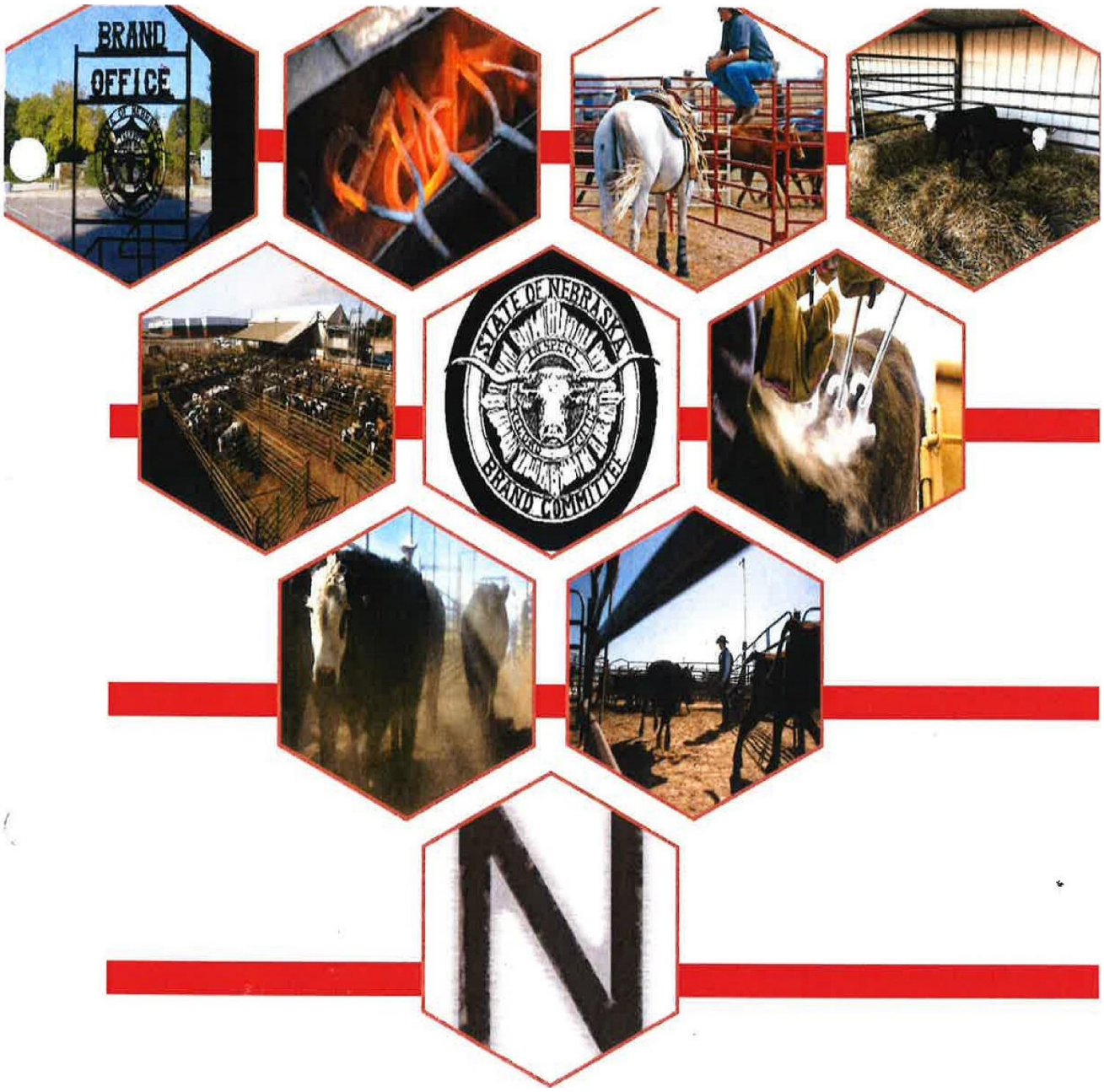
Employee Policy Handbook



Nebraska Brand Committee

May 2023 Edition

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

For the Nebraska Brand Committee, people are our agency's most valuable asset. The dedication and skill of our employees enable us to serve state agencies while making a positive impact. The ability of our agency to fulfill this important role is impacted by our agency culture and effectiveness of our efforts. That is why we created this Handbook.

These pages are filled with the guidelines we all can use—together with common sense, good judgment, integrity, and hard work—to create a culture of support and efficiency. We encourage you to become familiar with these guidelines and refer to the handbook to answer questions about working conditions, best practices, employee benefits, and your own performance as a member of the NBC family. If you have a question about something not covered in the handbook, contact your supervisor or the NBC office. We are very excited to have you on the team, and we're counting on you to do your best each day as we create our agency's future together.

NOTE: THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT. NOTHING CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK OR IN ANY OTHER STATEMENT OF THE NEBRASKA BRAND COMMITTEE'S PHILOSOPHY, INCLUDING ORAL STATEMENTS, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A PROMISE OF CONTINUING EMPLOYMENT. RATHER, BOTH THE NEBRASKA BRAND COMMITTEE AND THE EMPLOYEE ARE FREE TO TERMINATE THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP AT ANY TIME FOR ANY OR NO REASON.

Circumstances may arise in which the Nebraska Brand Committee determines that changes are required in this Handbook. For this reason, the NBC reserves the right, at any time, to modify, rescind or supplement any or all of the policies, procedures or benefits explained in this Handbook. You will receive notice of these changes as soon as possible. All changes must be authorized and signed by the Executive Director of the Nebraska Brand Committee. No such modification, however, shall change the at-will nature of employment at the NBC.

ABOUT THE NEBRASKA BRAND COMMITTEE

The Nebraska Brand Committee was created by the Legislature in 1941 to inspect cattle and investigate missing and/or stolen cattle. It is a self-supporting cash fund agency. Its operating funds come solely from fees collected for brand recordings, brand inspections and registered feedlots.

NBC STRATEGIC PLAN

The 1941 Legislature created the Nebraska Brand Committee which is a totally self-supported cash fund agency, and its mission is accomplished under the authority of Nebraska Livestock Brand Act.

The purpose of the Nebraska Brand Committee is to protect Nebraska brand and livestock owners from theft of livestock through established brand recording, brand inspection and livestock theft investigation.

The Nebraska Brand Committee is a non-code agency administrated by 7 Committee Members that are appointed by the governor and approved by the Legislature.

MISSION

To be the leader in animal ownership verification for Nebraska's #1 Industry.

VISION

By cultivating people, leadership and new technology the Nebraska Brand Committee will be the leader in inspection, recording and policing for the livestock industry.

Nebraska Brand Committee will pursue our vision by:

- Implementation and completion of electronic reporting system.
- Executing new methodologies for brand inspection to include current and emerging technologies.
- Provide continuing outreach and education.
- Foster a unified culture built on trust and integrity within the agency.
- Creating additional value of services to all segments of the livestock industry.
- Cultivating our relationships with state leadership, agencies, and industry partners.

THE GOALS SET BY THE NEBRASKA BRAND COMMITTEE TO ACCOMPLISH OUR VISION

1. Protection of the use of hot iron and freeze brands as prima facia evidence.
2. Continue to develop and enhance the electronic reporting system.
3. Analyze, monitor, and manage the budget to maintain a fiscally viable agency.
4. Enhance education and communication strategies.
5. Increase employee retention rate.
6. Development and implementation of an E-Inspection system.

EMPLOYMENT

AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT

No positions of the Nebraska Brand Committee other than the Executive Director are covered by an employment agreement for a specified period of time. All employment at the Nebraska Brand Committee is "at-will," and employees do not have a property right in their position with the Nebraska Brand Committee.

INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

All newly hired Brand Committee employees are required to complete an introductory period of one hundred eighty (180) calendar days. This introductory period is intended to provide both you and the Brand Committee with the opportunity to get to know each other. During this time, you have the opportunity to demonstrate:

1. That you are capable of performing the job for which you were hired;
2. That you understand and are following the policies and procedures of the Nebraska Brand Committee;
3. That you are suitable for employment at the Nebraska Brand Committee; and
4. That you are able to establish a sound record of attendance and punctuality.

At the Brand Committee's discretion, the introductory period may be extended beyond ninety (180) days.

Introductory employees may not be eligible for all benefits. The Brand Committee has specific policies explaining the benefits and eligibility for such benefits.

Neither your employment during the introductory period nor the successful completion of the introductory period is a guarantee of employment for a specific duration. All employment at the Nebraska Brand Committee is at-will.

ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION

Employees may qualify for advancement upon a successful evaluation, testing and completion of the original Introductory Period on the following intervals:

- All employees pay raises are determined by yearly performance evaluations.
- Pay increases outside of pay for performance reviews will be determined by the appropriate appointing authority.
- Inspector In-Charge status is reached only when transferred and promoted to a supervisory position and will be in-charge of one of the Auction Market barns.

RESIGNATION

Although all employment at the Nebraska Brand Committee is "at-will," in order to resign in good standing an employee must give written notice with the Standard Employee Separation Form to the Executive Director at least 10 work-days before separation unless the Executive Director agrees to a shorter period.

An employee may be considered to have abandoned the job if he/she has been absent from work for longer than two (2) workdays without being on approved leave, and such abandonment will be considered as a resignation not in good standing.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The State of Nebraska is an equal opportunity employer. This means that the agency makes employment decisions based on merit, qualifications, experience, and job pertinence. When it comes to employment opportunities and practices, the State does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

We also believe in the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008 (ADAAA). These acts prohibit employers from unlawfully discriminating against employees or job applicants with disabilities when making employment decisions. Qualified applicants or employees who are disabled should request reasonable accommodation from the Nebraska Brand Committee necessary to allow them to perform a particular job. If you are disabled and you wish such reasonable accommodation, contact Human Resources/Office Manager or the Executive Director. On receipt of your request, the Nebraska Brand Committee will meet with you to discuss your disability.

We may ask for information from your health care provider(s) regarding the nature of your disability and the nature of your limitations or take other steps necessary to help us determine viable options for reasonable accommodation. We also may ask that you undergo a medical examination by a physician chosen by the NBC to assist us in evaluating and accommodating your disability. We will then work with you to determine whether your disability can be reasonably accommodated, and if it can be accommodated, we will explore alternatives with you and endeavor to implement a mutually agreeable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation may take many forms and it will vary from one employee to another. Accommodation that will impose undue hardship on the Nebraska Brand Committee is not considered reasonable. Employees who report disability concerns or request accommodations will not be subject to retaliation.

If you ever feel we are failing in our duty and promise of equal opportunity to all applicants or employees, we sincerely invite you to report your concerns at once to your supervisor or the Executive Director. We will take every reasonable measure to correct any inequities, and promise that you will not be subjected to retaliation for bringing such matters to our attention. We will treat all such concerns with the utmost confidence consistent with a fair resolution of the problem.

FLEX SCHEDULES ALLIANCE OFFICE STAFF

Administrators and managers may use flextime to meet the needs of the work group as well as the individual employee. Flextime allows an employee to work the regularly scheduled number of hours in a week but have a fluctuating start and stop time outside the core office hours of 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday excluding designated paid holidays. Administrators and managers reserve the right to fluctuate an employee's flextime schedule to meet emergency situations or to have the employee attend mandatory agency meetings flex schedules that start prior to 7:00 am or any that would end after 6:00 pm require additional approval from the Office Manager.

GENETIC INFORMATION

We respect you and your family's medical privacy, and we take our responsibility to comply with laws relating to medical and genetic information very seriously. Federal law prohibits employers from requesting or requiring genetic information about any person or family member. Genetic information includes information about an individual or family member's genetic tests as well as information about family medical history. If you have any questions about this policy, please speak with your supervisor or contact Human Resources. If you believe this policy has been violated within our agency, you have the right to bring it to our attention using the Open Door process.

POLICY AGAINST UNLAWFUL RETALIATION

Fear of retaliation should not be a barrier to making a request for reasonable accommodation, reporting unlawful discrimination or harassment, or reporting ethical or legal or suspected ethical or legal violations. We prohibit unlawful retaliation against any employee:

- Who requests reasonable accommodation for a disability;
- Who complains about unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- Who reports ethical or legal or suspected ethical or legal violations, or;
- Who provides information or participates in an investigation of a complaint or report of the above.

Retaliation will not be tolerated, and those found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

If you have questions or concerns about any type of retaliation or discrimination in the workplace, you must use the Open Door process described in this Handbook to bring it to the attention of your management.

INTRA-AGENCY INTERVIEWS

Employees are highly encouraged to grow their careers. Therefore, employees who interview for a position within the agency are allotted travel time plus up to two hours of work time for the interview if the interview time cuts across normal work hours, provided their supervisor's approval is obtained.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

The Nebraska Brand Committee recognizes that some employees may need or want to hold additional jobs outside their employment with the agency. Employees can engage in outside work or hold other jobs, subject to certain restrictions. The Nebraska Brand Committee strives to provide the best service to our customers, and we require the full attention and efforts of our talented employees. To this end, the agency focuses on shared values, purpose, and vision and neither endorses nor precludes employees seeking employment outside their positions with the agency.

Any employee holding outside employment must demonstrate satisfactory performance in his or her job responsibilities with the Nebraska Brand Committee at all times. All employees will be expected to meet the job performance standards established by the agency and will be subject to the Nebraska Brand Committee' work and scheduling demands, regardless of any other outside work requirements.

If the Nebraska Brand Committee determines that an employee's outside work interferes with his or her job performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the Nebraska Brand Committee at any time, the

employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he or she wishes to remain employed with the Nebraska Brand Committee. A refusal to comply with the agency's reasonable request to terminate outside employment may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment with the Nebraska Brand Committee.

If an employee's outside employment presents a conflict of interest with the agency, as defined in the Conflict of Interest section, or if such outside employment has any potential for negative impact on the Nebraska Brand Committee, the employee will be asked to terminate the outside employment. Further restrictions include but are not limited to:

- You will not be allowed to undertake part time work outside of the geographical area which you are assigned as a Brand Committee Employee.
- You must have an agreement with your part-time employer that you have the flexibility of leaving on short notice as you will be expected to be able to leave any part-time work within 15 minutes after being notified that your Brand Committee services are needed elsewhere.
- You will not be allowed to use your state vehicle or claim mileage for a personal vehicle while going to or form your part-time job.
- You will not be allowed to solicit cattle for auction markets, feedlots, order buyers, or other similar actions which could bring criticism to the Brand Committee.
- You will not be allowed to own a monetary interest in an auction market, sale barn, packing plant, locker plant or similar business which may be used for the disposal of cattle, either dead or alive, in which you have a financial interest or which you have inspected.

Please contact your supervisor if you have questions about this policy. For Full-time employees engaging in outside employment, you must complete an Outside Employment Form, which can be obtained from and submitted to your supervisor.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

In order to safeguard the activities and assets of the Nebraska Brand Committee, employees should not have interests in outside businesses which conflict or appear to conflict with their ability to act and make independent decisions in the best interest of the State.

An employee is considered to have an interest in an outside business if the employee or any member of his/her immediate family hold any ownership in the business or its property; furnishes goods or services to the agency; is a creditor, employee, agent, officer, director, or consultant of the agency. Outside businesses include any person, firm, or corporation that sells or provides a service to, purchases from, or competes with the Nebraska Brand Committee.

All Nebraska Brand Committee employees who elect to do so may own a livestock brand(s) for their own use, but at no time are employees of the Nebraska Brand Committee allowed to buy, re-sell or trade brands.

All employees are expected to exercise good judgement and discretion in evaluating a particular activity so as to avoid any actual, or apparent, conflict of interest. If there is a doubt, the employee should discuss it with his/her supervisor and/or Human Resources.

GIFTS

Employees shall not solicit or accept for personal benefit directly or indirectly any loans, personal payments or discounts from any person or company that is seeking to conduct or is currently conducting business with the Nebraska Brand Committee. Gifts, meals, and accommodations of a reasonable and normal value provided to employees may be accepted. Employees should consult with management on the appropriateness of any gift exchanged.

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

To maintain a safe and productive work environment, it's important for Nebraska Brand Committee employees to be reliable and punctual when they report to work. The following policies help us with attendance and punctuality:

In the rare instance you can't avoid being late or are unable to work as scheduled, notify your supervisor as far in advance of your starting time as possible but no less than 30 minutes before your scheduled shift. Explain why you will be absent and when you expect to return to work.

Absences during working time are not paid unless covered by paid leave (vacation, sick, etc.) and approved by your supervisor.

If an employee doesn't report to work for two consecutive days and doesn't contact his or her supervisor he or she may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Such an absence may also be considered job abandonment and can be considered as a resignation not in good standing.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

You are expected to meet acceptable performance standards and otherwise conduct yourself in an appropriate manner in the course of your employment. The rules discussed below are published for your information and to guide your conduct on a day-to-day basis. These rules are not all-inclusive, and other circumstances may arise requiring the discipline and/or termination of an employee. We recognize that problems which arise in the workplace often present unique circumstances. Therefore, depending upon the circumstances, there may be times when immediate termination is warranted for the first violation of a rule which usually would only result in discipline. For this reason, the rules described below are not intended to form any contract between the Nebraska Brand Committee and its employees as to the procedures to be followed concerning any rule violation.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The following is a non-exhaustive list of violations of the Nebraska Brand Committee rules that could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination:

- Any act which might endanger the safety or lives of others, or the willful, deliberate or repeated violations of any safety rule;
- Violation of safety or security rules;
- Inadequate work performance, inattention to duties, or carelessness in performance of work;

- Sleeping or failing to remain alert while on duty, or failure to report to your supervisor any condition or circumstances that may affect alertness and/or performance;
- Refusal to perform work properly assigned or refusal to follow any reasonable, lawful instructions given by a supervisor without a reason considered acceptable by the Nebraska Brand Committee;
- Absenteeism or tardiness deemed excessive by the Nebraska Brand Committee;
- Failure to properly notify supervisor or Executive Director of an anticipated tardiness, absence or leave, or overstaying approved leaves;
- Discourteous, unprofessional or abusive treatment of members, co-workers or others having business with the Nebraska Brand Committee;
- Fighting bickering or failure to maintain harmonious relationships with co-workers and supervisors;
- Making malicious, false, or derogatory statements about the Nebraska Brand Committee, it members, employees or customers in public places;
- Misuse or abuse of the Nebraska Brand Committee property;
- Falsifying any the Nebraska Brand Committee records, including expense reports, pay, employment or brand records;
- Violating the Nebraska Brand Committees harassment policy;
- Violating the Nebraska Brand Committee's anti-retaliation policy;
- Violating the Nebraska Brand Committee's workplace violence policy;
- Violating the Nebraska Brand Committee's conflict of interest policy;
- Destroying, damaging, defacing, sabotaging or theft of the Nebraska Brand Committee records, property, tools, equipment, or the property of others;
- Removing or possessing without authorization property that belongs to the Nebraska Brand Committee, its employees, or its customers;
- Disclosure of confidential information to unauthorized persons;
- Dishonesty, including falsification of employment application or other records kept in the normal course of business (regardless of when discovered);
- Unauthorized alteration of the Nebraska Brand Committee documents, forms, or memoranda
- Insubordination or disrespect towards supervisors;
- Abuse of time during assigned working hours, including loafing, and interfering with other employees' duties;
- Commission of any act that may reflect adversely upon the Nebraska Brand Committee;
- Refusal to cooperate in an investigation by the Nebraska Brand Committee;
- Job abandonment;
- Using abusive, profane, insulting or discourteous language toward or in the presence of any other employees or third parties; and
- Any other act or failure to act which is deemed sufficient for immediate termination in the Nebraska Brand Committee's sole discretion.

DISCPLINARY ACTION POLICY

Normally, disciplinary measures such as verbal and written warnings or suspensions without pay are issued for the first instance of general rule violations. The nature of the discipline will vary depending on the

circumstances involved. However, in some cases, immediate termination of an employee for a violation may be appropriate. Also, minor infractions may also lead to immediate termination if the employee's work record and other lawful considerations make immediate termination appropriate in our sole opinion.

TIMEKEEPING

Under the federal law, the State is required to compensate employees for all hours worked. For that reason, employees should never work "off the clock." In other words, you should not perform any work without recording the time worked because you wouldn't be compensated for that work. If anyone asks you to work "off the clock," please contact the Chief Investigator/Human Resources so the issue can be resolved.

Non-exempt employees shall record their time worked in the timekeeping system or process as designated by the Nebraska Brand Committee. Employees shall request exceptions to their regular schedules in the timekeeping system (e.g., vacation or sick leave).

The standard work week for the Nebraska Brand Committee is Monday through Sunday of each week. Time cards are to be completed on a daily basis and submitted to Supervisors for approval no later than the Monday following the close of the week at 5:00 PM. Late submittal will result in an automatically generated corrective or disciplinary action.

WORK WEEK

The Nebraska Brand Committee Office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. where employees work a standard 40 hour work week. All employees other than the employees stationed out of the Alliance office are telecommuting employees, meaning they work from their homes or out of an assigned duty station (i.e. Auction Market).

The agency recognizes that everyone is different, so we strive to maintain a flexible work calendar and environment in which employees (having made proper arrangements with their supervisor) can customize their schedules to meet the particular demands of their jobs while still performing at a high level.

PAYDAYS AND PAYCHECKS

Nebraska Brand Committee full-time employees are paid monthly and part-time employees are paid bi-weekly.

Direct deposit is the quickest way to access your paycheck because your earnings are placed directly into your designated account. You may elect to have your paycheck deposited into multiple accounts. Direct deposit can be set up through the Employee Work Center (EWC). You may also choose a pay card, which operates like a debit card and no credit check or bank account is required.

At the Nebraska Brand Committee, we take all reasonable steps to ensure employees receive the correct amount of pay in each paycheck and they receive their pay promptly on the scheduled payday. If you discover an error in the amount of your pay, please bring it to the attention to the Human Resource Manager right away so a correction can be made in a timely matter.

OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY “COMP” TIME

Non-exempt employees are prohibited from working more than forty (40) hours in any workweek without their supervisor’s prior approval. Failure to abide by this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to an including termination.

In lieu of paid overtime, the Nebraska Brand Committee may compensate nonexempt employees for hours worked in excess of 40 hours during the scheduled work week by providing them with compensatory time off from work ("comp time").

Comp time shall accrue at the rate of one and one-half hours for every overtime hour worked. Eligible employees may accrue a maximum of 150 comp time hours.

Upon separation from employment, the Committee will pay employees for any unused accrued comp time at the higher rate of the employee during the last 3 years of employment with the Committee.

Comp time hours do not constitute "hours worked" for overtime purposes.

Employees desiring to use any accrued comp time must provide at least seven (7) days advance notice of such use. Untimely requests to use accrued comp time or requests that would unduly disrupt the Committee's operations may be denied by the Committee.

The Committee reserves the right to: (a) substitute monetary compensation at any time in lieu of providing comp time; and (b) require employees to use accrued comp time at any time. When taking time off, employees will be required to use comp time prior to using accrued vacation. Employees shall make every effort to use and "zero out" comp time balances by September 1st of each year, unless otherwise approved in advance by the Executive Director.

This policy is an agreement and understanding between the Committee and all non-exempt Committee employees and is a condition of employment.

Exempt employees of the Nebraska Brand Committee are not eligible for overtime or comp time and are not required to submit a weekly/ monthly time report, although management reserves the right to monitor hours worked to assist in ensuring efficient Committee operations and staffing levels.

BREAKS

During the daily work schedule, we encourage breaks so employees can return to work refreshed and relaxed. Every employee is allowed to take a 15-minute paid break during each work period of four consecutive hours. In general, you can take one break in the morning and one in the afternoon. Please be considerate of your coworkers and return to work promptly after 15 minutes.

After an employee has worked five hours, he or she is allowed to take an unpaid meal break of at least 30 minutes. If an employee is scheduled to work more than ten hours, he or she is allowed to take a second unpaid meal break of at least 30 minutes.

Because consistency and fairness are important, breaks may not be waived to excuse an employee from arriving late, leaving early, extending a meal break, or in lieu of a meal break.

Meal breaks should not be taken while performing work related duties and every effort should be made to take the meal period away from the immediate work area.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE REGARDING DEDUCTIONS/OVERTIME ELIGIBILITY

We respect our obligations under the various federal, state and local laws that govern the workplace, including the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Accordingly, we strictly prohibit the making of improper deductions from the salaries of exempt employees. We do not allow deductions that violate the FLSA.

If you believe that we made an improper deduction from your wages, you must promptly bring the matter to Human Resources/Office Manager. Reports of improper deductions will be promptly investigated. If it is determined that an improper deduction has occurred, you will be promptly reimbursed for any improper deduction made.

WORKING MOTHER ACCOMMODATION POLICY

In consideration to working mothers who may be lactating, the Nebraska Brand Committee will provide a reasonable amount of break time to accommodate an employee desiring to express breast milk for the employee's infant child. If possible, such break time should be taken during the rest breaks already provide to the employee. Any additional breaks taken to express breast milk may be unpaid for nonexempt employees, and exempt employees will be still be expected to work their customary total hours each workweek so as to ensure that NBC and customer needs are still met. The Nebraska Brand Committee will make reasonable efforts to provide a room or other location for the employee to express milk in private. If you are in need of such an accommodation, please contact our Human Resources/Office Manager as soon as possible so that any necessary arrangements can be made.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The Nebraska Brand Committee seeks to recognize superior performance and, when necessary, provide appropriate suggestions for you to improve. We evaluate performance at least annually. If you have not received a performance evaluation in accordance with this time frame, it is your responsibility to notify the Executive Director to help us ensure that the evaluation process is administered in a timely manner.

Your written performance evaluation will be based on your overall performance in relation to your job responsibilities and considering such factors as attendance, tardiness, conduct, demeanor, and attitude towards the Nebraska Brand Committee, your fellow employees and our customers.

A performance evaluation is not a contract or a commitment that you will receive a pay raise, compensation adjustment, promotion, bonus, continued employment, or retention. An evaluation is one of several factors we may consider when we make employment decisions.

TRAINING POLICY

Training is essential for agency and employee success. The Nebraska Brand Committee believes that it is crucial to enhance knowledge and skills, and to network with other professionals, thus improving potential for future opportunities and growth.

Because of this, all agency employees are required to complete at least 10 hours of agency facilitated or paid training within a calendar year. We recognize that for development, employees may need to attend training

that is conducted off or on-site and/or join professional associations that will enable them to remain up to date on best practices for their relevant fields.

Please note that the training policy is subject to annual division budgets established for training and memberships.

TRAVEL TIME

All employees who are required to report to a worksite other than that normally assigned or for the purpose of training, picking up tools, equipment, and/or uniforms and subsequently travel to a second work site, shall be in a paid status for time spent traveling to and from work sites. Overtime eligible employees away from the work site shall be in a paid time status during times of travel or when performing work related duties.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

An employee will be reimbursed at the rate per mile set by the IRS for travel in the employee's personal vehicle if work related. All mileage will start from each employees' designated duty station. Part time and Full time inspectors mileage will start at their homes, all Inspectors In-Charge mileage will start at their assigned barns.

Nebraska Brand Committee employees should not, whether driving a state-owned vehicle or a personal vehicle for which you are reimbursed mileage, transport any non-employees. Additionally, non-employees should not accompany Nebraska Brand Committee employees on job assignments or in state-owned or mileage compensated vehicles without prior approval of the Executive Director.

MEAL AND LODGING REIMBURSEMENT

It is Nebraska Brand Committee policy that any Salary Exempt Employee generally be more than 60 miles from his or her workplace in order to be eligible for One-day-travel meal reimbursements. One-day travel meal expenses (breakfast lunch and supper) may be reimbursed when it is deemed necessary for the working conditions of the employee. Only actual amounts paid for meals may be claimed. No reimbursement may be made for alcoholic beverages.

Employees who are required to travel shall be compensated for meals and lodging as follows:

- Breakfast- When an employee leaves for overnight travel at or before 6:30 A.M., breakfast shall be reimbursed.
- Lunch- When an employee leaves for overnight travel at or before 11:00 A.M., or returns from overnight travel at or after 2:00 P.M., lunch shall be reimbursed.
- Supper- When an employee returns from overnight travel at or after 7:00 P.M., the evening meal shall be reimbursed.

The appropriate record keeping procedure for the proper reporting of travel expenses under this handbook shall be consistent with the completion of the current State of Nebraska Accounting System Expense Reimbursement Document and IRS Code. The employee must adequately account, upon request from the Employer, for each state expense, dates of travel, and the area of travel.

NOTE: Meal expense incurred in the city or town in which the residence or primary work location of such employee is located, are not reimbursable.

WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

Respect means treating other employees, customers, clients, vendors, and other partners as professionals by showing courtesy and consideration for the full range of their talents, strengths, and viewpoints. We are a workplace that values respect for one another and trust our employees to perpetuate this value.

We know our employees are knowledgeable, talented people who understand how to conduct themselves properly at work. Nevertheless, we believe it helps to put some of these values into writing. These are just some of the ways in which we, as employees, can show respect with our daily behavior:

- We treat all customers in a patient, courteous, and professional manner.
- We treat other employees as we wish to be treated ourselves. Employees should not participate in practical jokes or making jokes at the expense of others.
- We don't fight, attempt to provoke fights, threaten, or cause bodily harm to others.
- We ensure our behavior does not damage customer relationships.

To help maintain a respectful workplace, the following policies have been implemented:

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS

To preserve our reputation and continued success as an agency, it is very important that we comply with all laws, rules, and regulations of the State of Nebraska.

To help us live up to our strong commitment to conduct business lawfully and ethically, we encourage employees to talk with a supervisor when in doubt about the best course of action to take in a particular situation. If you see what you believe might be a violation of a law, rule, or regulation, we ask you to report the violation to a supervisor team to help us make things right. We do not allow retaliatory action against any employee who, in good faith, reports a possible violation. Our commitment to conducting business ethically also means it's unacceptable to file false reports.

RACIAL PROFILING

Racial profiling is a practice that presents a great danger to the fundamental principles of a democratic society. It is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated. An individual who has been detained or whose vehicle has been stopped by the police for no reason other than the color of his or her skin or his or her apparent nationality or ethnicity is the victim of a discriminatory practice.

No member of this agency shall engage in racial profiling. Racial profiling shall not be used to justify the detention of an individual or to conduct a motor vehicle stop.

Definitions included in racial profiling include:

- **Disparate treatment** means differential treatment of persons on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- **Motor vehicle stop** means any stop of a motor vehicle, except for a stop of a motor truck, truck-tractor, semitrailer, trailer, or towed vehicle at a state weighing station.

- **Racial profiling** means detaining an individual or conducting a motor vehicle stop based upon disparate treatment of an individual.

INTERNAL METHODS OF PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT

All levels of supervision and command are required to take measures to ensure members of this agency do not practice racial profiling. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Categorically stating to members in their command that racial profiling will not be tolerated;
- A review of enforcement reports with a focus towards identifying possible racial profiling patterns;
- Encouraging appropriate traffic enforcement tactics;
- Randomly reviewing audio and video, if applicable, towards identifying possible racial profiling patterns.

Any member of this agency who becomes aware of incidents of racial profiling by any member of this agency shall report such incident to the Chief Investigator immediately. The Chief Investigator shall report such incidents to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice within thirty days after becoming aware of such incident.

In addition, this agency shall engage in internal methods of preventing racial profiling, including:

- Providing training to agency personnel focused on avoidance of apparent or actual racial profiling pursuant to this policy;
- Conducting internal affairs investigations in response to complaints regarding racial profiling; and
- Engaging in early intervention, up to and including disciplinary measures, with any member of this agency determined to have committed, participated in, condoned, or attempting to conceal any instance of racial profiling.

HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING RACIAL PROFILING

All complaints regarding racial profiling, as defined in this policy, shall be handled in the same manner which other complaints regarding officer conduct are investigated. Members of the public, who believe they have been the victim of racial profiling, are encouraged to report such allegation to the Chief Investigator, and no member of this agency should attempt to discourage a member of the public from reporting such allegation. Allegations of racial profiling will be investigated by the Chief Investigator or his/her designee. Members of this agency, who have been found through internal investigation to have violated this policy, may be required to participate in remedial training and/or be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

All allegations of racial profiling shall be reported to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice in the matter specified for electronic reporting on NCJIS. The Chief Investigator shall provide to the Commission the following:

- A copy of the allegation of racial profiling received;
- Written notification of the review and disposition of such allegation.

REPORTING OF TRAFFIC STOP DATA

All traffic stop data shall be reported to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice in the matter specified for electronic reporting on NCJIS.

This agency shall collect and maintain data regarding traffic stops and racial profiling allegations. This agency shall report to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, in a time-period, format, and manner prescribed by the Commission, a summary report of the following information:

- The number of motor vehicle stops;
- The characteristics of race or ethnicity of the person stopped, the identification of such characteristics shall be based on the observation and perception of the officer responsible for reporting the motor vehicle stop;
- If the stop is for a law violation, the nature of the alleged law violation which resulted in the motor vehicle stop;
- Whether a warning or citation was issued, an arrest made, or a search conducted as a result of the motor vehicle stop (search does not include a search incident to arrest or an inventory search);
- The agency shall collect and maintain any additional information this department has deemed necessary.

TRAINING

Members of this agency shall receive training on prevention of racial profiling during annual in-service training. Each member shall complete at least two hours of anti-bias and implicit bias training designed to minimize apparent or actual racial profiling in addition to the annual 20-hour requirement for continuing education in criminal justice and law enforcement. Such anti-bias training is not subject to the 10-hour limit, as noted in NAC Title 79, Chapter 17, §004.01 and §004.02, for courses delivered via distance or internet learning. The agency head shall ensure all personnel are familiar with the content of operational procedures related to racial profiling and personnel are operating within compliance of this policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

The Chief Investigator or his/her designee shall conduct an annual review of the operational procedures and practices relating to racial profiling to ensure members of this agency follow and adhere to the operational policies and practices.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

All employees at one time or another may have access to confidential information about the Nebraska Brand Committee, the State of Nebraska and/or employees or customers with whom we do business. It is very important to preserve this information in a confidential manner. Misuse of confidential information could damage the agency and/or our employees' reputation. Don't take chances - if you find yourself in possession of such information or are unsure of what to do, talk with your supervisor and get their authorization before you do anything with the information.

Not sure what is considered confidential? Here are specific examples:

- Any business process, data, plans, products, customer lists, or know-how, used in the agency.
- Information the agency hasn’t disclosed to the public or is not readily ascertainable by persons or entities outside the agency’s business without expending significant time and efforts.
- Information restricted by the agency to only select employees.
- Information about third parties the agency possesses as part of its business relationship with that person or company- especially if our agency is obligated to keep in confidence.

- Information the agency has spent significant time and money to develop or acquire. Information like this includes, but is not limited to, client lists, client files, vendor agreements and relationships, pricing lists and strategies, business strategies, and IT solutions.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

All work products developed on work time belong to the State of Nebraska and are considered intellectual property. Work products include, but are not limited to computer code, computer applications, proposals, manuals or white papers. Any outside financial gain or other benefits from work products developed while working for the State is prohibited.

STATE PROPERTY AND RESOURCES

The damage of equipment and loss of supplies all employees use to do their work could reduce our effectiveness and jeopardize our agency's well-being. That's why we ask all employees to exercise care when using state property. Please use state property only for authorized business purposes and report broken or malfunctioning equipment and depleted supplies to your supervisor as soon as possible.

Remember, all of the equipment and materials you use to do your work, as well as any materials you produce through your work, are the sole property of the State. It isn't permissible for employees to use state property for personal use.

Any theft of the Nebraska Brand Committee property should be promptly reported to a recognized law enforcement agency and the Executive Director of the Nebraska Brand Committee.

Repeated negligence of state equipment can result in disciplinary action and possible equipment reimbursement by employee.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY USER AND INFORMATION SECURITY

The Nebraska Brand Committee is committed to maintaining strong information security practices for users within our agency. The inappropriate use of technology exposes the State to risks such as virus attacks and compromised network systems and services, which could be very damaging to our work environment and the health of our agency. All computer, internet, and statewide network usage will be guided by the State of Nebraska.

Acceptable Use Policy (NITC 7-101) which can be found on the Nebraska Information Technology Commission NITC) website or from the Human Resources Department.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We know social media can be a fun, useful, and a rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends, and other employees around the world. However, the use of social media also presents certain risks and carries certain responsibilities.

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, social media can mean many things. For the Nebraska Brand Committee, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or

content of any sort on the Internet, including your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board, or chat room.

When you are online using social media, you need to follow all of the same principles, guidelines, and policies that the agency asks you to follow outside social media. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online, so before creating online content, consider the risks that could be involved. It's important to avoid any conduct that could adversely affect your job performance or the performance of fellow employees. You should watch for and avoid any conduct online that could adversely affect customers, clients, suppliers, or people who work on behalf of the State. It's possible any such harmful activity could result in corrective action by the State or law enforcement.

Know and Follow Workplace Guidelines

It is the responsibility of each employee to carefully read these guidelines as well as the agency's Equal Opportunity Employment, Harassment, and Confidential Information policies, so you understand them and know what to do. Make sure it's the responsibility of each employee to carefully read these guidelines as well as the agency's Equal Opportunity Employment, Harassment, and Confidential Information policies, so you understand them and know what to do. Make sure any social media posting you make are consistent with these policies. Examples of inappropriate postings that could lead to corrective action (or even termination) include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence, or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct.

Be Respectful

When you are communicating, always be fair and courteous to customers, clients, suppliers, or any person who works on behalf of the agency. Avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, or threatening. Don't post anything that disparages others or might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of negative comments made about race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law. Nebraska Brand Committee doesn't protect any other group of employee, or person.

Be Honest and Accurate

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news. If you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember, the internet archives almost everything so even deleted postings can be searched. The key is to think carefully about it before you post. Never post any information you know to be false, or rumors, about the State, fellow employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or people working on behalf of the State. While posting online, remember to:

- Maintain the confidentiality of the States trade secrets and private and confidential information trade secrets might include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how, and technology. Be careful not to post internal reports, policies, procedures, or other internal business-related confidential communications.
- Don’t create a link from your blog, web site, or other social networking site to the State’s web site without identifying yourself as a state employee.
- Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the State. If the State is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee, and make it clear your views do not represent those of the State, customers, clients, suppliers, or people working on behalf of the State.

- If you publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with the State, be clear you aren't speaking on behalf of the State. It is best to include a disclaimer such as, "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the State."

Using Social Media at Work
It's important not to use social media during working hours or to use it on equipment that belongs to the State unless it is work related and authorized by your supervisor. Please don't use State property, including but not limited to computers and email addresses, to register on social network, blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use.

POSTING, DISTRIBUTING, & SOLICITING

It is important to maintain a proper work environment at the Nebraska Brand Committee. One way to help achieve a positive environment is to prevent any interference or inconvenience caused by distribution of literature or printed materials by employees for the sale of merchandise, solicitation of business or financial donations during working time (working time does not include breaks, lunch breaks, or before and after a scheduled shift) for the employee's personal benefit.

VISITORS IN THE WORKPLACE

For the safety of our employees, customers, vendors, and visitors, we ask all visitors (including former employees) to enter the Nebraska Brand Committee at its main entrance and be accompanied to their destination by an employee. It is asked that you keep visits short. Reception areas may be used if children (young children should not be left alone) or other individuals are waiting for an employee for an extended period of time.

In all circumstances, whether in the office or at another work location, the Nebraska Brand Committee employee must take into consideration all safety issues for visitors, children, pets, etc.

CELL PHONES AND MOBILE DEVICES

Cell phones have become a common convenience for many employees. However, while at work, employees are expected to exercise discretion in using personal cellular phones or mobile devices to assure your phone or device will not interrupt our daily progress towards Nebraska Brand Committee goals. Except in emergency and work-related situations, employees are encouraged to make personal calls during breaks and lunch.

The Brand Committee will not be liable for the loss of personal cellular phones or mobile devices brought into the workplace. Cellular phones and mobile devices may not be used to defame, harass, intimidate, or threaten any other person. Employees are prohibited from using their cell phones in any illegal, illicit or offensive manner.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

An employee may engage in any political activities aside from:

- An employee may not participate in political activities while on Nebraska Brand Committee work time or while performing official NBC duties.

- An employee may not engage in political activity while wearing a uniform issued by the Nebraska Brand Committee.
- An employee may not use or authorize the use of NBC personnel, property, resources, or funds for campaign purposes, unless otherwise permitted by law.
- An employee whose position is partially or entirely funded with federal money and is covered by the federal Hatch Act is barred from being a candidate for partisan office (offices with candidates identified as being from specific political parties.)

If an employee wishes to take part in political activities during normally scheduled work hours, the employee must arrange for leave (vacation, leave without pay, etc.) to cover the period of absence. If an employee is elected to office and such office presents a conflict of interest with the employee's job or interferes with the employee's scheduled work hours, the Nebraska Brand Committee has the authority to change the terms and conditions of employment, up to and including termination of employment.

Political activity shall not be construed to mean or include any necessary policy-making or related duties associated with the normal course of employment and/or agency functions and duties.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE/DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Our goal for the Nebraska Brand Committee is to create a comfortable work environment while still maintaining a policy of appropriate attire for the workplace and for the clear identification of staff.

Proper hygiene is an important part of your personal appearance.

Clothing must be well-maintained, i.e. not torn, stained, or frayed, and cannot show the midriff or undergarments. Listed below are general guidelines to help us make good decisions about our appearance, helping to maintain a comfortable yet appropriate work environment:

- Collared shirt or un-collared shirt, that shall consist of either long or short sleeve.
- Pants will be long pants, waist high with no holes.
- Approved head cover will consist of a Nebraska Brand Committee ball cap, cowboy hat or any head covering that does not have a visible logo.
- Footwear will cover the whole foot, no open toed or sandal type footwear.

All Nebraska Brand Committee logo’s must come from an approved vendor. If an employee comes to work and the person's supervisor considers his or her attire to not meet the above standards, the supervisor will talk with the employee privately about it. It's possible the employee may be sent home to change into more appropriate attire.

DRUG, ALCOHOL & TOBACCO POLICY

The Nebraska Brand Committee is committed to protecting the safety, health, and well-being of all employees and other individuals in our workplace. We recognize alcohol and drug use could pose a significant threat to employees and our agency. For that reason, we have established a drug-free workplace program that balances our respect for individuals and their right to privacy with the need to maintain an alcohol-free and drug-free environment. Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment, as well.

It is a violation of our Drug and Alcohol Policy to engage in the following prohibited conduct during work hours or on state property:

- The use, unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, trade, transfer, gift, or offer for sale of alcohol, illegal drugs, intoxicants, or paraphernalia on a state property or during work hours.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or misusing legal prescription drugs.

These rules apply:

- During all working hours, whenever conducting business or representing the agency, while on call, while on standby, while on duty, when reporting for work, or when returning to work.
- While on state property- this includes state parking lots, in state vehicles or in personal vehicles while submitting for mileage reimbursement.

Alcoholic beverages should not be consumed or served at NBC functions or on state property.

This policy does not prohibit the use of a controlled substance that has a currently accepted medical use, provided the drug is prescribed or authorized by a medical doctor, the use of the drug at the prescribed or authorized level is consistent with the safe performance of the employee's duties, and the drug is used at the dosage prescribed or authorized. When an employee under physician's guidance is taking prescription drugs or other medication that could affect the employee's ability to work safely, the employee taking the medication is responsible for bringing the matter to his or her supervisor's attention before beginning work. We prohibit working under the influence of prescribed medication if it causes inability to perform the job safely, even when using medication under your physician's guidance.

REASONABLE CAUSE TESTING

The Nebraska Brand Committee employees may be subject to drug and alcohol testing when there is reasonable cause or suspicion to believe the employee is using, or under the influence of, a controlled substance or alcohol while on duty or in the workplace.

"Reasonable cause or suspicion" exists when the actions or appearances of an employee are out of the ordinary and unusual to the normal behavior patterns of the employee. It is based on objective facts sufficient to lead a sensible person to conclude that a particular employee is unable to satisfactorily perform his/her duties due to drug or alcohol impairment.

The conduct relied upon to form reasonable cause or suspicion must be based on specific describable observations, including but not limited to the following examples:

- Observable signs of intoxication (such as bloodshot or watery eyes, slurred speech, appearance of unsteady body movements or breath odors.)
- A work-related accident or near death accident which indicates employee fault.
- Decrease in the quality or quantity of employee productivity, judgement, reasoning, and/or concentration.
- Marked changes in behavior or erratic conduct.
- Deviations from safe working practices.
- Credible information received from a reliable person with firsthand knowledge.
- Smell of alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs.

All determinations and documentation concerning reasonable suspicion need to be made by at least one supervisor and one Human Resources representative.

DRUG/ALCOHOL TESTING PROCEDURES

Upon determination that reasonable cause or suspicion exists, an employee who is believed to be under the influence of an intoxicating substance while on duty or on work premises, may be directed to undergo drug/alcohol testing. All supervisors involved in this determination will document the events surrounding this reasonable suspicion.

The final decision to direct the employee to undergo drug/alcohol testing will be made in collaboration with the Human Resource Department. If an employee is referred for testing, all efforts will be made to transport the employee with their supervisor to the nearest testing facility. The employee will be required to provide a blood, breath, or urine sample. The sample will be tested qualitatively for at least the following substances: THC, cocaine, PCP, opiates, methamphetamine/amphetamine, and alcohol.

An employee who is required to submit a sample testing after determination of reasonable cause or suspicion will be informed verbally, followed by a written directive, that he/she may be placed on unpaid investigatory suspension, pending the outcome of an investigation.

After the testing is completed, the employee will not be returned to work or allowed to drive themselves home. Accompanying supervisors will assist the employee in arranging for transportation home after the testing, preferably by cab (at employee expense), or ride provided by a family member or friend.

Refusal To Test
An employee refusing to submit a sample under this policy will be placed immediately on unpaid investigatory suspension and will be subject to disciplinary action. Refusal by an employee to be tested, or confirmation by the lab of a specimen which has been altered will be treated as a positive test.

Employees suspected of being under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and who refuse an escort to be tested will be given a directive to not drive home. Local law enforcement will be notified if an employee suspected of being under the influence disregards a directive not to drive home and leaves in his/her vehicle.

Negative Test Results
If the test results are negative for alcohol/drugs, the employee will be reinstated back to work and all leave without pay during the investigatory suspension will be paid back to the employee. All records of the investigation will be purged.

SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE

The Nebraska Brand Committee is a smoke-free environment. This includes the use of lighted, battery operated or electronic smoking or similar devices. Employees are prohibited from using such devices and products in state owned vehicles. All NBC property shall remain smoke free.

PERSONAL PROTECTIONS

LEGAL CHARGES OR CONVICTIONS

Employees who are charged or convicted of any state and/or federal offenses (misdemeanor or felony other than a minor traffic violation) or that have been charged or convicted of an offense related to their duties, are expected to report the charges or convictions to their supervisor before their next scheduled work shift.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Nebraska Brand Committee takes our responsibility to support the safety of its employees very seriously. For this reason, our agency doesn't tolerate any form of violence in the workplace. Violence could mean such actions as physically harming another person, threatening, or joking about violence.

In an effort to provide a safe workplace and prevent violence, the Nebraska Brand Committee specifically prohibits possession of any weapons (including guns, non-work-related knives, explosives, and other potential weapons) while on state property or while performing work for the agency unless state law, your specific job duties or the Firearms Policy (below) provide otherwise.

The Nebraska Brand Committee will do what is possible to prevent violence in the workplace. However, you, as an employee, have a role in preventing violence, as well. If you believe another employee could become violent or if you see a violation of this policy, we encourage you to report this to your supervisor immediately or any other supervisor with whom you feel comfortable.

If you aren't comfortable reporting it to a supervisor, contact the Executive Director. All reports will be investigated, and the information you share will be kept as confidential as possible.

FIREARMS

If an employee of the Nebraska Brand Committee holds a concealed carry permit, and wishes to carry a firearm, it shall remain concealed, while performing their duties and functions as an employee of the Nebraska Brand Committee. A copy of your concealed carry permit must be provided to Human Resources for your personnel file if you choose to carry. Criminal Investigators are exempt from this policy.

SEXUAL & OTHER UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT

The Nebraska Brand Committee is committed to providing a work environment that is free of discrimination and unlawful harassment. That means we won't tolerate negative actions, words, jokes, slurs, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, military status, marital status, or any other legally protected characteristic or prohibited basis of discrimination under the law.
It is important to understand that the listener's perceptions will be taken into consideration in order to determine if harassment or discrimination has taken place. Harassment is any conduct that unreasonably interferes with another person's work performance; creates an intimidating work environment; and is repetitive in nature.

Sexual harassment has been defined by federal and state regulations as a form of sex discrimination. It can consist of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

There are two distinct types of sexual harassment:

- Quid pro quo (or "this for that") sexual harassment when supervisors make submission to such conduct either explicit or implicit term or condition of employment (including hiring, performance evaluation, discipline, compensation, promotion, or retention, etc.)
- Hostile Work Environment which is when a person, through unwanted advances, conduct, comments, or other actions unreasonably interfered with performance or morale.
  Sexual harassment under our policy might also exist when other employees (or non-employees, such as vendors, customers, or clients) engage in such conduct, when the conduct unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

It is important to note that harassment doesn't have to involve conduct of a sexual nature in order to violate this policy. For example, abusive, offensive, or demeaning behavior could violate this policy even though the conduct wasn't motivated by sexual desire or gratification. In addition, harassment of a male by another male or female by another female also constitutes a violation of this policy.

All employees of the Nebraska Brand Committee have a responsibility to come forward and report offensive or other improper behavior they believe may constitute harassment. If you believe that you are being harassed by any person in connection with your employment at the Nebraska Brand Committee, you must bring the incident to the attention of their supervisor. If that would prove uncomfortable, or you are not satisfied with the response, you must bring the incident to the attention of our Human Resources/Office Manager. If that is not feasible or would be uncomfortable or if you are not satisfied with the response, you must bring the matter to the attention of the Executive Director. We will promptly investigate all allegations of harassment in as confidential a manner as possible and take appropriate corrective action if warranted. Employees are always welcome to inquire about the status of their report by contacting the Executive Director.

Harassment Investigation

When an employee reports harassment or other improper conduct to their supervisor, Human Resources/Office Manager or the Executive Director, or otherwise learns about such harassment or conduct, the Nebraska Brand Committee will promptly and thoroughly investigate. While it may be necessary to discuss the reported concerns with the alleged offender and possibly other employees, the Nebraska Brand Committee will attempt to conduct the investigation in as confidential a manner as possible. Upon completion of the investigation, the Nebraska Brand Committee will inform the person filing the complaint and the alleged offender of the results of the investigation and, to the extent appropriate, any remedial action to be taken.

If it is determined that the terms of this policy have been violated, the Nebraska Brand Committee will take reasonable steps designed to prevent recurrence of the offending conduct. Any employee who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in sexual or other unlawful harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

If an employee continues to experience harassment or improper conduct after reporting prior harassment or improper conduct, they must again report the offending conduct to Human Resources/Office Manager or the Executive Director, who will conduct further investigation.

Retaliation Prohibited
The Nebraska Brand Committee strictly prohibits retaliation against individuals who report or complain of alleged harassment or other improper conduct, as well as against individuals who participate in an investigation of alleged harassment or improper conduct.

If you feel that you have been retaliated against in violation of this policy, you should report your concerns to Human Resources/Office Manager or the Executive Director, who will promptly and thoroughly review your concerns.

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

BULLYING

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behavior, either direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment. Employees are prohibited from bullying other employees whether or not the incidents occur on employer premises and whether or not the incidents occur during working hours. As with sexual harassment, it is the effect of the behavior upon the individual which is important. Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Cyber bullying**: Overt or covert behaviors using digital technologies, including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites, and other online platforms. This can include: abusive or hurtful texts, emails, or posts, images, or videos, nasty gossip or rumors, imitating others online, or using their log-in
- **Exclusion**: Socially of physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities.
- Gesture Bullying: Nonverbal threatening gestures; glances that can convey threatening messages.
- **Physical bullying**: Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault, threat of physical assault, or damage to a person's work area or property.
- **Social bullying**: Sometimes referred to as covert bullying, this is carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Activities include: lying, gossip, spreading rumors, playing jokes to embarrass and humiliate, and damaging someone's reputation or social acceptance.
- **Verbal bullying**: Slandering, ridiculing or defaming a person or his or her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; abusive and offensive remarks.

Bullying should be reported to your supervisor for proper investigation. Supervisors who knowingly permit or ignore bullying in the workplace will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

People are by nature different. Personality conflicts or not liking someone are not considered bullying. Neither is a supervisor holding an employee accountable to work standards and/or behavior or performance expectations. Additionally, neither is a supervisor imposing legitimate counseling or discipline based on documented facts of sub-par performance, sick leave abuse, and/or policy violations. For supervisors, the standard to remember is that discipline is designed to be corrective in action, it should not demean, insult, or otherwise ostracize an individual from their peers.

RELATIONSHIPS

The Nebraska Brand Committee recognizes that a romantic or sexual relationship between a supervisor and an employee who directly or indirectly report to him or her (a Subordinate) has the potential to create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias. Also, consent to a relationship like this by the employee could be suspected to be a result of coercion or intimidation. For these reasons, romantic or sexual relationships between a supervisor and an employee who directly or indirectly reports to him or her will necessitate a change in reporting structure. This policy doesn't apply to employees who have no supervisor/subordinate relationship.

If an employee and a supervisor find themselves in this situation, we ask that they take the initiative to notify the Executive Director right away, who will review the situation and work with everyone involved to determine the appropriate action.

Our goal is to find a solution that respects our employees while preserving our agency goals in a way that is least disruptive to our agency.

NEPOTISM

The Nebraska Brand Committee welcomes the opportunity to hire and retain qualified employees who are related to one another by blood or marriage. However, since such relationships sometimes can create conflict of interest, favoritism or bias in the workplace, we ask that employees not hire, promote, or supervise a family member.

If a state official or employee becomes a supervisor of a family member, the supervisor must notify the agency Director in writing within 7 days of the situation. The Nebraska Brand Committee Director may grant an exception to the policy or review the situation to determine appropriate action. If an exception is made the Nebraska Brand Committee Executive Director must file the following with the Accountability and Disclosure Commission:

- A copy of the notification from the employee.
- A written decision showing good cause for the exception.
- Any written decision of the Nebraska Brand Committee Executive Director.

OPEN DOOR/OPEN FLOOR POLICY

If you feel a work condition is unfair or keeping you from doing your job well, we want you to have a comfortable, professional way to share your concerns. That is why the Nebraska Brand Committee has a policy to provide all employees with accessible avenues of communication for work-related issues. This policy is called the Open Door/Open Floor policy. Here is how it works.

- First, you are encouraged to bring the situation to the attention of your supervisor, explaining the nature of the problem. The supervisor will make an effort to resolve the problem.
- If your supervisor is unable to resolve the problem or you are uncomfortable discussing the problem with your supervisor, you may contact your next-level supervisor.
- If that would prove uncomfortable, or you are not satisfied with the resolution, you should contact Human Resources/Office Manager.
- If the problem still isn't resolved or if discussing the matter with your supervisor(s) or Human Resources/Office Manager would prove uncomfortable, you must notify the Executive Director

of the situation. If needed, they will help you talk with your supervisor and/or inform them of the problem.

If the previous steps have been taken or if the circumstances warrant deviating from the previous steps, the Executive Director will:

- Talk with you for clarification of the problem.
- Talk with your supervisor and next-level supervisor for clarification of the problem.
- Schedule a meeting- usually within five working days- between you, your supervisor, and your next-level supervisor.
- A recommendation will be made usually within 10 days, and Executive Director will explain it to all parties involved.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

The grievance process was developed as a means for employees to formally present their complaints to management. Grievances are filed after informal attempts at complaint resolution are unsuccessful. An employee is not required to utilize the informal complaint process prior to filing a grievance. Nebraska Revised Statutes 54-192(4) states:

If any employee of the brand committee after having been disciplined, placed on probation, or having had his or her services terminated desires to have a hearing before the entire brand committee, such as hearing shall be granted as soon as is practicable and convenient for all persons concerned. The request for such a hearing shall be made in writing by the employee alleging the grievance and shall be directed to the director. After hearing all testimony surrounding the grievance of such employee, the brand committee, at its discretion, may approve, rescind, nullify, or amend all actions as previously taken by the director.

Grievance Rights
All employees have grievance rights.

Grievance Issues
Grievance issues are decisions that have resulted in disciplinary action against or the termination of a Nebraska Brand Committee employee.

SAFETY AT WORK

The safety of all our employees and our supervisors is a primary concern to our agency. We believe it is extremely important that you have a clean, safe, and healthy environment to support you as you do your work. That's our goal and we plan to take every reasonable precaution to make it a reality!

A safe environment reduces the likelihood that you or any other employee could become injured at work. However, not every situation can always be controlled, and you are trusted to take responsibility for thinking and acting safely to protect yourself and other employees.

SAFETY RULES

The following safety rules were created to help us reach our goal of a safe and healthy work environment. Please follow these rules whenever they relate to the work you do:

- For certain jobs, it's necessary to wear protective clothing and use protective equipment at times. This equipment might include items such as gloves, body armor, etc.
- To avoid injury, make sure loose or baggy clothing, hair, jewelry, and other dangling items are kept clear of sources of potential danger including machinery, livestock, etc.
- Be careful not to strain muscles when lifting. Bend your knees, keep your torso vertical, and lift with your legs. Use any available equipment to assist in lifting or carrying heavy or awkward loads, or ask for help.
- Use a ladder when handling objects in high places
- Be alert to warning signals and odors
- Watch for blocked aisles, stairs, exits, and fire doors, and help keep them clear at all times
- If vehicles, machinery, and safety equipment are in your care, keep them in top working order. If you detect a reason there might be a potential breakdown, report it right away to your supervisor
- Periodically check tools and equipment for flaws or wear. Report hazardous conditions right away to your supervisor.
- Always stay vigilant and never ignore safety rules or precautions, especially during busy operating times when equipment and employees are under more stress and fatigue
- Handle all livestock in accordance with Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Protocols
- Use common sense. Don't take any risks that can be avoided. Exercise care and good judgement to keep yourself and your fellow employees safe and healthy

IF AN ACCIDENT OCCURS

If an accident occurs, the safety and health of our employees is of utmost priority. We ask all employees to promptly report every accident, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem.

- Report any injury that happens to you or a fellow employee on duty right away. Tell your first-level supervisor and apply appropriate first aid or medical treatment immediately. Supervisors should report any injury to Executive Director as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours after the accident occurred.
- Even minor personal injuries such as cuts, abrasions, foreign objects in the eye, livestock-caused injury, minor burns, etc. Must be promptly reported and treated to prevent any complication;

- Remember not to move a seriously injured employee (unless you must get him/her out of harm's way) until proper caregivers have determined the injured person can be safely moved without causing further injury.
- It's very important that an injured employee not operate machinery or vehicles until proper caregivers have determined the person is capable of working without jeopardizing the safety of himself/herself or others.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

All agency employees are covered by workers' compensation insurance to ensure they have coverage for job-related injuries or illnesses. The insurance provides coverage for missed days of work, medical costs, and rehabilitation.

We ask that you take responsibility for reporting employment-related injuries or illnesses right away to your supervisor. Your supervisor should then report it to the Human Resource Manager as soon as possible.

DRIVING SAFETY

In the performance of their work, employees often use vehicles, whether state-owned, state-rented, or personally owned. We ask those who use vehicles during working hours to follow safety procedures and obey all traffic laws while driving to assure the safety of oneself, other employees, and the general public.

Both drivers and passengers shall wear seatbelts. Don't use a cell phone while driving unless using a phone specifically designed and configured to allow hands-free listening, talking, and dialing. Texting while driving is never permitted.

Any employee operating a vehicle for the benefit of the agency must have a valid driver's license and if driving a personal vehicle, must have proof of insurance coverage (the employee's insurance serves as primary coverage, while the State's insurance serves as excess coverage). The Brand Committee employee must notify the Executive Director should there be any changes in their driver's license or insurability status. Further, the employee must disclose to the Nebraska Brand Committee any health conditions that may interfere with the safe operations of a motor vehicle and may be required to provide a medical clearance from a licensed physician. Operating a motor vehicle and failing to disclose a medical condition may result in disciplinary action. Every year thereafter, documents showing the person's driving history as it appears in records held by the Department of Motor Vehicles will be requested and reviewed by the agency. The Motor Vehicle Record we receive, including the individual driver's license verification becomes a part of the employee's file.

Driving safety is so important that any driving offense identified in the Motor Vehicle Record we receive from the State, whether the offense occurred during personal time or while on state business, prompts a review of the employee's state driving privileges. We'll notify the employee of any offenses found during the review.

The Nebraska Brand Committee reserves the right to decide whether the employee will be allowed to continue driving for state business, depending on the seriousness and frequency of the offense. Further, Brand Committee employees must notify the Executive Director of any moving violation citations received while operating a state-owned vehicle or a personally owned vehicle for which they are receiving a mileage reimbursement within 24 hours.

Serious driving offenses could lead to disciplinary action and/or termination of employment. The following examples of serious offense:

- Driving while under the influence
- Refusing to submit to alcohol or drug testing
- Reckless or careless driving
- Vehicular homicide
- Offenses resulting in violation of any statute
- Repeated, less serious offenses and violations

Employees will notify the Executive Director of the occurrence of any of these infractions, whether in a state-owned or personally owned vehicle and regardless if it is duty or off duty time, within 24 hours.

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Only the Executive Director has the authority to close the office for a severe weather emergency. The Executive Director will direct the office staff in how to handle the closure. The agency Director may authorize employees to work from other locations, but employees may need to verify that assigned work was completed. The Department will notify employees if an alternative work site is being utilized due to a building closure.

Only our employees can decide if their driving skills, the condition of their vehicle, the weather conditions, or the road conditions are such that they could travel to work safely. Therefore, employees will need to decide if it is safe to travel to work.

Employees that choose not to report for work should report their absence to their supervisor and request an appropriate leave status. Employees may take vacation, compensatory time, or leave without pay. Employees may not use sick leave unless they are in fact sick. Leave shall be granted as liberally as possible. If feasible, a department may allow employees to make up missed work time within the current work week.

EMERGENCY WORK CONDITIONS

The Nebraska Brand Committee has emergency plans in place in the event that an employee's physical work location cannot be used. (i.e., acts of nature, catastrophic events, bombings and and/or bomb threat, epidemics, etc.). Employees should make themselves familiar with the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for their work area so they are prepared in the event of an emergency.

Employees who are deemed as "essential staff' will follow the appropriate COOP plan, including potentially reporting to an alternative worksite. This time will be compensable as regular work time. All other employees may be placed on a ready to work status by their supervisor. This means that he/she is ready and available to be called back to a work location at any time. Employees in a ready to work status will be compensated.

BENEFITS

This Handbook only generally identifies benefits offered by the Nebraska Brand Committee and does not set forth all the terms and conditions under which these benefits may be provided. Summary Plan Description booklets describe the above listed programs more fully. In the event of any contradiction between the information appearing in this handbook, any Summary Plan Description booklet and the information that appears in any master plan documents, the master plan document shall govern in all cases. All benefits may be modified, terminated or supplemented at any time in the sole discretion of the Nebraska Brand Committee. All benefit coverage closes upon termination of employment or retirement, unless otherwise extended by law.

We value our employees and want to provide valuable employment benefits. The State of Nebraska offers insurance benefits to permanent, full time employees. Part time permanent employees who work 20 or more hours per week are also eligible for insurance benefits at a pro-rated cost.

Every spring, you'll have a chance to participate in an Open Enrollment period for certain benefits. During this time, you are allowed to make changes to your benefit elections. Descriptions and in-depth information about these benefits are available on the State Personnel website.

HEALTH INSURANCE

This is available to all permanent full-time employees under a group program. Cost differs between the plans according to coverage needed. Selection of a plan needs to be made within 30 days of employment. Changes may be made during open enrollment periods unless the employee has a status change. Status changes are:

- Marriage
- Birth or adoption of a child
- Legal divorce or separation
- Legal child reaches age 26 years of age
- A change in employment status of you or your spouse
- Significant change in benefits or cost of spouse's insurance
- Spouse's open enrollment period

These are the only events which will allow you to change your health insurance election outside of open enrollment. When a dependent is no longer eligible for coverage under your insurance policy, the headquarters office should be informed immediately. The dependent may be eligible for continued coverage through the COBRA program.

OTHER COVERAGES

As state employees, employees of the Nebraska Brand Committee may elect additional coverages during the open enrollment period, including:

- Life Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Long Term Disability
- Health Savings Account
- Flexible Benefit Plan

COBRA

The continuation of health/dental insurance coverage for any employee or dependent who would otherwise lose group health coverage due to a qualifying event. Employees terminated for reasons of gross misconduct are not eligible for COBRA. Notify the Human Resource Manager to determine whether you have a qualifying event.

LONGEVITY PAY

At the beginning of the fourth year of employment, all full-time employees receive longevity pay equaling $60.00 per year, paid at $5.00 per month. This means that $60 is compounded each year of additional service. The following chart depicts how the Nebraska Brand Committee dispenses longevity pay:

Longevity Amount Paid Per Year	Year of Employment
$0	1-3
$60	4
$120	5
$180	6
$240	7
---	---
$2,520	45

- Any employee serving as disciplinary probation will receive no increase until probation is over.
- The Nebraska Brand Committee defines Longevity Payments as an AWARD **not** WAGE.
- Longevity Payments will not be included in wages used to calculate retirement contributions (Revised June 11, 2019)

EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT PROGRAM

Employees may only receive employee discounts through an approved program per state statute. You can find information about this program on the State of Nebraska website.

CREDIT UNION

Employees may become a member of the Nebraska State Employees Credit Union. Some services offered include checking and savings accounts and loans. To apply for membership, visit the Credit Union's website. The Credit Union main office is located at 330 South 16th Street in Lincoln, Nebraska and can be reached toll free at 1 .800.227.5965.

The Nebraska Brand Committee does not endorse this particular Credit Union or any other Credit Union. The NSECU is a private entity and is not a unit of State Government. It is the sole intent of the Nebraska Brand Committee to make employees aware of NSECU as a banking option available to state employees.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Balancing work and personal life can be a challenge. To help our employees find a healthy balance, we offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - a great way for you to receive counseling, financial advice, legal advice, and other support. No fees are charged to employees for the services. Rest assured all EAP-related calls and sessions are kept confidential to protect your privacy and are not shared with the agency.

RETIREMENT/DEFERRED COMPENSATION

The State of Nebraska includes a retirement plan. All permanent full time and part time employees, who have reached the age of 18, will be enrolled into the plan immediately.

Permanent employees can contribute up to 4.8% of gross wages to their retirement plan, which begins with the first paycheck. The State matches 156% of the employee contribution.

A Deferred Compensation Plan is voluntary and is also available to state employees. Under the provision of this voluntary supplemental retirement plan, employees may request the State defer payment of a portion of their income to a later date. Deferred Compensation is available to any employee and can be started and stopped at any time.

HOLIDAY PAY

The following are recognized as paid holidays for permanent employees with the State:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Arbor Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

Part time employees use holidays on a prorated basis. Employees must be in an approved paid status the day before and the day after an observed holiday in order to be paid for the holiday.

When a holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed on Friday. When the holiday falls on Sunday, it will be observed on Monday.

LEAVE

As a general rule, twelve weeks of leave is the maximum allowed for any employee within a 12-month period, the 12-month period will begin on the first day of leave. The twelve allowable weeks can include a combination of Sick Leave and Family leave.

Example if you have taken 6 weeks of Family Leave, prior to your own illness you will only have 6 weeks allowable leave left for that rolling twelve months. If you have exhausted over twelve weeks of leave the NBC will engage in an interactive process with you to determine your status, restrictions and anticipated date of return and you may be separated from employment.

BEREAVEMENT AND FUNERAL LEAVE

NBC allows employees to take as many as five days of leave following the death of an immediate family member. The person's supervisor should determine the leave period based on the circumstance. Bereavement leave is compensated for full-time employees at 8 hours per day.

Immediate family members include spouse, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, sister, brother, child, grandchild, spouse of any of these, or someone who bears a similar relationship to the spouse of the employee and any other individual for whom the employee is legal guardian. Step-persons bearing these relationships are included. At the Executive Director's discretion, the definition of immediate family may be expanded to include other individuals with a similar personal relationship to the employee as that of an immediate family member.

For funerals of persons not in the immediate family, up to one day of funeral leave to attend the funeral may be granted by the area supervisor and Executive Director.

CIVIL LEAVE

All employees will be eligible for paid civil leave under the following conditions:

- Jury Duty- If an employee is called to serve as a juror, he/she will be entitled to paid civil leave in addition to jury duty pay. Employees will return to work when not actually serving as a juror on a daily basis.
- Election Board Duty- If an employee is appointed as a clerk or judge on an election or counting board, he/she will be entitled to paid civil leave in addition to pay for this service.
- Voting Time- All employees will be given up to two (2) hours for the purpose of voting provided the employee does not have sufficient time before or after regularly duty hours to vote.
- Court Appearances- Time spent by employees appearing in court as a function of their job will be considered as hours worked. All witness fees and reimbursements received as a result of these court appearances will be returned to the agency. Employees attending court as a plaintiff, defendant, or witness on non-work related matters, may use vacation leave. In the event the employee is subpoenaed for the non-work related matters and does not have vacation leave, the agency head will grant leave of absence. Any witness fees paid the employee for these court appearances will be kept by the employee.

For leave of absences required for military, election board duty, voting time, emergency civilian duty, court duty and appearances, contact the headquarters office for the rules that apply to each.

MILITARY LEAVE

Military leave is granted in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserve shall provide their Unit Training Assembly (drill) schedule to their supervisor as soon as it is available from the Military Unit. Where practicable and at the request of the employee, the agency may allow the employee to flex his/her work schedule to accommodate Unit Training Assembly (drill) schedules.

CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS LEAVE

If you experience a catastrophic event, you may be eligible for catastrophic leave donation. A catastrophic event is defined as a serious illness or injury resulting in a prolonged absence of at least thirty workdays during a six month period.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

We understand that situations may arise where there may be a need to take leave time without pay. Therefore, employees may request an unpaid leave of absence for up to one year in certain circumstances. This request will need to be in writing and approved by the Executive Director. Business and agency needs will be a consideration when determining whether to approve leave of absence requests.

We ask that you make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so your absence doesn't unduly disrupt operations or cause undue difficultly for your coworkers.

Employees in a leave without pay or on an unpaid leave of absence that exceeds 14 days, which is not an approved FMLA absence, will experience a loss in benefits coverage.

ADVANCEMENT OF LEAVE

The Executive Director may approve advancement of sick and/or vacation leave under extenuating or compelling circumstances. Any leave advancement shall not exceed 80 hours per calendar year (prorated for part time employees). Employees shall reimburse the State for all unearned sick and/or vacation leave used upon separation. Employee's service date shall be adjusted when an unpaid absence due to Family Leave exceeds 14 consecutive calendar days.

SICK & VACATION LEAVE

Regular full-time employees begin to accrue sick and vacation days on their first day of employment, and it is accrued monthly based on length of service.

VACATION LEAVE

Because we recognize the importance of providing our employees with time off for rest, recreation, to recuperate from an illness, to attend family and other personal activities or for whatever purpose our employees deem appropriate, the Nebraska Brand Committee grants annual paid vacation to eligible exempt

and non-exempt regular, full-time and part-time employees. The amount of vacation to which you are entitled depends upon your length of continuous service with the Brand Committee

Scheduling Use of Accrued Vacation
Whenever possible, we ask that all requests to use vacation and changes to those requests be made as far in advance as is possible and not less than five (5) business days before the requested vacation is to commence. Shorter notice may allow in cases of extenuating circumstances, with notification to your supervisor as soon as practicable. The earliest requests and/or changes in advance of the specific day requested will be given priority in determining which requests can be grated based on work requirements and customer demands. In the event that multiple requests are turned in at the same time and production needs can't accommodate them all, the Executive Director reserves the right to determine which requests will be granted so as to accommodate the needs of the Brand Committee and its patrons.

Other Provisions
Time taken as vacation does not constitute "hours worked" for overtime purposes. The purpose of vacation is to give you a chance to rest, relax and spend time on activities other than work. Therefore, you may not take your paid time off benefit as extra pay in lieu of time off.

Upon separation, you will be paid accrued but unused vacation. Accrued vacation may not be used after a notice of termination has been given.

It is the responsibility of the employee to arrange to cover their area and responsibilities while they are gone.

Vacation Accruals
Regular, full-time employees shall accrue vacation as follows:

Years of continuous Service	Monthly Vacation Accrual	Annual Vacation Accrual
Introductory Period thru 5 years	8 hours	96 hours
6	10 hours	120 hours
7	10.66 hours	128 hours
8	11.33 hours	136 hours
9	12 hours	144 hours
10	12.66 hours	152 hours
11	13.33 hours	160 hours
12	14 hours	168 hours
13	14.66 hours	176 hours
14	15.33 hours	184 hours
15	16 hours	192 hours
16 years and after	16.66 hours	200 hours

Regular Part Time Employees: are eligible for vacation based on the aforementioned schedule proportionate to the part-time employee's regular workweek.

Example: A regular part-time employee scheduled to work 20 hours/week who has worked for the Brand Committee for 13 consecutive years would accrue vacation at the rate of 8 hours/month with a maximum accrual of 96 hours.

This does not apply to intermittent inspectors as they are paid by the piece rate.

Maximum Accrual: Pursuant to Neb.Rev.Stat. S84- 1328(6), the vacation bank of each Brand Committee employee shall be balanced as of 11:59 p.m. CST on December 31 each calendar year. Each employee shall be entitled to have accrued as of 11:59 p.m. CT December 31st the number of hours of vacation leave which he or she earned during that calendar year as set forth in the table above. Hours of vacation accrued in excess of 280 hours shall be forfeited. Nebraska Revised Statutes Section 81-1328 (6) states, "The vacation leave account of each state employee shall be balanced as of 11 p.m. Central Standard Time on December 31 each calendar year. Each state employee shall be entitled to have accumulated as of such time the number of hours of vacation leave which he or she earned during that calendar year. Hours of vacation leave accumulated in excess of that number shall be forfeited. Any state employee shall be entitled to use any vacation time as soon as it has accrued. Any vacation time not used within one calendar year following the calendar year during which the time accrued shall be forfeited. In special and meritorious cases, when to limit the annual leave to the period therein specified would work a peculiar hardship, such leave may be extended in the following year.

INJURY LEAVE

All employees who are disabled as a result of a job-related injury or disease, which is deemed compensable by Worker's Compensation, may be granted injury leave not to exceed five (5) of the employee's normal working shifts for any particular injury. A working shift is counted even if an employee is absent for any portion of their assigned shift. Disabled shall mean the employee is absent for any portion of their assigned shift. Disabled for purposes of this policy shall mean the employee is unable to perform the tasks usually encountered in one's employment due either to injury/disease or to treatment for an injury/disease.

FAMILY LEAVE

1.0 REGULATORY BASIS

Given the definition of "eligible employee" per the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), the Nebraska Brand Committee (NBC) does not provide FMLA leave in the same manner as other state agencies because NBC does not employ 50 employees at any specific worksite or within 75 miles thereof, therefore there are no NBC employees eligible for federal FMLA leave at the present time. Should that change in the future, the Committee will amend its policy.

2.0 NBC EXTEND LEAVE PROGRAM

Although NBC does not have any FMLA eligible employees, it does provide a program for extended leave for family and medical circumstances ("NBC Extended Leave Program" or "Extended Leave Program"). These circumstances are:

2.0(a) A serious health condition of the employee.

2.0(b) To provide care for a serious health condition of a spouse, child or parent of the employee.

2.0(c) The birth of the employee's child.

2.0(d) The adoption or placement of a foster care child with the employee.

In the circumstances of a serious health or medical condition, NBC follows the definition in the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be eligible for the Extended Leave Program, an employee must have worked for NBC for at least one (1) year prior to commencement of the leave, worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months prior to commencement of the leave, and must be benefits eligible.

4.0 TYPES OF LEAVE

4.1 Non-Pregnancy-Related Medical and Family Leave

4.1.1 Leave Use. Employee's may use the Extended Leave Program to cover leave for non- pregnancy-related medical and family medical circumstances.

4.1.2 Leave Amounts. The employee may cover the extended time away through the use of the employee's accumulated vacation, sick leave, compensatory time off, or in an unpaid status.

4.1.3 Leave Limits. Such leave is not cumulative and may be taken in increments with proper certification, but is limited to a total of 12 weeks in any 12-month period.

4.2 Pregnancy-Related and Parental Bonding Leave

4.2.1 Additional Eligibility Requirements

The employee must meet the Extended Leave Program eligibility requirements in Section 3 and must also meet the additional eligibility requirement of being a mother who has given birth.

4.2.2 Leave Amounts

4.2.2.1 *Base Pregnancy-Related and Parental Bonding Leave*. An eligible employee may take up to 240 hours (6 weeks) of paid leave consisting of 200 hours (5 weeks) of Pregnancy-Related Leave and 40 hours (1 week) of Parental Bonding Leave. This paid leave cannot be used intermittently.

4.2.2.2 *Supplementing Leave*. Base Pregnancy-Related and Parental Bonding Leave can be supplemented up to an additional 240 hours (6 weeks) of leave covered by the employee's accumulated vacation, sick leave, compensatory time off, or in an unpaid status.

4.2.2.3 *Total Limit*. The employee is limited to 12 weeks total of Base Pregnancy-Related and Parental Bonding Leave inclusive of all types of leave in any 12-month period.

4.3 Requests to Exceed Leave Limit.

The Executive Director retains discretion to approve or disapprove employee requests for the leave time exceeding 12 weeks.

4.4 Parental Bonding Leave for Fathers

Fathers meeting the eligibility requirements in Section 3 may take up to 40 hours (1 week) of Parental Bonding Leave. This paid leave cannot be used intermittently.

5.0 APPLYING FOR LEAVE

5.1 Notification to NBC

5.1.1 Notice. An employee must provide a minimum of 30 calendar days' notice to NBC before leave is to be taken. When 30 days' notice is not feasible, notice must be given as early as possible.

5.1.2 Form. Notice is given by completing the Medical Leave Form, provided by your supervisor or the Alliance Office. This form must be completed in its entirety, including being reviewed and signed by a licensed healthcare provider.

5.2 Certification

5.2.1 Physician Review. An employee requesting to use leave due to a serious health condition must provide certification from a physician, including specific information why the employee is unable to perform the functions of the job or a statement containing information on why the employee is needed to care for the child spouse, or parent.

5.2.2 Additional Opinions. NBC may require a second opinion (the agency's choice of a physician) and must pay for the cost of the second opinion. If the second opinion differs from the first, a third opinion may be sought (from mutually agreed upon physician, again, at the agency's expense). The results of the third opinion are final.

6.0 BENEFITS STATUS

NBC will continue to pay for the State's contribution of the employee's health coverage during his or her absence.

6.1 Coverage of Employee Premiums During Leave

6.1.1 During Leave. An employee on leave covered under this policy is paid as he or she would be regularly, so the employee premium for health coverage is paid out of wages paid as it would be if the employee were not absent.

6.1.2 After Exhausting Leave. Once the leave provided by this policy has been exhausted, employees using accumulated vacation, sick leave, or compensatory time off to cover additional time off have their premiums paid out of wages paid by leave.

6.1.3 During Unpaid Status.

6.1.3.1 *Use of Leave to Pay Premium*. An employee electing not to use accumulated leave to cover an absence and enter unpaid status may use accumulated leave balances to pay for his or her health coverage premium after being in said unpaid status for one full month.

6.1.3.2 *Employee Payment of Premiums*. An employee electing not to use accumulated leave to pay for premiums or having exhausted such leave, must directly pay health coverage premiums per the process established in Section 6.2 below.

6.2 Employee Direct Payment of Premium.

6.2.1 Payment Process

6.2.1.1 *Due Date*. The premium is due by the first of the month for the month of coverage.

6.2.1.2 *Payment Method*. The check must be made out for the specified premium total to the Department of Administrative Services, and delivered to NBC's Business Manager.

6.2.2 Ramifications

6.2.2.1 *Suspension of Coverage*. If the premium is not remitted by the first calendar day of the month, employee's coverage will be suspended until payment is received.

6.2.2.2 *Termination of Coverage*. If the payment is not received by the last calendar day of the month, the employee's coverage will be terminated permanently until he or she returns to work.

6.3 Benefit Changes.

The employee, while on leave, has the same opportunities as other employees to change coverage, plans or benefits during open enrollment and other approved events or circumstances.

6.4 Termination of Payment Obligation.

NBC's obligation to pay its portion of employee's health coverage ends when:

6.4(a) Employee chooses not to retain health coverage during leave period.

6.4(b) Employee fails to return from leave upon schedule.

6.4(c) Employee informs NBC of his or her intent to not return.

6.4(d) Upon separation from employment, COBRA insurance continuation provisions may apply.

6.5 Recovery of Payment

NBC may recover the amounts paid covering its portion of the employee's premium should the employee fail to return to work except in the following circumstances:

6.5(a) a continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition which would entitle employee to additional leave.

6.5(b) other circumstances beyond employee's control.

7.0 RETURNING TO WORK

When the employee is ready to return to work (except for situations in which they are a caregiver), they must provide an updated medical leave form, noting approval from a healthcare provider that the employee may return to full duty or provide limitations on the duties that may be performed, any accommodations needed, and the duration of the limitation.

SICK LEAVE

Sick leave accrual for all regular full-time employees begins on the first day of employment and ends on the last day of employment.

Sick leave may be used when employees are unable to perform employment duties because of sickness, disability, or injury. Sick leave should be requested in advance when possible (e.g., elective surgery, medical appointments). In the case of illness, injury, emergency, or any other absence not approved in advance, employees are required to inform the supervisor of the circumstances as soon as possible. Sick leave may be used for medical and dental appointments.

In instances where an employee has used three or more consecutive days of sick leave, the agency may require a medical statement to cover said absence. A maximum of five working days per illness or per incident within a major illness may be granted when illness or injury of a member of the immediate family. Employees may also use sick leave for medical and dental appointments of immediate family members if their presence is required. Employees may be eligible to use family leave for the serious illness of a spouse, child, or parent. (See Family Leave Policy) Upon return from sick or injury leave a completed fit for duty physician's certificate may be required by the Brand Committee.

In the event of a temporary disability due to illness or injury, employees will be allowed to use sick leave for a period not to exceed 12 weeks per 12 month period. If the employee is unable to return after the twelve weeks, his or her salary may be decreased by any amount required to pay a substitute to perform the work, and that position will not be held for the employee on leave.

Sick leave may not be used while employees are on vacation leave, with the exception that an employee who is hospitalized while on vacation leave may be granted sick leave after providing supporting documentation to the immediate supervisor.

Employees who use all accrued sick leave may normally use accrued vacation leave to continue to receive pay during an illness or disability. In some situations, in consultation with Human Resources, the department may choose not to approve use of vacation leave to cover such periods.

An employee who has exhausted all sick and vacation leave in the course of an illness or other disability may, with departmental approval, be advanced up to five days each of sick leave and/or vacation leave. Employees shall reimburse the agency for all used, unearned sick and/or vacation leave upon separation. After all sick and vacation leave has been used, employees may be granted a leave of absence without pay, with written departmental approval. Leaves of absence for illness may not exceed one year

All sick leave will be forfeited upon separation from employment, and no employee will be reimbursed for unused sick leave at the time of separation. The only exception to this rule is employees who are retiring, or upon death, said employees will receive payment for one-fourth of unused accumulated sick leave. Retiring Employees will be paid one-fourth of their accumulated sick leave including hours accumulated in a calendar year in excess of 1,440 hours

- Sick leave can accrue to an earned 1,440 hours. It can accumulate in excess of this amount, but all sick leave accounts shall be balanced to 1440 hours as of 11:59 p.m. Central Standard Time on December 31 each calendar year.
- Employees accrue sick leave only when they are in pay status.
- Time worked in excess of 40 hours in the workweek does not affect sick leave accrual.
- Change in the rate of sick leave accrual due to increased seniority will be effective on the anniversary date of hire.

Regular Full-Time Employees shall accrue sick leave as follows:

Years of continuous Service	Monthly Sick Accrual	Annual Sick Accrual
Introductory Period thru 5 years	8 hours	96 hours
6	11.33 hours	136 hours
7	12 hours	144 hours
8	12.67 hours	152 hours
9	13.33 hours	160 hours
10	14 hours	168 hours
11	14.67 hours	176 hours
12	15.33 hours	184 hours
13	16 hours	192 hours
14	16.67 hours	200 hours
15	17.33 hours	208 hours
16	18 hours	216 hours
17	18.67 hours	224 hours
18	19.33 hours	232 hours
19 years and after	20 hours	240 hours

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

I received a copy of the Nebraska Brand Committee Employee Handbook and either read it or had it read to me carefully. I understand this Handbook supersedes all prior versions. I understand all its rules, policies, terms and conditions, and agree to abide by them, realizing that failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and/or termination. I understand that upon termination of my employment for any reason I must return all Nebraska Brand Committee materials, property and equipment issued to me and pay the Nebraska Brand Committee any money that I may owe the Nebraska Brand Committee and agree that upon my failure to promptly do either of these the Nebraska Brand Committee can withhold corresponding amounts from my final paycheck and take whatever action the Nebraska Brand Committee deems necessary to recover such amounts from me.

I understand and agree that my employment is terminable-at-will, so that both the Nebraska Brand Committee and I remain free to choose to end our work relationship. Similarly, no Brand Committee official has the authority to enter into an oral employment contract, and only the Chairman of the Nebraska Brand Committee can enter into a written employment contract on behalf of Nebraska Brand Committee.

I understand nothing in this Handbook in any way creates an express or implied contract of employment between the Nebraska Brand Committee and me, but rather is intended to foster a better working atmosphere while the employee/employer relationship exists.

Date: _____

Employee's Signature: _____

Employee's Name (Printed) _____