

# 10 Minute Supervisor Trainings



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## Hiring Good Employees

Every conservation district office is covered by one or more office staff, and they can make the difference in the success or failure of your office. They are the FACE of your conservation district: the people who meet and greet the public, go into schools, make farm visits, work with government agencies on your behalf, and keep your office running. There is a lot of responsibility, and the job requirements have changed immensely in the last several years. District boards need to ensure that the people that they employ are good at what they do. This requires good communication, honest conversations, and clear expectations from the board of supervisors. In this training we will talk about how to hire a good employee.

### **HIRING**

Districts are required to follow all applicable state and federal labor laws; however, many employee issues must be decided by the board. **All policies that are made by the board should be reflected in the board's policy and procedures or personnel manual.** The board members and employees need to understand what is required and expected.

When it is time to hire an employee, where do you begin? Each time a new employee is hired, it is important for the board to carefully discuss what is needed in a new employee. Remember to use input from your district conservationist and field representative as they may know more about the day-to-day requirements of the job.

Topics that need to be discussed by the board prior to interviewing include, but are not limited to:

- Compensation and benefits (including wages, vacation or sick leave, insurance, retirement, etc.)
- Duties (bookkeeping, education, errands, reporting, coordinating meetings, technical visits, surveying, etc.)
- Supervision – Who will they answer to?
- Office (hours, dress, travel, reimbursements, training, etc.)
- Evaluations (probation period, how to evaluate, expectations, etc.)

### 10 Things A Good Employee Needs to Stay

Good pay and increments

Training and room to grow

Benefits/leave

New ideas and programs

Fulfilling work

Flexibility

Praise for good work

Assistance when needed

Necessary equipment and tools

A knowledgeable employer

A simple ad with a clear description of duties needs to be advertised for at least one week in the local paper, radio or on a website or social media. There should be requirements suitable to the job. For example, if you need this person to conduct financial/clerical responsibilities, then you should require knowledge of computers and specifically Quick Books or Quicken. Or, if you are hiring a technician, then require agriculture and surveying experience. There are also hiring platforms available that can be utilized, such as LinkedIn or Indeed. You can obtain a sample ad from your field representative if you need help. Districts can require a resume, or you can create your own application. It is good business to interview at least 3 candidates by the personnel committee or the whole board. If you don't get the right applications, do not hire from those applicants. Look at the pay and benefits and ask yourselves why you didn't get good applicants and then re-advertise. It is very important to request references and then follow-through and contact each of these before offering someone a position.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Hire someone suitable for the position. Just as you wouldn't hire someone who didn't like getting dirty for your farming operation – you want to hire someone qualified that can deal with the public, be good at finances, and operate financial software to run your office. Experience speaks volumes and can substitute for a degree.
- Be conscious of nepotism. Hiring the chairman's wife or the technician's son is not always a good idea and may cause issues later.
- Implement a probationary period. The probationary period is an important tool for the district. The position may not be right for the person you hired. This gives you the legal opportunity to simply let them go. Probation lasts typically 30-90 days.
- The requirements of every district change over time. It is important that the expectations of the employees change with those requirements. Every employee should have an up-to-date job description that outlines the goals, duties and expectations for the job and lays out all pay and benefit information. If your job descriptions are older than 3 years or if each of your staff does not have one, your field representative can assist you in updating these.

### **TRAINING**

As a district board, you are responsible for ensuring that your employees are trained in whatever they need to do their job successfully. While other members of the Kentucky Conservation Partnership are able to help with training, it is the board's responsibility to make sure the employee is ready for their tasks.

- Your field representative can't be present daily, but they are very knowledgeable on reporting and state programs and should be involved in training.
- KACDE has many training opportunities throughout the year, as well as tools for new employees.
- Your surrounding counties might be willing to have your new employee visit to ask questions and learn more about day-to-day tasks.
- NRCS can assist with programming and technical assistance.

For an administrative position, the MOST important skill will be bookkeeping. If the employee is not ready to take care of payroll and taxes, the board should contact a CPA or payroll company to complete those tasks. It is not the responsibility of your field representative or another district's employee to do this.