

**Application for Leadership in State Human Resources Management**

**For Commissioner Rebecca R. Hunter**



**Nominator's Name: Danielle Barnes**

**Title: Deputy Commissioner**

**Agency: Tennessee Department of Human Resources**

**Address: 505 Deaderick Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Nashville, TN 37243**

**Telephone: 615-253-8967**

**Fax: 615-741-7880**

**Email: [Danielle.Barnes@TN.Gov](mailto:Danielle.Barnes@TN.Gov)**

**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 her appointment as Commissioner of Human Resources by Governor Bill Haslam in January 2011, Rebecca Hunter has been a consistent influencer at the executive level on human resources activities within Tennessee state government. She has assisted the Governor's Office on legislative reform projects that led to the passage and implementation of the Tennessee Accountability in Management Act (T.E.A.M. Act) in 2012, and the Compensation Enhancement Act for state employees, which was introduced for the 2015 session. The T.E.A.M. Act was groundbreaking legislation which repealed many antiquated and restrictive civil service laws, allowing state government to recruit, retain and reward the best and brightest employees. The Compensation Enhancement Act seeks to repurpose funds that have historically been used to pay employees solely based upon length of service and redirect the focus from seniority to market and performance based compensation, allowing the State of Tennessee to become more competitive with the applicable labor market.

Commissioner Hunter is a member of the Governor's Cabinet and serves on the State Insurance Committee, the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board, the Total Rewards Committee, LEAD Tennessee's Executive Council, and the Shared Services Sub-Cabinet. She has been instrumental in the development of several projects in partnership with the Customer Focused Government Office, such as:

- creating a statewide initiative to teach all employees GREAT Customer Service;
- designing a new strategic planning process for state government that links each agency's plan to the Governor's priorities, connects it to each Commissioner's performance plan and

cascades throughout the state all the way to the performance plans of each individual contributor; and

- establishing the Governor's Management Fellows program and the Accelerated Leadership Institute associated with the program.

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

Commissioner Hunter had been a long-time member of the Tennessee Personnel Management Association due to her tenure as HR Director for Hamilton County government. Since her appointment to state government in 2011, she has continued her association with the organization, serving as president and a member of the executive committee. Under her leadership, the TPMA held its first strategic planning session, setting long-term goals to be accomplished. Membership nearly doubled during her tenure as president in large part because she encouraged HR employees from state agencies to participate and she led the development of a 12-hour educational certificate program (The Three Pillars of Human Resources) designed to teach basic strategy, employment law and personnel administration to government human resources professionals and other state and local government employees who might have HR as a part of their role or responsibility. This program proved popular enough that other public organizations, such as the City of Memphis, Tennessee Association of Utility Districts and the Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Records requested its presentation at their annual conferences as well.

Commissioner Hunter has also served as the president and on the executive committee of NASPE, during which time she has served on conference program committees, contributed to white papers, and hosted the annual conference.

In addition to her many responsibilities for the state, Commissioner Hunter finds time to give back to the HR community by speaking to student chapters of SHRM across the state, and supporting the Middle Tennessee SHRM Chapter through membership and the encouragement of her team's active roles as board members, conference and luncheon speakers, etc. She is also active in IPMA-HR and has been a program speaker and participant in a number of executive level discussions of HR practices and management around the country.

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

Commissioner Hunter is passionate about collaborative leadership – she involves all the groups or individuals who have a stake in any program or decision. Her attention to this detail, overlooked by many leaders, has led to great programmatic success and acclaim for her inclusive leadership style.

**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.**

Commissioner Hunter's commitment to NASPE has included attendance and active participation in conferences and mid-year meetings, where she has shared information about new initiatives in Tennessee and gathered best practices from her peers, served as president and a member of the executive committee, and participated in events and meetings hosted by NASPE and Governing magazine that were designed to share information on best practices and transformative HR leadership.

She was recently interviewed for and appeared on the cover of HR Professionals magazine, has twice been nominated for the Middle TN Society of Human Resources highest award for HR Leadership and led the department to win the HR Excellence Facet Awards for Strategy and

Learning. Last year NASPE gave an honorable mention Rooney award to the Three Pillars of HR program because it has been so successful in advancing the profession, and then created a new award category specifically for internal development programs designed to advance the knowledge and skills of HR professionals that will have its first winner this year.

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

Upon her appointment, Commissioner Hunter traveled the State of Tennessee to talk directly with employees to determine what employment practices were working and which one needed reform. She is often heard to say, "it is a difficult, but rewarding challenge to balance the needs of the employees, the needs of the agencies, and the needs of the taxpayers," which is one of her greatest strengths. In order to implement the T.E.A.M. Act, the department was required to write and put into practice entirely new policies, rules and processes for hiring, discipline, performance management, appeals, reduction-in-force and employee transactions in less than six months. Commissioner Hunter led the "reinvention" of the department through the use of the "Four Disciplines of Execution" program, which held all team members accountable for milestones but also had an element of fun and competition. The Three Pillars of HR series would not have garnered nearly the success that it has without the Commissioner Hunter as its champion. She talks about the program often, participates in graduation ceremonies and has offered it outside of government many times. The HR Master Series, a developmental program designed for state HR executives (manager, assistant director, director) is in its third year, and a large part of its success has been Commissioner Hunter's commitment to attending each session (six full days and six half days per year). She also attends every summit of LEAD Tennessee, a statewide leadership development program. Her participation in these events showcases her signature characteristic of "modeling the way" and helping others develop needed skills and competencies to become strategic and thoughtful leaders.



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GREG ADAMS  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

BILL HASLAM  
GOVERNOR

March 30, 2015

Leslie Scott  
Executive Director  
National Association of State Personnel Executives

Dear Leslie:

I am honored to endorse Commissioner Rebecca Hunter for the award of Leadership in State Human Resources Management for the National Association of State Personnel Executives. Rebecca is a valued asset to the Tennessee Enterprise and the Governor's office relies on her leadership regularly. Her recent leadership has been demonstrated in the development and articulation of the Compensation Enhancement Act. Her leadership was essential as we researched best practices for moving from a seniority based system to one where we recruit, retain and reward employees based on market and performance allowing the state to become more competitive with the market. She has personally met with each legislative member on the pertinent committees and the Tennessee Employees Association. Her collaborative leadership style and passion for state employees continues to allow others to offer support for this project.

Rebecca is also working on a Voluntary Buyout Program. This program is designed to give state agencies the flexibility necessary to restructure and reorganize while offering our valued state employees a very rich separation package. Again, by meeting with each cabinet level agency, she has been able to provide expertise and support for a program rarely seen in state government which will be offered to over 1,300 employees.

Rebecca serves as a member of the shared services subcabinet, an essential group of internal providers, and provides monthly updates to the cabinet regarding state employee issues. Her passion for learning is evident as she continues to provide exceptional programs for leadership development and HR strategies for all state employees.

There is no candidate more deserving of this prestigious award. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with her and for her leadership in state government and in HR.

Sincerely,

Greg Adams