

2023 NASPEs AWARD

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Leadership in State Human Resource Management

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Nominee: Kelly Hardwick Title: State Personnel Director

State: MS Agency: Mississippi State Personnel Board

Telephone: 601-359-1406

E-mail: Kelly.hardwick@mspb.ms.gov

Brief Biography of Nominee (One paragraph, please):

Kelly Hardwick was appointed Executive Director of the Mississippi State Personnel Board in March 2017. Kelly is no stranger to Mississippi state government. He served as both General Counsel and Chief of Staff for the Mississippi Home Corporation, the housing finance authority for Mississippi and served as Chief of Staff to Lieutenant Governor Amy Tuck. In this role, he was responsible for all affairs and daily operations for the Lieutenant Governor and acted as both counselor and adviser. After serving as Chief of Staff to Lieutenant Governor Amy Tuck for two years, Kelly returned to private law practice specializing in governmental consultation, public finance, and business transactions. Kelly received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of North Alabama and his Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Brittany Frederick on behalf of the MSPB Executive Team Title: Communication Director

State: MS Agency: Mississippi State Personnel Board

Telephone: 601-359-2701

E-mail: Brittany.frederick@mspb.ms.gov

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Meet deadline requirements
- Include a complete nomination packet • Conform to all copyright laws

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DETAILS

Provide a narrative answer for each of the questions. You are limited to four-pages (based on regular 8 1/2 x 11" paper double-spaced in 12-point font). Also, provide one letter endorsing the nominee's achievement. Do not send supporting documentation.

1. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated leadership by participating on major state government committees, task forces and/or special projects related to state human resource management.

Since being appointed State Personnel Director in 2017, Kelly has taken a proactive approach to improving state human resources management. He is not afraid to challenge the status quo and erase the common government philosophy of "that's the way it's always been done." Kelly is a leader who empowers his staff to utilize their knowledge and experience to make improvements to state human resources management. Major projects and achievement under Kelly's leadership include:

- **Project SEC²:** Project SEC² (State Employee Classification and Compensation) was the first major review and overhaul of Mississippi's classification and compensation system since 1981.
- **Complete rewrite of MSPB Policy and Procedures Manual and State Employee Handbook:** By clarifying how agencies should address unsatisfactory job performance and eliminating unnecessary regulations, MSPB updated policies ensure employees' right are protected through due process and allow agencies to operate more efficiently.
- **Overhaul of the state employee Performance Management System:** MSPB implemented a new Performance Review System that is based on an employee's actual performance including job knowledge, technical skills, ability to use required equipment, problem solving, decision making, and project management. Previous performance

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reviews evaluated employees based on competencies such as integrity, which are now considered disciplinary issues.

- **Pandemic Guidance for State Agencies:** Kelly took a transparent approach to providing timely COVID-19 guidance to state agencies to assist with compliance with applicable executive orders and federal laws.

2. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated exceptional leadership in the field of human resource management beyond your state human resources organization.

Under Kelly's leadership, MSPB spearheaded the organization of Mississippi's first chapter of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources to establish affiliation with an international organization for government HR professionals. Kelly served as the chapter's first president, and Mississippi will host the Southern Region conference for the 13 southern states less than two years after the chapter was established.

3. Describe the nominee's leadership and/or management skills in implementing human resource management programs.

Under Kelly's leadership at MSPB, the agency has seen a significant reduction in staff turnover. Kelly empowers his staff to utilize their knowledge and expertise to make positive changes. He takes a proactive approach to leadership and constantly seeks ways to improve processes and serve agency stakeholders.

Additionally, Kelly takes an open approach to communicating with the Mississippi Legislature.

Under his leadership, key MSPB staff members now have open and efficient communication with leaders in the Legislative Budget Office. This intangible approach to open communication

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has led to tangible benefits for state employees like pay increases (just by communicating relevant, accurate information to key stakeholders in the Legislative process).

4. Describe how the nominee has demonstrated leadership within the NASPE organization in support of NASPE's mission to share information on human resource issues so that members can better achieve their state's mission and business objectives. Include evidence of local or national acclaim in the field and influence on other states' personnel executives.

Kelly currently serves as NASPE secretary/treasurer. He previously served as an at-large director. In 2021, he received the Oscar B. Jackson President's Award President's Award for his commitment to NASPE and its members.

5. Describe any relevant state human resource management programs or initiatives that were successful because of the nominee's involvement.

The most notable initiative that owes its inception and success to Kelly's leadership is Project SEC² (State Employee Classification and Compensation), the first major review and overhaul of Mississippi's classification and compensation system since 1981. Over the last 40 years, Mississippi's classification and compensation system became outdated and disjointed. After research and review, Kelly empowered MSPB staff to modernize the system to give more accountability and to be more functional and transparent for the Legislature, agencies, and state employees. Project SEC² improved Mississippi's classification and compensation system by streamlining the number of job classifications from more than 1,900 to 641 and establishing salaries that are competitive, consistent, and equitable. Notably, Mississippi was the first state to electronically collect and evaluate more than 23,000 Position Description Questionnaires from state employees.

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The most influential change to Mississippi State government HR in four decades would not have been possible without Kelly's leadership, although he would disagree. Whenever Project SEC² is praised, Kelly always gives accolades to his staff, which is a testament to his humble leadership approach. However, those who work for Kelly attribute the success of a project of this magnitude to a leader who believes in his staff, confronts change with a smile on his face, and believes the best in state government HR is yet to come.

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KELLY HARDWICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 12, 2023

To the NASPE Award Nominating Committee:

It is our pleasure to nominate Kelly Hardwick, State Personnel Director for the State of Mississippi, for the NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Leadership in State Human Resource Management Award.

Kelly Hardwick was appointed Executive Director of the Mississippi State Personnel Board in March 2017. Under his leadership, the Mississippi State Personnel Board has worked proactively to improve state human resources management through projects including:

Major projects and achievement under Kelly's leadership include:

- **Project SEC²:** Project SEC² (State Emloyee Classification and Compensation) was the first major review and overhaul of Mississippi's classification and compensation system since 1981.
- **Complete rewrite of MSPB Policy and Procedures Manual and State Employee Handbook:** By clarifying how agencies should address unsatisfactory job performance and eliminating unnecessary regulations, MSPB updated policies ensure employees' rights are protected through due process and allow agencies to operate more efficiently.
- **Overhaul of the state employee Performance Management System:** MSPB implemented a new Performance Review System that is based on an employee's actual performance including job knowledge, technical skills, ability to use required equipment, problem solving, decision making, and project management. Previous performance reviews evaluated employees based on competencies such as integrity, which are now considered disciplinary issues.
- **Pandemic Guidance for State Agencies:** Kelly took a transparent approach to providing timely COVID-19 guidance to state agencies to assist with compliance with applicable executive orders and federal laws.

As members of Kelly's executive team, we can attest to his commitment to Mississippi state government human resources through his open approach to communicating with key stakeholders including members of the State Legislature, the Legislative Budget Office, agency heads, and state HR staff members. Kelly empowers his staff to make improvements to state government. Kelly's humble nature always directs external accolades away from himself, but we can assure you that none of the recent monumental changes would have been possible without Kelly leading the way, believing in us, and fighting to improve state government human resources management.

It is not only an honor to submit him for consideration for this award, but to work for a genuine, humble, proactive leader like Kelly Hardwick.

Sincerely,

Four handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the far right is the most prominent and appears to be "H. Hardwick". Below it is a signature that reads "Michael Finley". To the left of these are two other signatures, one above the other, which are less legible.

Ensuring a Quality Workforce

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