

## SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

The Georgia Department of Public Safety (DPS) was honored at the May 2015 HR Community Meeting for using model policy practices. DPS' responses in the FY 2015 HR Audit revealed a robust program that supports objective and consistent decision-making and increases the perception of fairness in the workplace, which improves an employee's experience of working for State government.

The DPS mission is to work with all levels of government to provide a safe environment for residents and visitors to the State. To accomplish this mission, a dedicated workforce relies on policies to guide them. DPS depends on its HR Team to develop, analyze, and support the enforcement of the agency policies in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws.

Working for the State and in various HR functions since 1999, Kate Maier, HR Director, praises the law enforcement staff of the Georgia State Patrol, Capitol Police, and the Motor Carrier Compliance Division, for their outstanding public service. "It's a calling," she says. "It comes from within." Because of her own love of public service, she leads her team of HR professionals with gusto to support the DPS staff in all areas of Human Resources, including policy management.

As a model agency in Policy, Ms. Maier attributes their accomplishments to the agency culture which comes from and is driven by their leadership. Both Commissioner Col. Mark W. McDonough and Deputy Commissioner Lt. Col. Russell Powell actively support strong policy. All members of leadership and stakeholders review policy modifications and sign off on new or revised policies before they are published. Ms. Maier explains that sound policy operating within State rules and laws is important to DPS.

Employees are kept abreast of Federal, State, and agency policies through access to the DPS Policy Manual and the Intranet. In addition, important new policies or changes are communicated directly by email to each employee. Employees must sign and return to HR a form acknowledging they have read, understand, and will adhere to the policy. Ms. Maier says the receipt of the forms is tracked to ensure every employee is aware of expectations, and employees are held accountable if they violate the policy. "If employees understand guidelines and expectations, it helps avoid problems." The same process is used when communicating changes that reflect important benefits. For example, HR recently emailed to all employees a notice explaining the new Education Support Leave and requiring signed acknowledgement.

Ms. Maier explains HR handles policy development very structurally. They review State Personnel Board Rules, utilize the agency legal director, and then the HR team collaborates to make revisions and additions. Although it is challenging to develop good policy, Ms. Maier's team balances how much detail to include, looks at different interpretation perspectives, and brainstorms "what if" scenarios. She considers communication and collaboration as means of obtaining success in policy management. "You need people around you to talk through policy issues, to see what they know and think."

Due to the nature of DPS work, policies such as the Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Program and Anti-Discrimination must be clearly written to clarify expectations and processes. There are rarely any problems; but if needed, they follow the State Personnel Board Rules, their agency policy, and have

steps and forms to fit their agency criteria. Furthermore, despite employees being stationed throughout the state, the agency provides regular training for managers and supervisors on employment law issues, such as harassment.

Another important step in being successful in policy development is that Ms. Maier personally attends monthly State Personnel Board meetings. She finds the meetings helpful because she hears what changes in rules are coming up and the perspectives of the Board members. Because DPS has classified employees, she finds that oral arguments on classified employee appeals held at meetings are very informative, as they demonstrate the legal process. But Ms. Maier maintains that it is the leadership support and the HR team effort that truly make DPS a Model agency in Policy.