

Schedule F. Workforce Plan

I. AGENCY OVERVIEW.

The agency was created in 1921 by the 37th Legislature under the name Texas State Board of Examiners in Optometry. The 61st Legislature in 1969 changed the agency's name to Texas Optometry Board. Sunset legislation in 2017 extended the agency until 2029. Board members are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for a term of six years and are eligible for one reappointment. Board meetings are open, public, meetings and are held at least quarterly.

The agency is mission-driven and carries out its core duties in accordance with the Texas Optometry Act. The agency continuously strives to streamline or revise processes to support the overall mission. Primary functions of the agency are the examination and determination of the fitness of applicants for licensure, the licensing of successful applicants, and the permanent monitoring of that license, including ensuring that the required continuing education for renewal of licenses is completed. In addition, the agency timely and thoroughly investigates and resolves complaints received against its licensees and issues remedial sanctions in accordance with the Act and promulgated rules.

A. Agency Mission.

The mission of the agency is to promote, preserve, and protect the health, safety and economic welfare of the people of Texas through the regulation of the practice of optometry.

B. Agency Strategic Goals and Objectives.

GOAL A	Licensure & Regulation. To manage a cost-effective quality program of examination and licensure to ensure the initial and continuing competency of optometrists to ensure protection of the public.
Objective A.1	Licensure & Regulation. To ensure timely and cost-effective application processing and licensure for 100 percent of all qualified applicants. To manage a quality program of examination and licensure to ensure the initial and continuing competency of optometrists.
Objective A.2	Licensure & Regulation. To ensure timely and cost-effective permanent regulation process through biennial renewals of licenses for 100 percent of licensees.
GOAL B	Enforcement. To facilitate effective enforcement of the Texas Optometry Act to ensure the public protection.
Objective B.1	Enforcement. To ensure swift and thorough investigations of all jurisdictional complaints. Ensure a fair disciplinary process and appropriate sanctions to protect the public.
Objective B.2	Peer Assistance. Oversee operation of a Peer Assistance Program referring participants as needed to protect the public.

C. Business Functions.

The Texas Optometry Board licenses optometrists, therapeutic optometrists and certifies Optometric Glaucoma Specialists, approves continuing education courses, approves annual professional responsibility/ethics courses, promulgates rules, conducts annual compliance inspections and investigates alleged violations of the Optometry Act and Board Rules.

D. Anticipated Changes in Strategies.

No changes to the agency mission are anticipated in the next five years. The agency will continue to search for organizational efficiencies and support modernization of operations through the use of technology.

E. Additional Considerations.

Agency Workload

Licensing - The Board consistently experiences a steady annual growth of its licensee population. In FY21, the agency experienced a significant increase in the total number of licenses issued annually. Specifically, in FY21 the agency issued 287 licenses compared to FY20 in which the agency licensed 193.

Enforcement – The agency is experiencing new trends in complaints and allegations are complex. Due to the complexity of the allegations, the agency has recently contracts with consultants and has filed more cases at the Southern Office of Administrative Hearings than in the past few years. The agency is committed to protecting the public but anticipates additional costs to enforce the Optometry Act.

Challenges to Providing Competitive Salaries.

Experienced staff are essential when carrying out the core functions of the agency. The Texas Optometry Board is a small but mighty agency. Smaller staff sizes often mean that the agency employees fulfill multiple rolls within the office for less compensation than other agencies. However, the agency strives to recruit and retain the most qualified employees. Employee compensation is a major concern through periods of economic inflation. The agency has offered a permanent hybrid telework schedule for some qualified employees as a reward strategy when increased compensation is not an option.

II. CURRENT WORKFORCE PROFILE (SUPPLY ANALYSIS)

A. Agency Demographics.

Female 57%

Male 43%

Race: African-American 29% Hispanic 28% Anglo 43%

Percentage of workforce eligible to retire in the next five years: 14%

The Texas Government Code, Section 657.004, sets an agency goal of 20 percent of employees having served in the military. The agency is currently below the goal at 14%. The agency continues to offer interview opportunities and positions of employment to qualified military applicants

B. Workforce & Essential Skills.

The agency has determined that the following workforce skills are necessary at a state agency charged with protecting the public: critical thinking, detail-oriented and problem solving, team-work and collaboration, time management, professionalism and strong work ethic, oral and written communication skills, customer service, delegation and leadership.

The agency has determined that the following essential skills are critical in performing the specific duties related to the Optometry Board: computer and database skills, regulatory and criminal investigation, administrative licensing, legal/analytical skills, legislative, human resources, accounting, information technology, office management, and an overall understanding of the administration of programs.

C. Employee Turnover

Agency turnover is low. In the last two years, two employees retired. One employee was a second-time retiree and the other recently retired in January 2022.

III. FUTURE WORKFORCE PROFILE (DEMAND ANALYSIS)

The Agency's future workforce profile should closely match the current profile, but perhaps with even more emphasis on the ability to use automated systems. As the agency continues to explore ways to move toward a modernized and paperless environment, it is anticipated that additional and ongoing training in the area of computer software and imaging processes will be needed.

IV. GAP ANALYSIS

A. Gaps Do Exist with Current Staffing or Future Staffing.

The agency's current workforce is qualified and competent to undertake the tasks required by the agency. Employees will leave in the future, creating vacancies that make it difficult to timely accomplish needed tasks. Provided that employee salaries increase, the agency should be able to select well qualified individuals to fill the vacancies. Since the cost of living has significantly increased and state agencies are unable to offer competitive salaries to sustain a reasonable lifestyle, the agency is and will continue to experience longer, unfilled, vacancies and smaller applicant pools of qualified individuals.

V. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The Texas Optometry Board requires a reliable, productive, business atmosphere with a well-trained staff in order to protect the public. The following are agency initiatives for this purpose:

1. Request additional operating funds in the next legislative session to reasonably enhance staff compensation.
2. Develop, implement and maintain professional development opportunities for staff.
3. Establish a mentorship program for new employees to better support them in their new roles.
4. Complete a succession plan for each position which incorporates timelines and minimal skill sets.
5. Establish and implement a career ladder as appropriate.