

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2013-2014 Performance Report

Merit Protection Commission

Agency Mission

The Merit Protection Commission is an independent Quasi-judicial agency established to protect the integrity of the state's merit system, utilized by state agencies and their employees. The Commission was created in 1982 by the Oklahoma Personnel Act. The Commission and the division of OMES, formerly known as the Office of Personnel Management, act independently.

Our goals and objectives reflect how our mission is carried out. A brief summary of some of Merit Protection's primary responsibilities are provided below:

- 1) Investigate allegations of abuse in the employment practices of the Administrator(s) of state agencies.
- 2) Investigate allegations of violations of the provisions of the Oklahoma Personnel Act within its jurisdiction.
- 3) Receive and act on complaints, counsel persons and groups on their rights and duties; and take action designed to obtain voluntary compliance with the provisions of the Oklahoma Personnel Act.
- 4) Establish and maintain a statewide Alternative Dispute Resolution program to provide dispute resolution services for state agencies and employees. Actions agreed upon through the Alternative Dispute Resolution program provided by the Commission shall be consistent with applicable laws.
- 5) Establish rules, pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act, as may be necessary to perform the duties and functions of the Commission. That includes rules to monitor the state's agency grievance process, to ensure full compliance with the law.
- 6) In addition to its original functions, this agency is now responsible for providing training on the grievance process, the appeals process, the steps of Progressive Discipline in state employment, and training for its administrative law judges. Agency functions include a component designed to assist agencies in voluntarily complying with the Oklahoma Personnel Act.

Executive Director

Susan Bussey
3545 NW 58th, Ste. 360
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112
405.525.9144

Governance:

The Director is appointed by the Commission. There are nine members of the Commission. The Speaker of the House appoints two members. The President Pro Tempore appoints two members. Five members of the Commission are appointed by the Governor. No more than four appointments of the Governor are from the same political party. Members of the Commission serve staggered terms.

Modernization:

The Merit Protection Commission outsourced IT and accounting functions. The agency recently upgraded its Courtroom technology and upgraded its software. The Commission is appreciative of the assistance we received from the State Chief Information Officer, in achieving this objective. With the upgrades, the agency hopes to expand the use of our courtroom technology to offer training to state employees.

Core Mission:

The agency is not required to provide any services outside of our core mission. We hope to restore funding levels this year to maintain critical staffing levels within our agency in order to carry out our core mission.

Goals Achieve this year:

During the 2012 fiscal year, 277 cases were closed. Eight training sessions were conducted in the following areas: progressive discipline, investigations, and grievances. Ten trainings sessions were conducted in 2011 when our staffing level was higher by one FTE.

Goals for the upcoming year:

In FY 2014, as part of our ongoing commitment to development, the Commission will focus on developing webcast trainings. Webcasting technology is the newest trend outreach for professional development. The instructors present the material by capturing courses, training and events, that are accessed through our online video library. The Courses will be offered to employees of the State of Oklahoma. The education, networking, and creative opportunities to connect with others are unlimited. Colleges and universities use this system to stream Executive communications and online training. Like websites, webcasting is a major component in overall communication and service strategy. Our goal is to provide online learning that can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We will offer courses in Progressive Discipline, grievances and Appeals. Attendees will be able to make time for e-learning and prepare for a self-paced course. MPC can also utilize this system for other employee and agency services such as Mediation. The benefits of webcasting or an e-learning program will provide:

- 1) Increase opportunity for outreach and scope of services delivered
- 2) Increase the number of learning opportunities for all employees, especially those in rural areas of the state
- 3) Reduce training costs and travel fees
- 4) Increase the likelihood of participation

5) Trainings will be offered to more employees.

Savings and Efficiencies achieved:

With respect to savings, Efficiencies and shared services, it is very difficult to estimate a dollar figure. We outsourced our IT services before the big push to consolidate that began a couple of years ago. We outsourced our IT in 2008.

We outsourced our accounting function six months ago. It is really difficult to estimate the savings at this juncture. We know we have saved the benefits costs of one full time FTE. But, our goal is to increase our FTEs, so that we can operate at a minimum staffing level of Six FTEs. If we are successful in achieving this objective, we will likely fill one position with a liaison who will work full time with accounting and payroll Apparently this is what other larger agencies have been doing.