

BWSR Meet & Confer Meeting Notes

Tuesday, April 5, 2022, 11:00 AM-12 PM

BWSR Meet and Confer (M&C) Committee Chair Melissa King began the meeting at 11:00 am.

Introductions & Agenda

Melissa started the meeting and welcomed everyone. Completed a round of introductions. M&C members present include Melissa King, Jason Weirnerman, Annie Felix-Gerth, Steve Hofstad, and Gwen Steel. BWSR leadership present include John Jaschke and David Weirens. Others present include Adam Browning (DNR HR) and Pete Marincel (MAPE). Melissa introduced the Jamboard that will be used later in the meeting and made sure everyone was able to access it.

Draft Workload Agreement Form

Melissa introduced the Draft Workload Agreement Form and provided background on why the M&C team developed the form and the goals for its use. Ask: Is there a way to get this more formalized for BWSR?

John responded about the importance for BWSR to be systematic in the approach to approve and document temporary work assignments. Dave expressed the importance of the information that we have provided and how that helps him. He talked about the importance of facilitating consistent conversations across different sections/supervisors and documenting those conversations. Steve brought up the importance of regular check-ins between supervisor and staff.

Jason asked if we should trial the form with some MAPE members or make it a BWSR form. John responded that there may be two different things here with the overtime possibly being a separate item. Annie responded with the importance of having overtime as part of the conversation if an employee is being asked to do additional duties/special work assignments. Pete provided background on how that fits into the contract.

Dave asked about what would trigger the use of this form beyond filling in for vacant positions. Melissa and Jason provided examples, self and those heard from staff through the input process, with work assignments and seeking guidance on prioritization of work with time available.

Matt asked if it would be possible to have the future BWSR HR staff work with the M&C team to formalize a process/form. John replied that there are parts of the process (e.g. conversations between supervisor and employee) that don't need HR involvement. John stated that he sees this as three different items: 1) frequent conversations between supervisors and staff, 2) discussions/documentation of workload adjustments, and 3) overtime.

Steve brought back the importance of documentation and ultimately that is the team's goal with this form. Melissa acknowledged the comments heard and the team will work to revise the form.

Discuss Organizational Workload Solutions

Melissa provided more background on the Jamboard and introduced the summarized ideas for organization solutions to the workload issues and began the discussion on staffing strategies. John

discussed where we are at as an agency with a priority to fill vacant positions first and then assessing additional needs for new & expanding programs such as climate, tribal consultation, DEI strategy, partner customer service. This will include some workload analysis that is expected to begin on each program sometime in May. There was acknowledgement that specific details are not yet known.

Dave expressed the importance of ensuring long-term consistent workload before decisions are made to add positions and it all takes time. Jason shared an example from regional operations how we continue to see additional programs and growing funding for existing programs that are assigned to existing staff, whereas other agencies typically hire new staff to run new programs.

John asked for more specificity in examples and solutions. Jason provided an example of MDA hiring two staff to run the MAWQCP program compared to BWSR's new Soil Health program that was built by a team of existing staff.

Annie mentioned that we are likely going to be discussing specific examples of workload issues at the next Regional Ops meeting. Limited time left in the meeting to discuss. Melissa acknowledged John's request for more specificity. Discussion will be continued at the next committee meeting.

Return to Work/Telecommute

Melissa provided an update that a telecommute survey was distributed to MAPE members and asked for direction on how we should share the survey results. Melissa was directed to send survey results to John, Dave, and Jenny Gieseke.

Next Steps

Next meeting scheduled for June. In the meantime, M&C team will work on getting more specific examples for the workload solutions. John stated he would be happy to join the June meeting and this meeting was beneficial to him. It was discussed that Justin Hanson will also be involved in the next meeting as the new Assistant Director for Regional Operations. Annie asked about possibility of reaching out to Justin ahead of the next meeting to get him up to speed on M&C items. Melissa and Jason will schedule time with Justin to review.

Melissa ended the committee meeting.