

# 2024 NASPEs AWARD

## *Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

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.

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### PROGRAM INFORMATION

**Program Title:** Pennsylvania's Permitting, Licensing, and Certification Hiring Project      **State:** PA

**Contact Person:** Miranda Martin

**Contact's Title:** Director, Talent Management Office

**Agency:** Office of Administration

**Mailing Address:** 613 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120

**Telephone:** 717-710-2595

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### NOMINATOR INFORMATION

**Nominator:** Jason W. Swarthout      **Title:** Acting Deputy Secretary for Human Resources and Management

**State:** PA      **Agency:** Governor's Office of Administration

**Telephone:** 717-787-8191

**E-mail:** jswarthout@pa.gov

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### **DETAILS**

On January 31, 2023, Governor Josh Shapiro issued an executive order to address wait times and backlogs for permits, licenses, and certifications issued by state agencies. The order directed agencies to inventory all permits, licenses, and certifications; established standard processing times for each one; and implemented a money back guarantee to refund application fees when these timeframes are not met. Faced with potential revenue loss, agencies immediately prioritized their staffing complement and hiring needs to quickly fill and retain positions that review and process these applications. Simultaneously, the Office of Administration (OA) established a workgroup to identify all in-scope positions (upwards of 6,300) and worked closely with agency leadership to identify vacancies, implement specialized recruitment campaigns, and expedite all parts of the hiring process. OA updated policies for the non-civil service hiring process to shorten vacancy posting timeframes and interviews and shift certain aspects of the background check process to be conducted post-offer and/or hire. OA also created a new, tailored dashboard to track all in-scope positions throughout the hiring process. Since April 2023, the overall vacancy rate for in-scope positions has dropped from 14 percent to 9 percent. The average time to hire dropped by nearly 27 percent, from 90 days to 66 days. Agencies have reported dramatically shortened timeframes for issuing licenses, permits, and certifications – in some instances, decreasing processing times by as much as 93 percent.

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### **1. Please provide a brief description of this program.**

In support of Executive Order 2023-07, Building Efficiency in the Commonwealth's Permitting, Licensing, and Certification Processes, the Office of Administration (OA) expedited hiring efforts to quickly fill positions identified as being involved in processing these applications. OA partnered with senior leadership and HR offices in agencies that have in-scope positions to coordinate efforts and ensure that positions moved through each step of the hiring process as quickly as possible. OA also developed a tailored dashboard to track these positions and held weekly calls with the agencies that have the most critical needs, such as the Department of State (DOS) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). As a result of this effort, the vacancy rate for in-scope positions has dropped from 14 percent to 9 percent since April 2023, and the average time to hire Commonwealth employees dropped by nearly 27 percent, from 90 days to 66 days. The DOS's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs experienced a dramatic improvement in the average number of business days for processing licenses, which it credits to an increase in filled positions accomplished through this project. DEP has also seen a drastic reduction in the permit backlog. Since hiring 15 additional staff members, DEP has reduced its backlog by nearly 900 individual permits as of March 1, 2024, a 41 percent reduction.

### **2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?**

This project began on January 31, 2023. The tracking of metrics through a data dashboard began in April 2023.

### **3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)**

This project was implemented to support an executive order which requires agencies to issue refunds for application fees when permits, licenses, and certifications are not processed within

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### *Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

established timeframes. To minimize potential revenue loss, agencies needed to ensure they had adequate staffing to process applications in a timely fashion.

#### **4. Why is this program a new and creative method?**

This project was new in the sense that we carved out a subset of the vacancies (i.e., the in-scope positions related to issuing permits, licenses, certifications) and established a way to monitor and shepherd them through the hiring process. This level of tracking required the creation of a new, interactive dashboard, along with weekly calls with agency leadership to show commitment and sustain momentum for this concerted hiring effort. It also involved revamping the non-civil service hiring process to expedite every possible step (e.g., shorter vacancy posting and interview timeframes) and moving some lengthier parts of the hiring process to post-offer and/or hire (e.g., supplemental employment approval).

#### **5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology, and staff already in place.)**

This project has been executed using existing staff and IT resources; no new funding was required.

#### **6. What are the program's operational costs?**

None.

#### **7. How is this program funded?**

There is no special funding for this program.

#### **8. Did this program originate in your state?**

#### **9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?**

**If yes, how does this program differ?**

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### 10. How do you measure the success of this program?

The first indicator of success is the reduction in overall time to hire and reduced vacancy rate for positions that are involved in issuing licenses, permits, and certifications. The second indicator of success is the reduction in the average number of business days for state agencies to issue licenses, permits, and certifications, which typically results from being better or fully staffed. The final indicator of success is the number of refunds required to be issued. We've seen great success in the Bureau of Occupational Affairs of the Department of State, which credits this project which a dramatic decrease in their average licensing times. This bureau went from a filled complement of 88 in January 2023 to a filled complement of 112 in October 2023. In that same timeframe (January through October 2023), they reduced the average time for processing licenses as follows:

- Real Estate Salesperson from 13 days to 2 days
- Real Estate Broker from 15 days to 1 day
- Vehicle Salesperson from 12 days to 1 day
- Vehicle Dealer from 10 days to 2 days
- Pharmacist by Exam from 26 days to 2 days
- Dentist from 27 days to 4 days

DEP has also seen a drastic reduction in its permit backlog. Since hiring 15 additional staff members, the department has reduced the backlog of permits by nearly 900 individual permits as of March 1, 2024, or 41 percent.

Since this policy became effective on November 1, 2023, only one refund has been issued.

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**11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

This project has changed from its inception through identifying new ways to streamline the hiring process. We also created, and later finetuned, an interactive dashboard of in-scope positions, which was pivotal in tracking and monitoring impacted vacancies.

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