

SCHEDULE F

TEXAS BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINERS

WORKFORCE PLAN

OVERVIEW OF AGENCY SCOPE AND FUNCTIONS

The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners was created in 1911 by the 32nd Legislature and charged with regulating the practice of veterinary medicine. The 82nd Legislature added the licensure and regulation of equine dental providers and the 83rd Legislature added the licensure and regulation of licensed veterinary technicians. As the years have passed, different legislative bodies have refined the Board's responsibilities and authority. The Board's current enabling statute is located in the Texas Occupations Code, Title 4, Professions Related to Animal Health, Chapter 801.

Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners is to establish and enforce policies to ensure the best possible quality of veterinary and equine dental provider services for the people of Texas.

Agency Programs

Today, the Board's primary program responsibilities include Licensing and Examination, Legal/Enforcement, and Peer Assistance.

Licensing and Examination

The Licensing Division is charged with ensuring that only those persons who have demonstrated the ability to meet or exceed the minimum qualifications required to be a licensed veterinarian in the state of Texas enter the practice and provide veterinary services to Texas citizens. The Board is also responsible for renewing the more than 10,000 licenses currently held by practitioners, and for collecting fees associated with the licensing and examination functions.

Enforcement

The enforcement program is designed to protect consumers of veterinary and equine dental provider services and ensure veterinarians, equine dental providers, and licensed veterinary technicians comply with the Veterinary Licensing Act through the investigation of complaints and compliance inspections as well as the investigation of the unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine.

The legislature has granted the Board authority to utilize many tools for the enforcement efforts. Those tools include the ability to refuse to examine an applicant; suspension, probation or revocation of a license; issue reprimands, require the make-up of missed continuing education and/or requiring additional continuing education; impose administrative penalties; and hold informal conferences concerning alleged violations of the Act and Rules.

Peer Assistance

The Peer Assistance program assists veterinarians and veterinary students who are impaired by chemical dependency or mental illness.

The program, authorized by Chapter 467 of the Health and Safety Code, is administered under contract through the Professional Recovery Network and is approved by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

Our Compact with Texans

The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners is the State's agency that regulates the practice of veterinary medicine by licensing and regulating veterinarians, equine dental providers, and licensed veterinary technicians. It also takes action against non-licensed persons who violate the Veterinary Licensing Act by practicing veterinary medicine without a license. The Board and its staff are committed to excellence in their service to the public and the veterinary profession. The Board's first priority is to protect the public. It must maintain high standards for veterinarians who seek licensure in Texas and those who are already in practice. The Board also has a commitment to its licensees to keep them informed about the law, its rules, and related information.

All individuals who contact the Board can expect:

- Easy access to agency services.
- Consumer friendly processes;
- Agency staff that are courteous, knowledgeable, and responsive to their needs;
- Answers to questions and requests for information provided in a timely manner; and
- Services provided in an efficient manner that meets the customer's needs and yet remains fiscally responsible.

WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. Current Workforce

The Board's current workforce consists of 21 full time positions. Classifications include:

- Executive Director (1)
- General Counsel I (1)
- Attorney I (1)
- Director I (1)
- Investigator V (1)
- Investigator IV (4)
- Investigator III (1)
- Program Supervisor III (1)
- Program Specialist I (1)
- Administrative Assistant IV (1)
- Licensing and Permit Specialist II (1)
- Licensing and Permit Specialist I (1)
- Legal Secretary III (1)
- Staff Services Officer IV (1)

B. Critical Workforce Skills

There are numerous skills necessary for successful completion of the agency's core functions. These skills include:

- Executive Level Management
- Customer Service
- Investigative

- Analysis/Research
- Mediation/Arbitration
- Communication (Oral and Written)
- Legal Experience
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- State Budgeting/Governmental Fund Accounting
- Advanced Computer Skills
- Business Office Management
- Computer Skills (skill requirements range from entry-level to highly skilled information technology specialists)

C. **Workforce Demographics**

As of June 1, 2022, the Board was staffed with a total headcount of 17 employees. The following tables profile the agency’s workforce.

Gender

	Number of Employees	Percent of Employees
Male	7	41%
Female	10	59%

Age

	Number of Employees	Percent of Employees
20 – 29 years	1	6%
30 – 39 years	4	24%
40 – 49 years	1	6%
50 – 59 years	6	35%
60 – 69 years	5	29%

State Tenure

	Number of Employees	Percent of Employees
0 – 5 years	11	64%
6 – 10 years	2	12%
11 – 15 years	1	6%
16 – 20 years	2	12%
21 – 25 years	0	0%
Over 25 Years	1	6%

Agency Tenure

	Number of Employees	Percent of Employees
0 – 5 years	13	76%
6 – 10 years	3	18%
11 – 15 years	1	6%

D. Workforce as Compared with Statewide Civilian Workforce

The following table compares the Board’s percentage of African American, Hispanic, and Female employees to the statewide civilian workforce as reported by the Texas Workforce Commission Civil Rights Division. The State % is based on data reported from fiscal year 2016.

Job Category	African American		Hispanic American		Female	
	Board%	State %	Board %	State %	Board %	State %
Officials/Administrators	11.76%	8.10%	17.65%	22.40%	17.65%	38.80%
Professionals	0.00%	10.90%	6.00%	20.30%	6.00%	54.50%
Administrative Support	0.00%	14.30%	6.00%	36.40%	17.65%	71.60%

The Board is under-represented in all of the African American and Hispanic categories. Because the Board has a small number of staff, only 21 FTEs, and maintains a small budget, \$1,473,491 for FY2022 and \$1,409,791 for FY2023, the Board faces many challenges in attracting a diverse group of applicants from which to choose the most qualified applicants when vacancies arise. A small staff means that promotional opportunities are very limited. A small budget limits the Board in its competitiveness with larger governmental entities and its ability to recruit experienced personnel and retain newly trained employees.

The Board continues to utilize as many tools as possible to seek a diverse applicant pool, including advertising with WorkInTexas, a web-based job Board with the Texas Workforce Commission, providing copies of announcements for all positions to be filled externally to minority and women’s organizations.

E. Employee Turnover

Turnover experienced by the Board in 2017 can be attributed largely to the Sunset Commission’s Review of the agency. Most of the turnover in FY17 and FY19 was directly related to leadership changes and reorganization. In the past, a variety of internal and external factors including the lack of advancement opportunities with a small agency contributed to the high turnover rate. The Board had no turnover in FY20 and FY21 due to Covid pandemic instability. Currently, during FY22, the agency has begun to experience some significant turnover. The agency is currently appropriated 21 FTEs; however, only 17 positions are currently filled.

Following is a chart that shows the Board’s turnover rate as compared to the overall State turnover for fiscal years 2017 – 2021.

Fiscal Year	TBVM	State
2021	0.0%	21.5%
2020	0.0%	18.6%
2019	27.4%	20.3%
2018	41.2%	19.3%
2017	35.3%	18.6%

F. Agency Workforce Needs – Expected Workforce Changes

- High demand for new and improve data management software;
- Increased need for additional staff due to changes in workload and to meet statutory requirements;
- Increased use of technology to revise and streamline work processes; and
- Greater demand for web-related services;

G. Anticipated Program and Workload Changes and Shortfalls

Enforcement

Veterinary medicine is an ever-changing field. With constant advances in medical technology and changes in treatment protocols, the demands placed on veterinarians are increasing dramatically. In addition, many individuals see themselves as guardians of animals instead of owners, placing more emphasis on the emotional attachment to animals. Some individuals even see their animals as companions. This opens the door to more litigation and more complaints. As a result of these changes, the number of complaints received by the Board has increased. The increase in the number of citizens moving to Texas has also brought an increase to the animal population and the needs for veterinary care. This increase has also contributed to an increase in the volume of complaints received.

The Board currently has 10,536 licensed veterinarians, 57 special licensed veterinarians, 10 temporary licensed veterinarians, 2,424 licensed veterinary technicians, and 61 licensed equine dental providers. Our current funding allows for 750 on-site inspections per year; however, due to the rise in fuel costs and lodging, funding should be increased. We have seen a significant increase recently with drug diversion and serious mental health issues. Some of these problems have been

discovered during on-site inspections and some have been long term problems. It certainly is better for the public and the licensee to discover drug diversion, substance abuse, and serious mental health problems as early as possible.

Each individual investigator has a responsibility to investigate a complaint by contacting both the complainant and the responding licensee, gathering information relating to the complaint including patient records and other documentation from both parties to support their argument and obtaining second opinions from veterinarians not connected to the case. In order to allow the Board to make a fair decision, investigators are required to delve into medical matters and understand medical processes and terminology to allow them to write comprehensive, informative reports of investigation that are then sent, along with supporting documentation, for medical review. In addition to the investigation of complaints, Board investigators complete special investigations as needed and enforcement staff spend significant hours per day on the phone answering questions relating to the laws and rules that govern veterinary medicine.

Unlike most medical professions, veterinarians purchase and maintain dangerous drugs and controlled substance inventories within their practices. On-site inspections allow investigators to ensure that these controlled substances are maintained and utilized in a manner consistent with applicable laws and rules. These on-site inspections also allow investigators to review patient records, clinic operations, and other business records to ensure compliance. This contact with board investigators provides the licensee with an opportunity to ask questions and have one on one contact. On-site inspections also allow the Board an opportunity to remain up-to-date on the workings of a veterinary practice. Onsite inspections can be very time consuming to board investigators and will utilize a lot of work hours, causing an interference with the investigators ability to also perform thorough investigations of complaints. The addition of Investigator FTEs is needed to allow the agency to fulfill its core function of performing the necessary number of inspections to meet its performance measures, in addition to performing more thorough and comprehensive investigations.

Legal

At this time there is one General Counsel, one Staff Attorney, and one Legal Administrative Assistant FTE within the TBVME's legal division. While the backlog of cases has decreased within the division, a backlog remains. Further, the legal division has seen an increase in cases and an increase in the complex nature of those cases. The number of licensees is also on the rise which will logically lead to an increase in cases as well. This change in circumstances demands additional resources and experience. The Board's budget only permits a lower salary for its Staff Attorney and General Counsel; therefore, it often is only able to hire an attorney with less experience. This requires time and resources for training. Once the attorney has obtained such training and institutional knowledge, they often leave employment with the Board for higher salaries in other agencies, often within the Health Professions Council. The same funding issue exists for the legal administrative position as the TBVME's Legal Division has recently experienced turnover with this position and has

yet to backfill it due to a lack of applications being received. The increased cost of living in Austin, the requirements for in-person employment format, and the salary has presented a challenge on recruitment and retention for the position. While the agency is waiting to fill the position, the attorneys are performing the duties of the legal administrative position resulting in reduced productivity. The amount and nature of cases the Board is currently experiencing and expects to experience in the future necessitates additional funding to obtain and maintain quality legal staff.

Licensing and Examination

The agency currently has three FTEs operating its licensing and examination program. The licensing and examination division is responsible for administering the State Board Examination, the Provisional and Special License examinations, issuing licenses to qualified individuals who apply for a State of Texas veterinary, veterinary technician or equine dental provider license, and annual renewal of each license.

H. Future Workforce Skills Needed

With the evolution of veterinary medicine, an increasingly mobile licensee base, changes in business processes, and the continued need for strong leadership, the agency anticipates a greater need in the following skills:

- Leadership;
- Critical thinking;
- Problem solving;
- Communication;
- Change management;
- Expanded technological; and
- Advanced time management.

The continued development of these skills within agency staff will enable the agency to successfully complete its mission in the coming years.

I. Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Skills

Based on the agency's workforce analysis, the following issues must be addressed:

- The high number of employees with just a few years of experience in their positions requires more time and resources spent training.
- Employee turnover
- Additional salary compensation that is commensurate with other state agencies
- Additional FTEs to fulfill agency's core functions and meet performance measures

III. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

While the Board faces many challenges in its workforce over the next five years, most can be addressed by the following objectives:

Objective: Obtain additional staff necessary to successfully meet agency strategic responsibilities.

Action Steps

- Identify staffing deficiencies.
- Seek FTEs and funding from the Legislature; and
- Hire appropriate staff.

Objective: Adjustments to current employment placement within the State's compensation schedule.

Action Steps:

- Identify staff inappropriately placed within the State's compensation schedule; and
- Seek funding to allow for appropriate placement.

Objective: Continue to Develop and Document Job Procedures

By continuing to develop and document job procedures, the Board can build a library of resource material for its future workforce. This action will effectively reduce the "brain drain" that will happen as experienced workers leave the agency.

Action Steps

- Identify undocumented procedures.
- Provide guidance to staff on process documentation techniques;
- Ensure sufficient available time to allow staff to complete the documentation process; and
- Include the protection of completed job procedure documentation in the agency's Business Continuity Plan.

Objective: Continue Seeking Diversity Within the Applicant Pool and the Agency's Workforce.

By continuing to seek a diverse applicant pool that includes all qualified individuals, the agency can build a resource of individuals with a wide range of ideas and experience. These attributes can better help the agency to deal with changes in workload and challenges as responsibilities are added.

Action Steps

- Continue to identify and refine ways to attract a more diverse pool of applicants.
- Continue to hire the most qualified applicants; and
- Continue to identify ways to retain those qualified individuals.

Objective: Develop a competent, well-trained workforce.

It is imperative that the agency continues to cross train all agency employees to ensure that agency processes are not disrupted as employees leave. The agency should provide training to its employees whenever possible, utilizing both free and low cost training. This measure will ensure that, where possible, current employees will have opportunities for advancement, thereby increasing the agency's retention ability and that new technologies will be added to the agency's repertoire.

Action Steps

- Identify agency critical skills and competencies with input from divisions.
- Assess the level of risk facing the agency regarding the potential loss of knowledge and focus
- Training efforts in those areas.
- Expand and enhance staff development to include effective leadership and mentoring; and
- Assessing and addressing division specific training needs.