



Aug. 13, 2021

Dear Chairman Larry Martin and fellow SHaPE SC task force members:

As requested, please see attached following documents from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC):

- Agency budget presentation to the South Carolina Senate Finance Committee Healthcare Subcommittee March 23, 2021
- Detailed summary overview of the agency's FY 2021-2022 salary increase request for critical position retention

DHEC recognizes the need to provide increased funding to recruit and retain critical positions. This includes prioritizing increased salaries in critical areas where agency staff is paid significantly less than the state agency average.

As part of this year's state budget request, DHEC identified the following five critical personnel classification categories which meet this criterion:

Administrative Services:

- Front-line health department clinical support
- Clinic patient intake and initial payment collection
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food supplement services
- Vital Records searches and certifications
- Permit application receipt and processing

Engineering Services:

- Environmental permit review and issuance
- Assistance with compliance, enforcement, and oversight activities

Health & Safety:

- Environmental monitoring, inspections, compliance, and enforcement
- Onsite wastewater permitting
- Development of environmental standards and regulations

Laboratory Services:

- Diagnostic testing for foodborne pathogens, clinical/newborn screenings, microbiology, and analytical chemistry
- Analyzing environmental samples and providing data to support permitting, enforcement and standards development

- Support and consultation for physicians, private laboratories, hospitals, and county health departments

Nursing Services:

- Direct patient services including immunizations, disease testing and treatment, and family planning
- Postpartum/newborn support
- Assistance with Children/Teens with Special Health Care Needs

Each classification requires significant training, often requiring a full year of employment before becoming fully proficient.

Most of these classifications are also highly technical, requiring advanced training and degrees. High turnover limits, available staffing, and efficiency reduces employee morale and ultimately impacts services to our constituents. **Below is an overview of current positions at DHEC as of August 2, 2021.**

Major Program Area	Filled FTEs*	Filled Hourly	Filled TG/TL	Vacant FTEs*	Grand Total
PH Central Office	495	124	72	86	777
PH Regions	1,083	382	30	251	1,747
Environmental Affairs	983	70	1	165	1,219
Healthcare Quality	166	5	2	70	243
Administration	204	5	1	35	245
Grand Total	2,931	586	106	608	4,232

* Includes Classified and Unclassified FTEs

** TG/TL= Temporary Grant and Time Limited Positions

*** Data Source -SCEIS HR1018 on 8/2/2021

As background, agency average salaries **for more than half of the 167 classifications** utilized by DHEC are below the state average. Thirty-four of these classifications fall in critical categories providing essential services to the citizens of the state.

Employee retention is an agency priority and is being addressed by several initiatives including providing training opportunities and workforce development. However, salaries remain a critical issue and DHEC lacks funding necessary to address deficiencies at an appropriate scale. Further compounding this issue, much of DHEC’s personnel funding comes from non-state sources. Cost of living increases and continued employer-paid health care costs are a great benefit to employees. While the Agency is very supportive of these efforts, two thirds of DHEC’s employees are funded from non-state sources and DHEC must realign resources from existing funds to fully cover the cost.

Funding Received

Thanks to the support of the state legislature, DHEC received **\$2.7 million** of its requested approximately \$5 million in state funding during the past legislative session. This is a **significant increase and will help us continue to retain and recruit great people on our team**. At the same time, agency leadership recognizes that more must be done to address salary inequities and improve retentions. Efforts are currently under way to further review and support future requirement and retention efforts.

Succession planning, knowledge transfer, recruiting and employee retention are critical success factors for the agency moving forward. To prepare for anticipated staff attrition, we are aggressively working to implement several succession planning, recruiting and retention initiatives designed to make DHEC the premier employer in South Carolina. This includes:

- Working with the S.C. Department of Administration to obtain increased hiring salary ranges for key positions to compete with the private sector
- Implementing a comprehensive, electronic talent management system that includes modules for succession planning, onboarding and performance review
- Piloting a position-based succession plan that will focus on critical roles that are occupied by retirement eligible employees and other critical positions that could impact business operations
- Developing the agency's Leadership Excellence Achievement Program (LEAP), an employee training program designed to identify and develop future agency leaders, as well as supporting other internal and external development programs like:
 - LinkedIn Learning, new employee orientations, a new internal mentorship program, and the Certified Public Manager Course and Associate Public Manager Course.

In addition, DHEC began hosting an annual career fair in 2017 to boost recruiting of critical jobs and recognition of the agency within the community. After increasing attendance by **38 percent** in March 2018, we engaged other state government agencies to build upon the success of the career fair. In 2019, **four additional agencies** joined DHEC to create the State Government Career Fair: Department of Corrections, Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services and Office of State Human Resources. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency plans to host additional fairs.

Other Recruitment efforts currently underway by the agency include:

- Leading DHEC Career Workshops at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs), colleges, and universities on a quarterly basis
- Increasing the talent pool by cultivating customized internships and job shadowing experiences
- Conducting onsite tours and hosting virtual career fairs
- Partnering with HCBUs, LGBTQIA agencies, SC Able, and veteran entities to promote a diverse talent pool
- Utilizing SC Works and workforce development programs to source paid interns and veterans, at no cost to DHEC
- Expanding DHEC's presence in external job boards and social media platforms
- Tracking job fair attendance, applicants who applied following, and measuring success
- Utilizing neogov's talent sourcing tool to strategically recruit top talent
- Partnering with Midlands Technical College to create customized interview trainings and best practices for hiring managers

- Educating staff on the cost of turn over and how to properly screen applicants prior to an interview
- Conducting neogov trainings in partnership with the Department of Administration regarding posting protocol, formatting, and best practices
- Shortening the length of hiring time

To assist the task force in better understanding job classification and average salaries at DHEC, the agency is working to produce a cross-sectional analysis of salaries for critical positions and areas of high turnover. Once finalized, this analysis will be provided to the task force and published online.