTIFICATION FORM

# Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies

## Employee Certification

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By signing below, the employee hereby certifies:

1. That they have read and understand the Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies outlining the Saint Cloud APO's policies, rules, and general information;
2. That their employment with the Saint Cloud APO is at will and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the APO for any lawful reason;
3. That the Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies is not an expressed or implied contract of employment, but, rather, is an overview of working policies and benefits;
4. That neither the employee's employment nor the term and conditions are guaranteed to continue for any period of time;
5. That the Saint Cloud APO reserves the right to make changes to these policies and procedures at any time, with or without notice, and to interpret these policies and procedures at its discretion;
6. That they have been notified that it is unlawful to manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use a controlled substance in the workplace, and have been notified that action will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibition;
7. That they will abide by the terms of the drug-free workplace statement above, and will notify the APO in writing of his or her conviction for a violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five (5) calendar days after such conviction;
8. That they will abide by the terms and conditions of the APO's Non-Harassment and Non-Violence policy as described in Section 7 of this document.
9. That they will abide by the terms and conditions of the APO's performance standards as described in Section 18 of this document, including the Employee Code of Ethics, the Conflict of Interest Policy, the Federal Hatch Act, and the proper use of the APO's Communications System.

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Employee's Signature

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Date



## APPENDIX B

# APO EMPLOYEE PROFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM

## APO EMPLOYEE PROFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Please Print or Type

Employee Name

Title

Reviewer

Date of Review

Using the definitions of work performance below, rate the performance of the individual relative to the attached factors. Select the number which best indicates your perception of that individual's performance on each of the criterion and enter it in the box provided. Then enter a composite number indicating an overall observation for the factor. Your composite should not necessarily reflect an average of the criteria rating since some criterion are more important than others.

OBSERVATION SCALE				
Unsatisfactory	Development Needed	Successful	Exceeds Expectations	Outstanding
1, 2	3, 4	5, 6	7, 8	9, 10

**OUTSTANDING:** This rating is earned by performance that dependably exceeds performance standards and job requirements. Individuals earning this rating have exceptional technical, professional and leadership skills. Their quantity, quality and timeliness of work are clearly and consistently far above standards/expectations. A (9) rating is earned by exceeding standards 50% - 74% of the time, while a (10) is earned by consistently exceeding standards 75% - 100% of the time.

**EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS:** This rating is earned by an individual who is fully competent, and whose quantity, quality and timeliness of work occasionally or often exceeds expectations and job requirements. This level of performance is considered good and valuable. A (7) rating applies to a performance that exceeds expectations 10% - 24% of the time, and an (8) applies to performance that exceeds expectations 25% - 49% of the time.

**SUCCESSFUL:** This rating is earned by an individual who is fully competent and whose quantity, quality, and timeliness of work consistently meets minimum expectations. This represents the expected minimum level of performance. A (5) rating is earned by consistently meeting standards but never or almost never exceeding them, while a (6) rating is earned by consistently meeting standards and rarely or inconsistently exceeding them.

**DEVELOPMENT NEEDED:** This rating is earned by performance that does not consistently meet all expectations and job requirements by an individual who may need additional training, experience, or guidance in a particular area. The quantity, quality and timeliness of work does not meet minimum expectations, but it is not considered unsatisfactory. A (3) rating reflects a consistently sub-standard performance, while a (4) rating means that the employee occasionally or inconsistently meets minimum expectations, but additional effort is needed to become fully competent and successful.

**UNSATISFACTORY:** This rating reflects a need for immediate performance improvement by an individual whose performance is harmful or potentially harmful to the organization. A (1) rating reflects performance that is unacceptable and which must show improvement within a short period of time, while a (2) rating reflects unsatisfactory performance that nevertheless demonstrates improvement or which may inconsistently achieve merely "sub-standard" levels of quality, quantity, or timeliness.



Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies – Approved XXXX, 2026

### **FACTOR A: TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE:**

*Performance Criteria:*

	Possesses required technical and professional knowledge to perform assigned duties.
	Possesses relevant experience and skill expertise to perform assigned duties.
	Applies knowledge and skill experience to perform assigned duties.
	Keeps up to date in relevant knowledge and skills to perform assigned duties.
	Able to work independently and dependably meets deadlines without prompting or reminding.
	Able to break complex objectives into component steps and can organize and schedule completion of those steps in support of the overall objective.
	Thinks critically, assesses risks and rewards, and uses sound judgement in the development of tasks and assigned duties.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

### **FACTOR B: UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

*Performance Criteria:*

	Understands the structure and mission of the organization.
	Understands the inter-relationships between local, state, and federal entities.
	Understands the rules, regulations, and requirements of transportation planning, programming and implementation.
	Understands the roles and authorities of the organization's committees, sub-committees, boards and staff members.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

### **FACTOR C: INTERACTION & COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC & OUTSIDE ENTITIES:**

*Performance Criteria:*

	Advocates open interaction and communication with the public and outside entities.
	Verbal and written communications with outside sources are effective.
	Policies and positions of the organization are accurately communicated to the public.
	Personal contact with the public demonstrates efficiency, competency, and courtesy.
	Listens and understands the positions and circumstances of others and communicates that understanding thoroughly.
	Is open and available to the public; recognizes the public's need and right to be informed.
	Promotes information sharing and dialog on issues with outside entities.
	Provides timely responses to verbal and written communications.
	Effectively engages the media relative to organization policies and issues.
	Acts with integrity and openness towards all persons.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

**FACTOR D: INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION:***Performance Criteria:*

	Endeavors to foster and facilitate constant and close communications with constituent governments of the organization.
	Values the input and expertise of others.
	Listens attentively to the views of others.
	Verbal and written communications are clear, concise and timely.
	Communicates effectively in highly visible and/or adversarial situations.
	Understands what information is necessary for making informed decisions and provides the information.
	Openly shares problems and issues.
	Communicates with all persons equally and fairly.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

**FACTOR E: ADMINISTRATION, ORGANIZATION, PROCESSES, AND LEADERSHIP:***Performance Criteria:*

	Develops realistic project schedules based on needs and resources of the organization.
	Manages projects within or below its approved budget/allocation of resources.
	Accurately and consistently reports the status of projects.
	Obtains the best value possible for the available resources expended.
	Uses standard operating procedures effectively.
	Knows how to get the work done and does it.
	Provides leadership and expert advice to the organization.
	Upholds and fosters implementation of policies adopted by the organization.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies – Approved XXXX, 2026

### **FACTOR F: GENERAL COMPETENCIES:**

*Performance Criteria:*

	Exercises sound judgement and creativity to overcome obstacles and solve problems.
	Identifies and resolves issues before they become a crisis.
	Supports, develops, and implements new or different approaches to improve performance.
	Reacts quickly to assignments and anticipates needs relevant to those assignments.
	Asks appropriate questions.
	Sets high standards for self and others.
	Is trustworthy, reliable, and responsible.
	Promotes the organizations values, goals, and accomplishments.
	Respects and accepts guidance from the organization, including constructive criticism.
	Demonstrates tact and diplomacy; provides constructive feedback and input.
	Provides objective and thorough analysis of issues.
	Knows which issues are worth pursuing.
	Avoids activities which may prejudice or discredit the organization.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

### **FACTORS G: MANAGEMENT OF SUBORDINATE PERSONNEL (*Supervisors Only*):**

*Performance Criteria:*

	Subordinate(s) receive proper orientation, on-the-job training, and continuing feedback on performance.
	Policies, procedures, and work rules are communicated to subordinate personnel and monitored to see that they are followed.
	Is consistently fair, open, and impartial in dealing with all personnel.
	Provides subordinates reasonable opportunities to develop and improve their knowledge and abilities.
	Listens attentively to different perspectives.
	Inspires others to achieve higher levels of performance.
	Uses authority fairly.
	Recognizes and rewards good performance.
	Allows subordinates to assume leadership and responsibility for assignments.
	Sets example for high performance.
	Facilitates a trusting and productive work environment.
	<b>OVERALL OBSERVATION FOR THE FACTOR</b>

**OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING:**

Based on your ratings of the individual performance factors, but not necessarily an average of the factors since some are more important than others, select the level and the rating which best describes the employee's overall performance and enter it in the table provided:

FACTORS		OVERALL OBSERVATION
<b>A</b>	<b>TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORGANIZATION</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>INTERACTION &amp; COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC &amp; OUTSIDE ENTITIES</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION</b>	
<b>E</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATION, ORGANIZATION, PROCESSES, AND LEADERSHIP</b>	
<b>F</b>	<b>GENERAL COMPETENCIES</b>	
<b>G</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT OF SUBORDINATE PERSONNEL (<i>Supervisors Only</i>)</b>	
<b>OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING</b>		

Notes or Overall Comments of Reviewer:

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**REVIEWER'S SIGNATURE:**

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments of Employee:

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**EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE:**

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature indicates only that appraisal has been reviewed with employee, but does not necessarily indicate agreement.)



**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN:**

No matter at what level an individual is performing, improvement is always possible. This performance improvement plan (PIP) is intended to assist staff members in achieving their best possible performance, and does not necessarily indicate that a performance problem currently exists. This PIP should be completed jointly between the staff member and their supervisor, and should be reviewed at the staff member's next performance appraisal.

<b>Factor for Improvement:</b>			

## APPENDIX C

# APO EMPLOYEE TRAVEL REQUEST FORM

Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies – Approved XXXX, 2026

## Saint Cloud APO Employee Travel Request Form

(Please Print)

Employee Requesting Travel Permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Absent from Work for Travel: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Destination:  
\_\_\_\_\_Reason for Request: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cost Estimate:

Cost Item	Notes	Total Estimated Cost
Registration		
Travel		
Hotel		
Meals		
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$</b>

Approved: Denied: \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



1040 County Road 4, Saint Cloud, MN 56303-0643

*T. 320.252.7568 F. 320.252.6557*

**TO:** Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board  
**FROM:** Brian Gibson, Executive Director  
**RE:** Consider Changing APO Lobbyist  
**DATE:** December 2, 2025

Based on APO records, our lobbyist in Washington, DC has been David Turch & Associates since January 2001.

The only contract I was able to find in our archives was dated 3 January 2001. That contract was set to expire on 31 December 2001, with an option to renew for three consecutive years. Thereafter (31 December 2004), the contract was not to be renewed. So, it appears we are currently outside of a contract.

That initial contract was for \$36,000 per year. We currently pay \$48,000 per year. That's an effective annual inflation rate of 1.2%. We have budgeted for lobbying services for 2026 at that \$48,000 level and the APO member jurisdictions all have their budgets for 2026 already set.

**Suggested Action:** Approve an APO Consultant for 2026



1040 County Road 4, Saint Cloud, MN 56303-0643

*T. 320.252.7568 F. 320.252.6557*

**TO:** Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board  
**FROM:** Brian Gibson, Executive Director  
**RE:** Consider Regionalizing Lobbyist Efforts  
**DATE:** December 2, 2025

The APO engages a lobbyist to help us educate lawmakers regarding our regional transportation priorities and to help secure funding for transportation projects.

However, the member jurisdictions of the APO have needs beyond just transportation. And there may be efficiencies and benefits to working collectively to promote the needs of the entire region rather than working individually.

To that end, it may be possible to structure a contract with the APO lobbyist such that:

1. They act as the APO's lobbyist for the purposes stated above, and
2. Individual jurisdictions, at their discretion, could buy into "enhanced services" to cover any and all issues beyond surface transportation needs.

Participation in the second part of the contract would be voluntary for each jurisdiction and may change over time. But by having a regional lobbyist already under contract, the APO would be saving the jurisdiction the effort of finding and contracting with a lobbyist. Additionally, the entire region may receive more attention and more lobbyist services by collectively lobbying for our needs.

**Suggested Action:** No Staff Recommendation