

# State of Vermont



## Appointed and Elected Officials Handbook

Published by the Agency of Administration, Department of Human Resources  
120 State Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Montpelier, Vermont 05620

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# 1 Vermont State Government

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## The State's Organizational Structure

The Vermont State Government, like the federal government, is divided into three distinct branches. The legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch carries out the laws, and the judicial branch interprets the laws.

## The Executive Branch

The Governor functions as the chief executive officer overseeing the administrative Agencies, Departments, Boards, and Commissions. Other elected officials of the executive branch include the [Lieutenant Governor](#), [Secretary of State](#), [State Treasurer](#), [Auditor of Accounts](#), and [Attorney General](#). Each official is elected to office for a term of two years.

Administrative organizations under the Governor are headed by appointed employees, mainly Secretaries and Commissioners, whose appointments are subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Many agencies and departments also have appointed Deputies. To learn more about each of the agencies in the Executive Branch, visit [The Administration Page](#) where you will find an overview of each agency and department including their functions, key contact information and locations of statewide offices.

## The Judicial Branch

The courts and judges make up the [Judicial Branch](#) – the Supreme Court, Superior Court, and such other courts as may be provided by law. The Supreme Court consists of one chief justice and four associate justices, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature for six-year terms.





## The Legislative Branch

The [Vermont Legislature](#) (General Assembly) is bicameral - the Senate and the House of Representatives. The one hundred-fifty members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years. Each represents approximately 3,500 citizens. The thirty senators are also elected every two years from 16 single and multi-member senate districts. The districts largely correspond to the boundaries of the state's 14 counties with adjustments so that each senator represents an approximately equal number of residents (17,000-18,000).

The General Assembly enacts and may also repeal laws. The legislative session begins on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in January.

## Legislative Process

An idea for a [bill](#) may come from any number of sources: a legislator, the Governor, an executive agency, a citizen or group, municipal officials, or businesses. A bill can be written by anyone, although all bills are given by a Legislator to the Legislative Council, whose staff then write the proposal. Bills must be sponsored by a member of the General Assembly in order to be submitted and considered.

Bills may originate in either house (with one exception: all revenue bills must originate in the House of Representatives). After being introduced, or read for the first time, a bill is assigned to a committee in the house where it was introduced.

The permanent committees are called standing committees. Standing committees may hold public hearings or committee hearings, at which interested individuals and representatives of groups and businesses express their opinions on a bill. Following testimony and discussion, the committee will evaluate, often amend, and make recommendations on the bill. Sometimes special committees are formed to consider a particular topic.

A committee may then vote a bill out favorably, unfavorably or without any recommendation, or table the bill, which kills it in committee. A bill may go through this process in one or more committees before being read the second time on the floor of the house in which it originated. After

going through the committee process the bill is sent to the floor. If it passes "second reading," a floor debate may occur. If the vote is favorable, the bill will be read again the next day (third reading) - the last vote in this stage of the process.

If the bill passes in the house where it was introduced, it goes to the other chamber to begin the same process over again. When a bill has passed both the House and Senate, but in different versions because of amendments, the two chambers try to agree on a single version by appointing a conference committee, with three members from each house.

A majority of the members of each house constitutes a quorum (except that at least two-thirds of the members of the house must be present for a vote on a tax bill). Measures are passed by a majority of those present and voting.

Bills may be amended in first one and then the other house. All bills must pass through both houses before being sent to the Governor for action.

The Governor can sign the bill into law or veto it. A two-thirds majority in both houses is required to override a veto. When the Governor signs a bill, it becomes law. A bill can also become law if the Governor does not return it to the General Assembly within five days (Sundays excepted). If, however, the General Assembly adjourns within three days of the presentation of the bill, preventing the return of the bill, it shall not become law without the Governor's signature.

In an average two-year session, or biennium, about 1,000 bills are introduced. Generally, about a third of those pass and are signed into law.

The Vermont Legislature's home page includes on-line access to all of the [Vermont Statutes](#).

All reports to the Legislature, whether required or not must be submitted electronically via email at: [legislative@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:legislative@leg.state.vt.us) and must include the following information:

- a. Name of agency/department submitting report
- b. Name of report (this goes in email Subject line, too)
- c. Name of submitter
- d. Committees to which you are submitting report
- e. Date
- f. Statutory reference requiring report

## **General Assembly Officials**

The Legislative Council was established in 1965 to provide professional staff to support and assist Legislators. Officially, the Council is composed of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, three senators and three representatives; but the name Legislative Council has now also come to refer to the staff hired by the Council. The staff consists of lawyers, researchers and full-time aides who research and draft bills for legislators.

The Joint Fiscal Office provides staff support on all budgetary and financial matters to the Joint Fiscal Committee of the Legislature. The Sergeant at Arms, appointed by the Legislature, has charge of the State House, including many of the State House employees and pages.

Administrative support and other services to legislators are provided by the Senate Secretary and the House Clerk and their staff.

## Important Roles and Functions in the Executive Branch

### The Agency of Administration

The [Office of the Secretary of Administration](#) is located in the historic Pavilion Building in Montpelier. The Agency of Administration (AoA) is comprised of the Office of the Secretary, Central Office Divisions and Departments that provide administrative and supportive services to all Vermont state government agencies and departments, as well as Vermont taxpayers and citizens. With primary responsibilities related to human resources, revenues, accounting and budget management, physical plant, contracting, general and informational services, the AoA promotes the effective and efficient coordination of state programs and services by responding to changing administrative, policy and fiscal environments, while ensuring transparency and accountability of, and value for, public tax dollars.

As principal administrative aide to the Governor, the Secretary of Administration issues general policy requirements through administrative memoranda and bulletins to implement executive orders and legislative mandates applicable to the Executive Branch of state government. The Secretary convenes and chairs the Governor's Cabinet, coordinates the budget and appropriations testimony to the General Assembly and manages the Agency of Administration. The Secretary also directs the collective bargaining processes on behalf of all State executive agencies and works to promote and enhance staff development and training and the overall well-being of the State's workforce.

### State Treasurer

The office of the [State Treasurer](#) is a service and administrative department with most of its duties prescribed by statute. It is responsible for the management and accounting of the State's cash balances; processing of checks and check reconciliations of payroll and vendor payments; administration and operation of three major pension plans, the deferred compensation plan and defined contribution retirement plan for state employees; management of temporary investment of State funds; issuance of tax-exempt commercial paper for temporary borrowing when necessary, issuing and servicing State bonds authorized by the General Assembly; and administration of the Unclaimed Property Act.

### Secretary of State

The [Secretary of State](#) has a variety of duties under State law. The Office of the Secretary of State includes the Divisions of:



- Professional Regulation
- Elections & Campaign Finance
- Corporations
- State Archives and Records Administration

## **Administrative Rules**

The Secretary of State is responsible for the receipt of official filings and publishing proposed and adopted administrative rules, which may be required by the Executive Branch to facilitate the implementation of laws enacted by the Legislature. Detailed information on the administrative rulemaking process is available on the Secretary of State's website.

## **Public Records and Open Meetings**

The Office of the Secretary of State has various publications about the open meeting and public records laws found at 1 V.S.A. §§ 310 – 320. These resources are available at:

<https://sos.vermont.gov/municipal-division/open-meetings/>.

Under the provisions of Title 1, §316(d), the Secretary of State shall adopt a rule establishing a uniform schedule of public record charges for state agencies. This is available at:

<https://sos.vermont.gov/vsara/manage/information-governance/compliance/uniform-charges-schedule/>.

The Secretary of State also has many other programs and responsibilities, including, but not limited to: the safe at home address confidentiality program, temporary officiants for marriages, a municipal assistance program, and civics education.

## **Attorney General**

The [Attorney General](#) for the State of Vermont is a constitutional officer elected biennially by the citizens of Vermont, and is vested with broad authority and powers to protect the state's citizens and the integrity of their governmental operations. The Attorney General's responsibilities are detailed in 3 V.S.A. Chapter 7.

The Attorney General has the exclusive authority, unless otherwise specified by statute, to represent the State of Vermont or to retain outside counsel for the purpose of representing the State in civil litigation. The Attorney General, as an independently elected official, is responsible for determining the public interest in any State matter subject to litigation.

## **Auditor of Accounts**

The [State Auditor](#) is a constitutional officer, elected biennially by the citizens of Vermont. The mission of the Auditor's Office is to hold state government accountable and to ensure that taxpayer funds are used effectively and efficiently.

The Auditor's principal duties are defined in 32 V.S.A. §§163, 167 and 168, which include (but are not limited to):

- Annually perform or contract for an audit of the State's financial statements (ACFR) (<https://auditor.vermont.gov/reports/audit/financial>).
- Perform or contract for the annual compliance audits as required by the Federal Single Audit Act of 1984 (A-133).
- Conduct discretionary performance audits of every department, institution and agency of the State and certain county officers.
- Conduct audits or reviews as statutorily required by the Legislature.

All audit work is conducted consistent with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

The Auditor's reports are intended to inform all citizens and organizations interested in the State's financial status and operations. They provide objective analysis and recommendations to 1) program managers to help improve service delivery; 2) policy makers to better inform decisions about resource allocation; and 3) the general public, which has a right to know if taxpayer funds are being used effectively. The Office's goals and objectives are to:

- Complete all audits in compliance with government auditing standards.
- Issue audit reports on a timely basis.
- Track the number of recommendations adopted by auditees.
- To the extent possible, identify opportunities for savings and cost recovery.
- Respond promptly to all inquiries, complaints, and whistleblower allegations.



## 2 Working Together

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As a leader in Vermont State Government, one of your most important responsibilities is to help support our efforts as an employer of choice. By cultivating positive employee engagement, morale, and communication, together we will be in the best position to serve each other and Vermonters. Your role as a leader is exceptionally important in creating healthy work environments by modeling your own self-awareness and appreciation of differences in the workplace. You are also in the best position to hold staff accountable for creating a professional atmosphere, thereby promoting the achievement of our goal to provide all employees a healthy, respectful and harassment-free work environment.

### Communication

Effective communication is the cornerstone of a strong organization, and your role is vital in this effort. We use a number of communication methods to keep you informed of State initiatives, policy changes, events, and news. Please take the time to review information you receive, and ensure your staff do as well.

- [HR Connect](#) – A monthly e-newsletter published by the Department of Human Resources for all employees in the state.
- To keep abreast of the state’s progress, visit the [State of Vermont website](#) and the [Office of Governor Phil Scott](#) to view [Press Releases](#) and [Blogs](#).
- Periodic meetings are held for Secretaries, Commissioners, Department Heads, and Directors to update senior management regarding Statewide initiatives, policy changes, and strategic and budgetary information.

### Equal Opportunity Employer

The State of Vermont is an [equal opportunity employer](#) and is committed to offering equal employment opportunities in accordance with state and federal laws. The State prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, place of birth, age, or physical or mental condition (a person with a qualifying disability) in all employment practices and terms or conditions of employment including, but not limited to: recruitment, hiring, promotion, demotion or transfer; layoff or termination; rates of pay and other forms of compensation; selection for training; agency sponsored social and recreational events; and all other terms, privileges, and conditions of employment. Additionally, it is unlawful to retaliate against an employee for filing a complaint of prohibited discrimination, reporting prohibited discrimination, or acting as a witness for a person who has filed a complaint of prohibited discrimination. Every supervisor and manager within the State is responsible for providing a workplace free from discrimination and unlawful harassment.

### Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan

The [State’s EEO Plan](#) is a blueprint to build a strong and diverse workforce by taking advantage of and skills and education of all segments of Vermont’s population. A diverse workforce reflects all

segments of society, incorporates new ideas and a variety of work and leadership styles, and promotes inclusion and support for the work of state government.

The Statewide plan is an umbrella document for the State of Vermont agencies and departments to use in developing their own EEO plans. Appointing authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with the [State's EEO Plan](#), and applicable agency/department EEO Programs. Guidelines and assistance for developing or updating agency specific plans are provided by the Department of Human Resources.



### **Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council**

The [Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council \(GWEDC\)](#) is charged with consulting with and advising the Commissioner of Human Resources and the Secretary of Administration regarding the development, implementation, and maintenance of the EEO Plan for the State of Vermont. The plan is updated annually and is reviewed by the Secretary of Administration and approved by the Governor.

### **Sexual Harassment**

The State is committed to maintaining a workplace free from sexual harassment. We do not accept or condone actions of harassment by management, employees, vendors, or others. Unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, verbal abuse such as offensive racial, ethnic or sexual threats or comments, physical overtures, rude gestures, or any type of pressure to engage in sexual activity.

All employees, including, but not limited to staff, supervisors, managers, and appointing authorities, are expected to [comply with this policy](#), [complete mandatory training](#) and take appropriate measures to ensure that sexual harassment does not occur, and are encouraged to report it when it does.

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

As an employer, the State is responsible for maintaining safe, efficient working conditions for its employees by providing a drug-free workplace.

### 3 Leading in the State of Vermont

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#### Leadership Conduct

As a leader within the State, you must conduct the affairs of your office in such a manner as to **instill public trust and confidence** in the integrity of State government. Further, Appointees have a responsibility to act as examples and demonstrate a civil and respectful tone in the public discourse. Every appointee shall be true and faithful to the State of Vermont; will not, directly or indirectly, do any act or thing injurious to the Constitution or Government of the State of Vermont; will faithfully execute the office which they hold; and will therein do equal right and justice to all men and women, to the best of their judgment and ability, according to law. Furthermore, all exempt employees shall comply with **Executive Code of Ethics**, to effectively ensure fairness and impartiality in the conduct of State business.

In accordance with [Executive Order 04-22, the Executive Code of Ethics](#), every member of a Public Body appointed by or upon the approval of the Governor – including Secretaries, Commissioners and Deputies, or any exempt employee appointed by or upon the approval of a Governor’s Appointee – who earns \$30,000 or more per year, is required to file an "Ethics Questionnaire" at the start of a new biennium or within 30 days of appointment with the Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs by emailing it to [exe.appointments@vermont.gov](mailto:exe.appointments@vermont.gov).

All State employees shall employee comply with the Vermont [State Code of Ethics](#) which includes mandatory code of ethics education and training within the first 120 days of public service. Annually, each Executive officer shall file with the with the State Ethics Commission a disclosure form on or before January 15 or, if they are appointed after January 15, within 10 days of that appointment.

## Building Your Team

In the executive branch, exempt positions are filled by appointment, rather than by the competitive process used for classified service. As the appointing authority, you manage the recruitment and selection process. Exempt positions are removable at-will, subject to the [Fair Notice statute \(32 VSA § 1271\)](#). Pay and benefits of exempt positions are controlled by statute or policy. A Secretary or Commissioner may appoint one deputy, principal or executive assistant, one private secretary and one executive director. Other exempt positions may be authorized by other statutes. A department is generally comprised of divisions, each headed by a director.

## Leadership Expectations

In April 2015, the State began utilizing a strengths-based approach to supervision as the foundation for our supervisory and management training. The training curriculum was developed with three main goals – to attract and retain top talent; increase workplace engagement, satisfaction and performance; and build strong teams while increasing employee morale. [Supervising in State Government](#) is mandatory for all designated supervisors and managers. All levels of leadership, including appointing authorities in the executive branch, are strongly encouraged to attend.

In addition, the State has articulated eight [supervisory competencies](#). These supervisory competencies provide a framework for training, coaching and consulting work that is performed within state government.

As a mechanism for measuring our progress in enhancing employee engagement, the Department of Human Resources conducts an annual Statewide employee engagement survey. This annual survey process allows us to measure how employees feel about their daily work and about the State of Vermont as an employer, and to establish goals for improved engagement. The survey addresses employee engagement in a number of areas including:

- The relationship between job duties and the organization’s mission/goals
- Communication and input
- Relationships and morale within the organization
- The employee’s relationship with supervisor
- The impact of workload, staffing and resources
- Compensation and benefits
- Management and senior leadership communication and staff opportunities to provide feedback

Research on employee engagement shows that leaders play the most significant role in building engagement. Therefore, we encourage you to partner with your management team, your HR Representative and staff at the Center for Achievement in Public Service to focus on enhancing employee engagement throughout your agency/department and to utilize data in the [annual employee engagement surveys](#) as a benchmark for tracking progress. Taking an active role in building engagement with your staff and measuring progress on these metrics are some ways the State is making progress in being an employer of choice, making the State of Vermont a great place to work.

In 2018, the State implemented the online New Employee Onboarding program. Successfully onboarding new employees is a critical component in improving employee engagement and retention. All new executive branch employees are required to [complete the program](#). Leaders

in departments and/or agencies play a critical role in promoting the practice of successful new employee onboarding by supervisors within their department and/or agency.

## **Media Communications**

As a public official, what you say and do can reflect on the position you are in, your agency/department staff, the citizens that you serve, and the State of Vermont. You should expect that the media may attend meetings or report on statements made and actions taken. Members of the media may also contact you directly about your appointment, decisions made by you or your staff, or other issues.

Below are some general tips for handling media communications:

- Ensure your interactions with member of the media are respectful.
- Work with your agency staff on all media inquiries. If you are unsure of an issue, how to answer, or are uncomfortable speaking on the issue, you can ask one of your staff to contact the reporter with further information or you can reach out to the Governor’s Office for assistance and support.

If you are asked questions regarding a personnel issue, please work with the [Commissioner of Human Resources](#) to ensure the appropriate level of confidentiality is adhered to for our State staff

## 4 Managing in a Civil Service Environment

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### Classified Service

Most State employees are “classified” employees, whose employment is subject to rules and processes derived from civil service laws and [collective bargaining agreements](#). The system governing the hiring and promotion of classified employees is referred to as the “Merit System.” There is also a class of employees, “exempt” employees, whose employment is not governed by the merit system or collective bargaining agreements. All elected and appointed positions are exempt, as are certain other classes of employees.

There are some general policies regarding the classified service that are important to understand, as a majority of our employees (over 90%) are employed in classified positions:

### Hiring New Employees

Most vacant positions in the classified service **must be posted online for a minimum of 10 business days**. Candidates are required to apply online in order to be considered for the position. The online application includes questions that are utilized for screening, which is conducted based on the applicant’s responses to the questions. The Department of Human Resources forwards a list of qualified applicants to the hiring manager, who selects candidates to interview. The department filling the vacancy manages the selection process.

### Original Probation and Permanent Status

All employees entering the classified service (by any means other than restoration and reemployment) must successfully complete an original probationary period, usually lasting six (6) months, in order to gain status as a permanent classified state employee. Rights and privileges of permanent classified status may include, but are not limited to, reduction in force, reemployment, appeal rights, and consideration for promotion, transfer, and restoration.

### Collective Bargaining

Pay, benefits and working conditions of most classified service employees are determined through collective bargaining. The State Employees’ Labor Relations Act provides the basis for collective bargaining between the State and its employees. Labor contracts are negotiated between the State and the labor union certified to represent the bargaining unit covering the employees’ positions. Membership in the applicable labor union is not required of all eligible employees; and the labor unions cannot represent certain employees who are expressly excluded by statute or by order of the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB). These exceptions include, but are not limited to, appointed and elected officials and classified employees who are designated as confidential or managerial.

### Compensation for Classified Employees

The State's [classified pay plan](#) provides internal equity by establishing a common set of salary ranges for each position. Entry level rates, maximum rates and the systematic method for employees to



move within a salary range are uniform and applied consistently for all employees governed by the compensation plan.

There are pay grades 5 through 32 - each with a defined entry rate and maximum rate. Utilizing a point-factor job evaluation system, each job class within the classified service is assigned to one of these pay grades. Each pay grade has 15 steps. New employees typically start at Step 1 (the probationary rate) in the assigned pay grade and serve a six-month probationary period. Upon successfully completing this probationary period the employee moves to Step 2 of the pay grade (known as the end-of probation rate) and continues to advance through the steps based upon a time-in-step system as outlined in the current collective bargaining agreement. Features of the classified pay plan include:

- End of Probation increases for employees who have completed their original probationary period within the classified service.
- Step advancement within salary range based on longevity and satisfactory performance.
- Merit increases may be granted for exceptional performance.
- Market rate differentials granted to specific groups of positions.
- Hiring above the minimum of the salary range in special circumstances.

## **Job Specifications**

A [job specification](#) describes the duties, required knowledge, skills and abilities, and minimum qualifications for a job within state government. Job specifications for some jobs are not available online. For example, the State does not maintain job specifications for jobs that are exempt from the classified service (exempt and temporary jobs). In addition, job specifications under review or in draft format will not be available online until a final version is approved by the Department of Human Resources.

## **Performance Management**

Annual [performance evaluations](#) are required for all classified employees and strongly suggested for exempt employees. The labor contracts and personnel policies include specific provisions for the administration of employee evaluations, employee recognition and merit bonus awards, and corrective performance action.

## **Public Service Recognition Week**

Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is celebrated nationally during the first full week in May each year to show appreciation to public employees and to showcase the services that public employees provide. Vermont departments are encouraged to host a variety of recognition events and activities this week or at a time that works best for them. The highlight of Vermont's celebration is a ceremony to honor outstanding State employees, with the Governor, Secretary of Administration and the Commissioner of Human Resources presenting award certificates to outstanding employees.

## **Discipline and Corrective Action**

All classified public sector employees have a constitutional property interest in their continued employment at their current rate of pay. Disciplinary action and corrective performance action must be taken in strict accordance with the labor contracts and/or State policy. The Human Resources

Representative assigned to support your agency/department, or the Labor Relations Division of the Department of Human Resources, should be consulted whenever discipline or an unsatisfactory performance rating is considered and can advise you on just cause provisions and the specific due process requirements that must be followed.

The State's policy is to administer discipline fairly, reasonably and impartially. Employees and the State are best served when discipline is administered to correct actions rather than to punish. Disciplinary action is intended to maintain the efficiency and integrity of State service. Progressive disciplinary actions will generally be used after considering the nature and severity of the offense. It is the responsibility of each supervisor, human resources representative, and appointing authority to evaluate the circumstances and facts as objectively as possible and then apply the most suitable form of discipline.

### **Discipline of Non-Bargaining Unit Classified Staff**

With respect to classified employees who are not eligible to join bargaining units, such as employees designated as managerial or confidential, the law and personnel policies provide that such employees may not be disciplined except for cause, but the contract provisions regarding discipline do not apply to them. Your Human Resources Representative or the Labor Relations Division of the Department of Human Resources should be consulted when discipline for non-bargaining unit classified employees is under consideration.

### **Employee Grievances**

The grievance procedure is detailed in the labor contracts. Managers and supervisors must consult with your Human Resources Representative assigned to support your agency/department regarding grievance issues to obtain guidance during the process. Employees and supervisors are expected to make a sincere effort to reconcile their differences at the lowest possible organizational level. All decisions and resolutions must be consistent with the Agreements between the State of Vermont and the applicable labor union, state laws, and current policies. There are four (4) levels through which a grievance may progress.

### **Helpful On-Line Publications and Resources**

There will be numerous documents and publications to review as you learn about the State and your agency or department. Below are a few helpful resources available to you from the Department of Human Resources related to managing staff:

[Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual](#): Provides essential information on how to accomplish your agency/department mission within the administrative framework of Vermont State Government.

[A Guide to the State Performance Management System](#): Discusses the purpose, objectives and phases of the State's performance management system.

[SuccessFactors](#): External and Internal applicants and hiring managers use the SuccessFactors talent acquisition system for the recruitment process where job openings are posted, applicants apply for positions, qualifications are reviewed and to communicate with job applicants.

[Guide to Interviewing and Reference Checking](#): Provides an overview of the steps involved in developing and conducting a structured interview and the legal aspects of the interview process and reference checking.

[Equal Employment Opportunity Plan](#): A blueprint to help build a strong and diverse workforce by taking advantage of the skills and education of all segments of Vermont's population.

[Workforce Report to the Governor and Vermont General Assembly](#): A comprehensive annual report of Vermont State Government workforce trends and practices.

[Employee Engagement Survey](#): In 2013, DHR implemented the first annual statewide survey assessing employee engagement in an effort to address the goal of developing workforce excellence using meaningful performance targets and measures.

[Employee and Manager Self-Service](#): Employee Self-Service (ESS) and Manager Self-Service (MSS) is the State's secure, web-based human resource information system, called VTDR. Employees can login to VTDR to complete timesheets, update personal information, and view pay statements, leave balances, sign up for health insurance and much more!

[Statewide Training and Development](#): The Center for Achievement in Public Service (CAPS) is the Statewide training center for state government. CAPS offers a number of services including trainings, on-line courses, supervisory and management trainings, consulting, and training and meeting facilities.

## 5 State Administrative Processes

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### The Budget Process

**“Vermont is a national leader when it comes to government spending transparency, according to a new report released by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG)...”**

Preparation of the Governor's Annual Executive Budget Recommendation for the State of Vermont is the primary responsibility of the Commissioner of Finance and Management and their staff along with agency and departmental budget staff. The development, implementation and monitoring of the budget is an on-going annual cycle comprised of the following highlights:

#### **Financial Analysis of Actual and Projected Expenditures and Revenues**

At the end of a fiscal year (June 30<sup>th</sup>), the budget and management staff spend time reviewing the financial data for each agency, department and program. This analysis provides important insights into how state government raises revenues and spends tax dollars. These insights may lead to recommendations for changes in the budget for the current fiscal year as well as assist in the development of the Governor's budget proposal for the coming fiscal year. The results of this financial analysis are reviewed with the Governor and his/her senior staff.

In September, budget instructions are distributed to each agency and department with an estimated budget allocation for the coming fiscal year. The budget allocations are driven primarily by the consensus revenue forecast of the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government and the Governor's spending priorities. From September to December, using the Statewide budget development system (VANTAGE), agencies and departments construct and fine tune their budgets. During the months of November and December, departments work closely with the Commissioner of Finance and Management to analyze these proposed budgets; revisions to the original allocations may be made if necessary. By the middle of December, the Governor has made most of the decisions important to the budget. Throughout this process, it is the responsibility of each appointing authority to understand fully what their final budget proposal does or does not include.

#### **Preparation of the Budget**

Following the Governor's decisions, the Commissioner of Finance and Management finalizes the Governor's recommended budget proposal for submission to the General Assembly. This submission is generally comprised of a draft appropriations bill and an executive budget book that presents most of the key financial information. Additionally, an electronic version is submitted to the legislature that profiles how the recommendations of the Governor will be spent.

## **Submission of the Budget to the General Assembly and Legislative Deliberation**

Soon after the General Assembly convenes in January, the Governor presents the budget proposal to the legislature. The Governor usually accompanies the budget proposals with a formal address to a joint meeting of all House and Senate members. After the budget recommendations and budget message have been presented, the appropriation process is initiated. The appropriations bill, prepared in draft form by the Department of Finance and Management, is referred to the appropriations committee of the house. In addition to the information made available from the automated budget system, agency and department heads are invited to testify on their organizations' budgets.

Once the House and Senate pass the appropriations bill, a budget conference committee, comprised of three members of the House and three from the Senate, is established to resolve any differences. Once differences are resolved, both the House and Senate must approve the final version of the appropriations bill. After approval by the legislature, the bill is forwarded to the Governor. The Governor can sign the bill into law, veto the bill, or allow the bill to become law by taking no action within ten days of its arrival at the Governor's office. If the Governor vetoes the bill, the legislative approval process begins anew.

## **Budget Implementation**

When passage of the appropriations bill is complete and it is enacted into law, the implementation of the act begins. The appropriations approved by the General Assembly and the Governor are entered into VISION, the State's financial accounting system, by the Department of Finance and Management with an effective date of July 1, unless otherwise noted. Agencies and departments can then spend appropriated funds. At the same time the new fiscal year is beginning, the Department of Finance and Management is also "closing the books" for the most recently completed fiscal year and beginning the process of compiling the State's financial statements, officially known as the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), and working through the annual audit conducted by the State Auditor's Office.

At this point, the budget process begins anew for the next fiscal year.

As an appointing authority, it is your responsibility to assure all budget and year end closing deadlines are met, and all information requests for the budget, year end and audit process are responded to in a timely and complete fashion. Questions regarding this process should be directed to the Commissioner of Finance and Management.



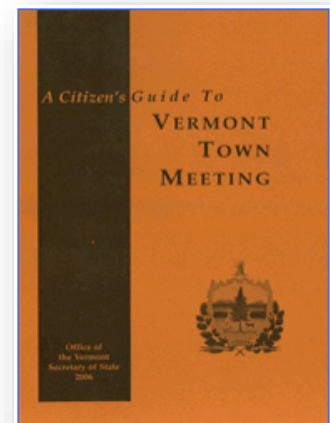
## Open Meetings

Generally, all meetings of public bodies in Vermont must be open to the public unless there is a specific provision in the law that allows a meeting, or a portion of a meeting, to be closed to the public. For purposes of the open meeting law, "public body" means any board, council, or commission of any State agency, or authority of or instrumentality of the State or of a subdivision of the State. In limited circumstances, public bodies can vote to go into executive session and exclude the public from the executive session. The following are among the subjects that may properly be considered in executive session: the appointment or evaluation of public officials, negotiation of real estate purchases, or the consideration of records or documents that are not available to the public. The Vermont Open Meeting Law is found at [1 V.S.A. Subchapter 2, 310 - 314](#).

The [Secretary of State's website](#) offers a number of resources for managing and facilitating an [open meeting](#) including [A Guide to Open Meetings](#), [Born to Chair](#), an introduction to the science and art of chairing a board meeting, and [Disability Etiquette: A Guide to Respectful Communication](#) – offering tips for people who serve the public, designed to ensure effective and respectful communication with members of the public who have disabilities.

## Administrative Bulletins

The Secretary of Administration is responsible for issuing, rescinding and maintaining [Administrative Bulletins](#) and directive memos concerning important State processes and rules to follow including, but not limited to, employee travel and expenses, procurement and contracting procedures, and grant issuance and monitoring. In particular, Administrative Bulletin 3.3 provides specific procedures concerning the delegation of authority for signing documents to assure that the accountable official maintains personal knowledge of and involvement in important or sensitive issues, and Administrative Bulletin 3.5 provides specific information regarding procurement and contracting procedures



## 6 Transparency and Accountability

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### Transparency

The [Agency of Administration](#) is committed to openness and transparency, with a focus on outcomes. [SPOTLIGHT.vermont.gov](https://spotlight.vermont.gov) is the State's primary fiscal transparency and performance accountability website. The website features a number of links showing how Vermont is doing in a variety of areas, and as compared to other states.



### Public Documents

The Public Records Act provides that written or recorded records produced or acquired during the course of business of a State agency are public documents. However, the law also provides that a number of specifically listed types of documents are protected from public disclosure either entirely or to the extent the interests in protecting the documents outweigh the public interest in disclosure. Such protected documents include, but are not limited to, documents made confidential by any law, documents which are recognized as being privileged (such as medical records), documents dealing with criminal investigations, tax returns, trade secrets, records relevant to active litigation, records relevant to the negotiation of contracts, and records containing certain types of personal or financial information about individuals. The procedures for requesting public documents are set out in the public records law. The Vermont Public Records Law is found at [1 V.S.A. §§315 - 320](#).

### Public Records Requests

Access to public records is governed by the [public records law](#). If your organization receives a request under this law, your staff must comply with the request in accordance with the law, and coordinate as necessary with other State organizations whose documents are implicated in the request. The State's [open data site](#), maintained by the Department of Information and Innovation, is also a resource for individuals seeking information about state government.

### A Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement (CI) tools come in many shapes and sizes. Regardless of the process your agency utilizes, there are a number of common elements, including:

- A focus on improving results through the monitoring of data, and comparing to benchmarks.
- Collaboratively sharing ideas that work across department and programs.

- Striving for the most efficient operations possible.

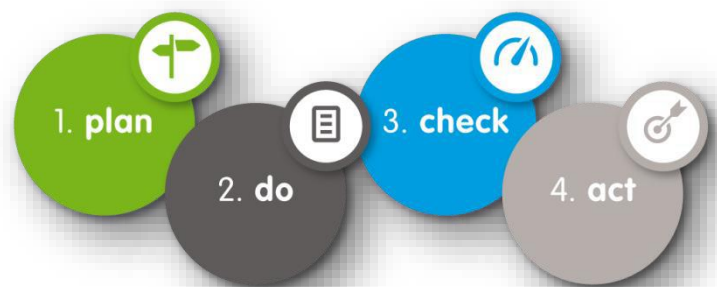
Some of the most common tools used by the State include Results-Based Accountability (RBA), LEAN, Agency Improvement Model (AIM), and a Results Scorecard.

## Performance Accountability and the Budget

In 2014, [Act 186](#) called for the expansion of the FY 2015 Programmatic Performance Measure Budget Pilot Program, where performance measures were reported as part of the Governor’s Budget Recommendation submission. Since 2014, the Program has grown from 13 programs across 11 departments for FY 2015, to 41 programs across 31 departments for FY 2016. FY 2017 is expected to grow even more. The State will continue this roll-out to all Executive Branch units under the direction of the State’s Chief Performance Officer (CPO), who oversees continuous performance and fiscal transparency improvements within state government.

The CPO is charged with overseeing the estimated three to five-year implementation of this initiative, supported by the Legislative and Executive Branches, and a number of Vermont non-profit early adopters. Ultimately, the goal is for agencies, departments and the State to have on-line scorecards (dashboards) showing outcomes/results tied to performance measures and budgets, at the program/activity level, for all major programs/activities. In addition, the CPO assists agencies as necessary in developing performance measures for contracts and grants. Annually on or before July 30, the CPO reports to the General Assembly on the State’s progress in reaching population-level outcomes for each area of Vermont’s quality of life outcomes.

Programmatic Budget submissions by fiscal year is one important way the State is working to move steadily toward results-based accountability to achieve population-level outcomes and be responsive to the long-term needs of Vermonters.





## 7 Compensation for Exempt Employees

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### Elected Officer Salary

The annual salaries for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor of Accounts, and State Treasurer are established in [32 VSA § 1003\(a\)](#). The legislature must approve any salary adjustments.

### Department Head Salary

Base salaries for secretaries, commissioners, and heads of certain free-standing organizations are established in [32 VSA § 1003\(b\)](#).

Appointing authorities may receive pre-approval for a hiring range permitting them to negotiate salary with a potential exempt candidate. The appointing authority recommends a specific salary offer by completing an Exempt Salary Request Form. See [Compensation and Leave Benefits for Exempt Employees, Policy Number 12.8](#) for more details regarding the procedure and the approval process.

Periodic salary adjustments granted to individuals in positions subject to 32 VSA § 1003(b) may not exceed the average of the total rate of adjustment available to classified employees.

The Governor may grant a special salary increase or bonus subject to statutory limits.

### Other Exempt Employee Salary Information

This group includes agency and department deputies, executive or principal assistants, private secretaries, and other exempts not covered by a pay plan.

All requests to hire, or to grant annual increases, end-of-probation increases, or merit increases for exempt employees not covered by any pay plan must be forwarded in advance for review to the Department of Human Resources, Compensation Management. Final approval may only be granted by the Secretary of Administration as the Governor's designee.

When recruiting, a working salary range must first be authorized. No specific salary may be offered to the candidate until the salary has been approved. Please follow the procedures detailed in the General Guidelines section of [Compensation and Leave Benefits for Exempt Employees, Policy Number 12.8](#).

An [Exempt Salary Request Form](#) for all salary offers must be completed by the appointing authority and forwarded to the Department of Human Resources, Compensation Management.

## **Exempts Covered by a Unique Pay Plan**

As authorized in [32 VSA § 1020 \(c\)](#), unique pay plans have been established for certain categories of exempt employees. Each of these pay plans include established entry and maximum pay rates, as well as conditions and guidelines for administration of the plans.

[Attorney Pay Plan](#)

[Correctional Facility Superintendent Pay Plan](#)

[Executive Director Pay Plan](#)

[Executive Office Pay Plan](#)

[Public Service Board Pay Plan](#)

[State's Attorneys and Office of the Defender General Pay Plan](#)

[Vermont Labor Relations Pay Plan](#)

Employees are compensated on a bi-weekly basis and paychecks are directly deposited every other Thursday, in accordance with the [bi-weekly pay chart](#).

## 8 Benefits and Leave Information

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### General Benefit Information

The State of Vermont offers an excellent total compensation package, offering [benefits](#) designed to meet your health and financial needs, improve your quality of life and help balance your responsibilities at home and work. Most benefits require enrollment within a specific timeframe after beginning employment. Some of our key benefits include:

- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Group Life Insurance
- Flexible Spending Account
- Long-Term Disability Insurance
- Family and Medical Leave Insurance
- Employee Assistance Plan (EAP)
- Tuition Reimbursement
- Child Care Information and Referral
- Infants in the Workplace
- Deferred Compensation Plan (457 Plan)
- Retirement Plan



You can enroll for your benefits on-line through VTHR upon hire. The State's Open Enrollment period begins November 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and ends Nov 30<sup>th</sup> with changes becoming effective on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the new plan year. The [Benefits Staff](#) or your [Human Resources Business Partner](#) are available to assist you with questions or help with enrollment.

### Retirement Plan Information

Elected and appointed officials are automatically enrolled in the Vermont State Employees' Retirement plan – a “defined benefit” plan which includes an employee contribution of 6.65% – 8.15% of pay each payroll. As exempt employees, elected and appointed officials are also eligible to transfer to a “defined contribution” retirement plan, which requires an employee contribution of 2.85% of the employee's compensation for each payroll period and the state contributes to each employee's account at the rate of 7.00% of the employee's compensation for each payroll period. The Retirement Division of the State Treasurer's Office provides additional information on [retirement benefits](#). For further questions, the Retirement Office can be contacted at 802-828-2305.

*Note: Contribution rates may change over time through statutory amendment as the result of actuarial recommendation and/or benefit changes.*

### Leave Information

Agency, department heads and elected officials are salaried and are not eligible to participate in any leave benefit or leave accrual plan. Appropriate time off is taken on a discretionary basis and the

administration of time off is informal. Please work with your supervisor regarding requests for time off.

The State also offers time off for [holidays](#). All State agencies and departments observe any legal holiday falling on a Saturday on the preceding Friday, and any legal holiday falling on a Sunday on the following Monday.

## 9 Employee Wellness and Safety

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### Employee Wellness

[LiveWell Vermont](#), the State's wellness program, supports the employee and retiree population through partnerships with health and wellness resources both within and outside state government. Their initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Onsite Biometric Screenings
- Telephonic Wellness Coaching
- Quarterly Wellness Challenges
- Annual Flu Vaccination Clinics
- Health and Wellness Workshops and Classes - Onsite and Online



Wellness “challenges” throughout the year are designed to support behavioral change in the workplace that engage employees in becoming happier, healthier and more energetic at work. Challenges help to promote a supportive, positive climate of fun and camaraderie in both the workplace and personal life, and may help participants to adopt or maintain a healthy way of living. The net result is an engaged and productive workforce that performs at a higher level where everybody wins!

Challenges are focused on all aspects of health and wellness including, but not limited to:

- Physical Activity
- Nutrition
- Emotional/Personal Growth/Capacity for Change
- Healthy Worksite Culture
- Relaxation & Stress Management

Please visit the [LiveWell Vermont Wellness Portal](#) to register for the current wellness challenge and encourage your staff to participate as well!

### Healthy Eating and Creating a Healthier Worksite

As an employer, the State is committed to helping our employees achieve optimal health and well-being. The relationship between diet and health makes supporting nutritious choices at work an important part of our commitment. The [healthy eating](#) and [creating a healthier worksite](#) programs are designed to make selecting healthy food and beverages an easy choice in the workplace at all employer-funded meetings, trainings and events.



## **Employee Safety**

The [Office of State Security Program's](#) mission is to develop, coordinate, implement, and evaluate safety and security programs, in cooperation with all State organizations, in support of the State's efforts to ensure and maintain a safe and secure environment for all employees and visitors.

If an incident occurs at your worksite, please encourage staff to complete a BGS Security Incident Report. Incidents can be an event or an occurrence that is not ordinary in nature or may be potentially violent, or may result in a critical situation. To submit an incident report, click here: [BGS State Incident Report](#).

## **Workers' Compensation, Liability and Workplace Safety Program**

When an employee is injured in the workplace, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to complete an [Employer's First Report of Injury Form](#) through an on-line reporting portal within 72 hours (Sundays and legal holidays excluded) of receiving notice or knowledge of the injury. However, any work-related incident should be reported immediately, whenever possible.

If a Workers' Compensation claim is approved as a work-related injury, the employee will receive a bi-weekly disability (temporary or partial) benefit check through a third-party vendor.

The State's [workplace safety program](#) includes risk [assessments](#), ergonomic evaluations, and in-person and on-line safety trainings.

## **Statewide Smoking Policy**

Our goal is to provide healthy and safe work environments for all Vermont State employees, to ensure the health hazard created by second hand smoke is removed from the workplace, and to guarantee that regulations restricting workplace smoking are implemented in a timely manner. Smoking is legally prohibited within 25 feet of any State-owned building, and many State workplaces have designated outdoor smoking areas.

## 10 Employment and Career Development Opportunities

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The State is committed to offering a number of educational opportunities to support all employees in maintaining and advancing their careers with us. We strongly encourage staff to take advantage of these programs and educational opportunities to enhance skills in their current position or for future career growth opportunities. Our SOV Lead, Innovate, Navigate, and Connect (SOV LINC) [online portal](#), provides all staff with a full array of development opportunities.

### New Employee Orientation

As you begin your new role with the State, you will undoubtedly have a number of questions regarding your benefits and State processes, policies, and procedures. Your supervisor, staff in your work area, and your [Human Resources Representative](#) are key resources to help you in your first few weeks on the job. The Department of Human Resources also offers a [New Employee Orientation](#) that covers key benefit and policy information for all new staff. Your agency or department may also have additional training, education or orientation activities for you to participate in.

### Statewide and Department On-Boarding

The statewide employee onboarding process includes New Employee Orientation, standardized training courses, professional development pathways and key communication points for managers to check in with their new hires. The [Hiring and Onboarding Guide](#) provides a Toolkit that will simply and effectively take Managers AND their new hires through the First 180 Days and beyond. Part of that toolkit is this dedicated area on the DHR Website that is a "one-stop shop" for Hiring Managers to reference as a "roadmap" to onboarding.

Your agency or department will provide you with more specific on-boarding activities to familiarize you with your work environment, agency or department-specific policies and information, and opportunities to meet and interact with staff and colleagues. Your department on-boarding process is an important component in ensuring a successful transition to the State and your new role with us.

Likewise, you and your management team's active engagement and participation in your own agency or department's on-boarding process is vital to ensuring a positive experience for new staff to make them feel welcome, engaged and a valued member of your team.

### Career Development Opportunities

As one of the State's largest employers, we offer a number of different [career opportunities](#). Working for the State, you and your work matter. That is because as an employer, the State exists to protect, preserve and enhance the exceptional quality of life in Vermont. A career with the State of Vermont also puts you on a rich and rewarding professional path; one filled with challenge, excitement, and tremendous opportunities for growth.

Nowhere in Vermont will employees find so many opportunities with one employer, including:

- Human Services
- Public Safety
- Engineering

- Natural Resources
- Information Technology
- Accounting/Finance
- Agriculture
- Public Health
- Economic Development
- Corrections
- Trades



## Center for Achievement in Public Service (CAPS)

The [Center for Achievement in Public Service](#) (CAPS) is the State's training center. It offers classroom and on-line training opportunities, coaching, facilitation, organizational development solutions, customized trainings, and meeting and conference room space for State agencies and departments. CAPS offers a wide range of [staff development opportunities](#), the [Vermont Certified Public Managers® Program \(VCPM\)](#) and [Supervising in State Government](#) program.

CAPS staff are professional trainers, consultants and coaches, and are available to consult with departments and agencies to address planning, facilitation and team development needs. In addition to the SOV LINC, the [online course catalog](#) spans subject matters for all levels.

CAPS is located on the Vermont College of Fine Arts campus in Montpelier, and offers spacious, comfortable and well-equipped classrooms and meeting spaces



## 11 Additional Resources Available to You

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This handbook is intended to serve as a source of information; a quick reference guide. It is not designed to answer every scenario you may encounter during your employment with the State. It is presented solely for informational purposes and is not a contract between the State of Vermont and any of its employees. If you have questions or need more information, please feel free to work with your agency/department staff, the Governor’s Office, your Human Resources Representative, and your colleagues. We are here to help!

### Helpful Links and Resources

Below are resources and links that will be helpful to you as you begin your new position. Feel free to bookmark them in your browser for future use.

<b>Administrative Bulletins:</b>	A <a href="#">listing</a> of “in force” Administrative Bulletins, Administrative Rules, and Directive Memos explaining processes and rules to follow.
<b>Contracts and Grants:</b>	The <a href="https://aoa.vermont.gov/bulletins">https://aoa.vermont.gov/bulletins</a> establishes the State’s policies (rules) for procurement, contracting, grant making, approvals and tracking of contracts and grants.
<b>Departments:</b>	A quick <a href="#">link</a> to State of Vermont Agencies and Departments.
<b>Emergency Closings:</b>	For alerts/closing/delays of State offices call 800-644-4402 or <a href="#">click here</a> .
<b>Employee Contact Information:</b>	The State’s on-line <a href="#">employee directory</a> .
<b>Governor’s Office Contact Information:</b>	<a href="#">Office of the Governor</a> , 109 State Street, Pavilion, Montpelier, VT 05609, Phone: 802 828-3333, TTY: 800 649-6825, Fax: 802 828-3339
<b>Information Technology:</b>	<a href="#">Desktop and business support services</a> from the Agency of Digital Services.
<b>Legislature Information:</b>	<a href="#">Legislative contacts and schedule</a> .
<b>Pay Periods and Pay Dates:</b>	<a href="#">Pay dates</a> for all State employees.
<b>Purchasing and Contracting:</b>	<a href="#">Resources</a> for the acquisition of material, equipment, supplies, fuel, and printing for all State agencies.

**Safety:** [Reporting](#) a workplace security incident.

**Statutes:** Vermont's State [Statutes On-Line](#).

**Training:** Center for Achievement in Public Service ([CAPS](#)), the Statewide training center.

**Human Resources:** [Link](#) to complete a timesheet, view HR policies and procedures, view benefits connect to SOV LINC, and career opportunities.

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State of Vermont Map

