

**HANDBOOK OF  
EMPLOYEE POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

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## ***Employee Welcome***

Welcome new employee!

We wish you every success here at the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization.

We believe that each employee contributes directly to the River to Sea TPO's growth and success, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our team.

This handbook was developed to describe some of the expectations of our employees and to outline the policies, programs, and benefits available to eligible employees. Employees should familiarize themselves with the contents of the employee handbook as soon as possible, for it will answer many questions about employment with the R2CTPO.

We hope that your experience here will be challenging, enjoyable and rewarding. Again, welcome!

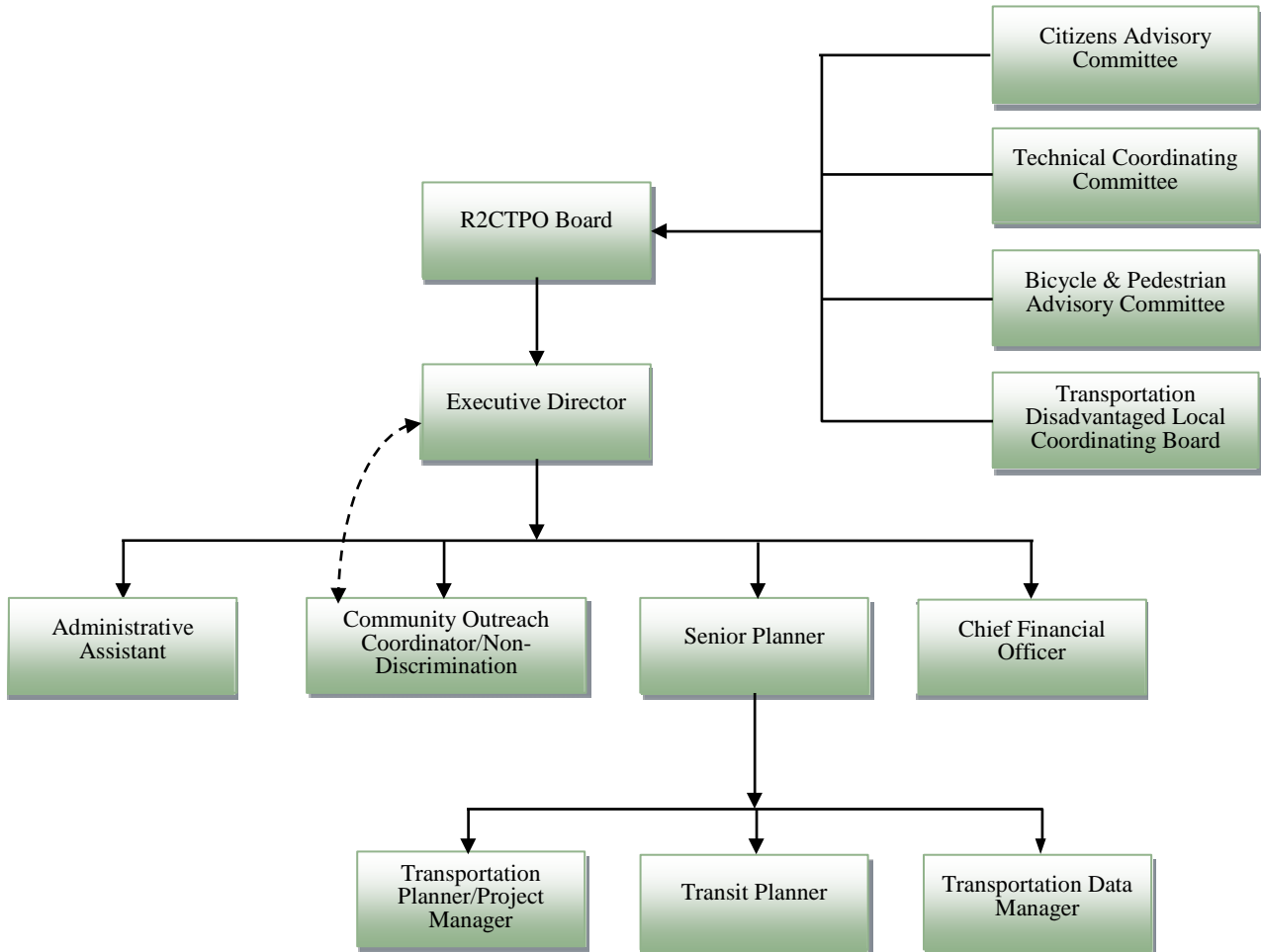
## **SECTION 1      ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The R2CTPO is a federally mandated organization that is responsible for area-wide transportation planning. This includes the development and update of the following transportation plans: the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Transit Development Plan, and the Unified Planning Work Program. The R2CTPO is also involved in various special transportation planning studies.

R2CTPO shares office space, equipment, and some expenses with the Volusia Council of Governments (VCOG). Both of these individual organizations have their own governing boards, their own top-level management staff and their own technical support staff. Other than the sharing of space and some expenses, there is no operational or employment relationship between these two entities.

## River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

### Organizational Chart



## **SECTION 2      *INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS***

This handbook is designed to acquaint the staff with the R2CTPO and provide information about working conditions, employee benefits and policies affecting employment. Additional policies may be adopted by the Executive Director and/or the Board, as necessary, to guide operations or establish policies and procedures for the organization. Copies of these policies will be provided to all staff members upon adoption. Staff members should read, understand and comply with all provisions of the handbook. It describes many of the responsibilities of the staff members as employees and outlines the programs developed by the R2CTPO to benefit employees.

No employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question about policy. As the R2CTPO continues to grow, the need may arise, and the R2CTPO reserves the right to revise, supplement or rescind any policies or portion of the handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Employees will, of course, be notified of such changes to the handbook as they occur.

All employees of the R2CTPO are subject to the adopted employment-at-will policy permitting a staff member or the R2CTPO to end the employment relationship for any reason at any time. Nothing in this handbook shall alter this employment-at-will policy.

As a condition of your employment, you will be required to sign an Employee Acknowledgement Form stating that you have read and fully understand the information contained in this handbook; therefore, it very important that you read this handbook and understand its contents.

If you have any questions regarding these policies, you should seek advice and guidance from the Executive Director, or his/her designee. A current copy of this handbook is available at all times and may be requested from the Executive Director.

## **SECTION 3      GENERAL POLICIES**

### **A. Nature of Employment**

Employment with the R2CTPO is voluntary and every individual employed retains the status of an “at will” employee. This means that the employee is free to terminate the employment relationship at any time and for any reason. Similarly, the R2CTPO may terminate the employment relationship at any time and for any reason, with or without notice or cause.

Policies set forth in this handbook are not intended to create a contract, nor are they to be construed to constitute contractual obligations of any kind or a contract of employment between the R2CTPO and any of its employees. The provisions of the handbook have been developed at the discretion of the Board and, except for its policy of employment-at-will, may be amended or cancelled at any time, at the R2CTPO’s sole discretion.

These provisions supersede all existing policies and practices and may not be amended or added to without the express written approval of the R2CTPO Board.

These policies are not necessarily applicable to contract employees. As related to contract employees, the provisions of the contract shall govern in the event of a conflict.

### **B. Equal Employment Opportunity**

The R2CTPO is an equal opportunity employer. In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at the R2CTPO will be based on merit, qualifications and abilities. The R2CTPO does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, veteran’s status, disability or any other status protected by law.

The R2CTPO will make reasonable accommodations for qualified disabled individuals in all employment matters and comply with all applicable regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Executive Director, or designee. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or negative employment action based upon raising an issue alleging potential discrimination. The raising of concerns or alleged discrimination will not impact other employment actions that may be taken for other bona fide reasons not related to the claim of discrimination (i.e. – poor job performance, violation of personnel rules, etc.).

Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including termination of employment.



### **C. Violence in the Workplace**

The R2CTPO recognizes the seriousness of violence in the workplace, including domestic and sexual violence. Personal issues can be extended to the workplace and are of concern. Employees facing such issues may seek assistance through the employee assistance program. The R2CTPO does not tolerate violence in the workplace and will impose serious disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for employees found to have engaged in this behavior.

### **D. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

ADA is the federal law which prohibits discrimination against qualified applicants or employees with a disability. And, if the need exists and can be met by the employer without “undue hardship,” it also requires that such persons be provided “reasonable accommodation” to participate in the job application and selection process or, if employed, to perform the “essential functions” of their job. If you have questions or concerns about who is covered and whether you qualify for a special accommodation, contact the Chief Financial Officer. The R2CTPO is committed to being an employer of choice for all individuals.

## **SECTION 4      EMPLOYMENT START-UP**

### **A.      Employment Application**

The R2CTPO relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application or resume, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the R2CTPO’s exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, immediate termination of employment.

### **B.      Job Posting**

The R2CTPO provides employees an opportunity to indicate their interest in open positions and advance within the organization according to their skills and experience. In general, notices of all regular, full-time job openings are posted, although the R2CTPO reserves its discretionary right to not post a particular job opening. Job openings will be posted on the R2CTPO bulletin board located in the copy room, and normally remain open for a minimum of ten days.

Each job posting notice will include the dates of the posting period, job title, department, location, grade level, job summary, essential duties and qualifications (required skills and abilities).

To be eligible to apply for a posted job, employees must have performed competently for at least one year in their current position. Eligible employees may only apply for those posted jobs for which they possess the required skills, competencies and qualifications.

To apply for an open position, employees should submit a job posting application to the Chief Financial Officer listing job-required skills and accomplishments. It should also describe how their current experience with the R2CTPO and prior work experience and/or education qualifies them for the position.

Job posting is a way to inform employees of openings and to identify qualified and interested applicants who might not otherwise be known to the hiring manager. Other recruiting sources may also be used to fill an open position in the best interest of the organization.

### **C. Employment Reference and Background Checks**

To ensure that individuals who join the R2CTPO are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of the R2CTPO to check the employment references of all applicants. Additionally, the R2CTPO reserves the right to conduct any necessary background checks or verification of information (such as educational credentials) submitted on the employment application at any point in time if it relates to the employee's qualifications to hold a specific position with the R2CTPO.

### **D. Employee Medical Examinations**

To help ensure that employees are able to perform their duties adequately and safely, medical examinations will be required. Any such examination shall be limited to the determination of the applicant's / employee's ability to perform the required duties of the position.

After an offer has been made to an applicant, a medical examination will be performed at the R2CTPO's expense by a health professional of the R2CTPO's choice. The offer of employment and assignment to duties may be contingent upon satisfactory completion of the exam.

A medical examination or re-examination of an employee during employment may be required to determine ability to continue to adequately and safely perform the duties of the employee's position.

Information on an employee's medical condition or history will be kept separate from other employee information and maintained in confidence. Access to this information will be limited as provided by law.

## **E. Job Applicant Drug Testing**

All job applicants who have been made an offer of employment with the R2CTPO shall be required to undergo screening for the presence of illegal drugs or alcohol. Any applicant who tests positive for the presence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol will be denied employment at that time and may not re-apply for employment with the R2CTPO for six (6) months. Any applicant who refuses to submit to a drug test will be rejected, and will no longer be considered for employment with the R2CTPO.

## **F. Immigration Law Compliance**

The R2CTPO is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, and all other applicable state and federal legislation, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing their identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with the R2CTPO within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

## **G. Family Employment Restriction**

No member of the family (i.e., relative) of a permanent full-time, permanent part-time, temporary or other R2CTPO employee who has direct or delegated supervisory authority shall be hired, promoted or retained on a permanent or temporary basis. A waiver of this policy may be considered for approval by the Board where such action is determined to be in the best interest of the Organization or because such waiver is necessary to obtain (or retain) an employee with certain unique skills and/or abilities.

No member of the family of a R2CTPO Board member, or the R2CTPO Executive Director shall be hired or retained as a permanent full-time, permanent part-time, temporary or other R2CTPO employee at any time.

Direct or delegated supervisory authority is defined as an employee having the authority to appoint employees, promote, advance, evaluate, discipline or the ability to effectively recommend the same regarding the affected family member applicant/employee.

For the purposes of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

## H. Introductory Period

The introductory period is intended to give new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether the new position meets their expectations. The R2CTPO uses this period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits and overall performance. Either the employee or the R2CTPO may end the employment relationship at will at any time during or after the introductory period, with or without cause or advance notice.

All new and rehired employees work on an introductory basis for the first 180 calendar days after their date of hire. Employees who are promoted or transferred within the R2CTPO must complete a second introductory period of the same length with each assignment to a new position. Any significant absence will automatically extend an introductory period by the length of the absence. If the R2CTPO determines that the designated introductory period does not allow sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate the employee's performance, the introductory period may be extended for a specified period with notice given to the employee of the R2CTPO's decision to extend the introductory period. Such notice will be given in writing prior to the normal expiration of the introductory period.

During the initial introductory period, new employees are eligible for those benefits that are required by law, such as workers' compensation insurance and Social Security. They may also be eligible for other R2CTPO-provided benefits, subject to the terms and conditions of each benefits program.

## I. Timekeeping

Accurately recording time worked is the responsibility of every employee. Federal and State laws require the R2CTPO to keep an accurate record of time worked in order to calculate employee pay and benefits. Time worked is the time actually spent on the job performing assigned duties.

Employees should accurately record the time they work each day and the task they are supporting. They should also record any departure from work for personal reasons. Overtime work must always be approved in writing by the Executive Director before it is performed. Failure to seek and receive approval in advance of working additional hours may be cause for disciplinary action.

Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records or recording time on another employee's time record may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

It is the employee's responsibility to sign their time records to certify the accuracy of all time recorded. The Executive Director will review and then initial the time record before submitting it for payroll processing.

## **J. Outside Employment**

An employee may hold outside jobs as long as the employee continues to meet the performance standards of his/her job with the R2CTPO. No outside work may be conducted during hours the employee is being compensated by the R2CTPO or utilizing any supplies, equipment or other resources of the R2CTPO. All employees will be judged by the same performance standards and will be subject to the R2CTPO's scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If the R2CTPO determines that an employee's outside work interferes with performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the R2CTPO, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he or she wishes to remain employed with the R2CTPO.

Outside employment that constitutes a conflict of interest is prohibited. Employees may not receive any income or material gain from individuals outside the R2CTPO for materials produced, or services rendered, while performing their jobs.

## **K. Work Schedules**

The R2CTPO office is normally open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding certain holidays. Other operating hours may be established in the future by the R2CTPO. It is imperative that sufficient coverage of the office is in place at all times during regular office hours. The normal work schedule for full time employees is eight hours per day, five days per week. The Executive Director will advise employees of the times their schedules will normally begin and end. Staffing needs and operational demands may necessitate variations in starting and ending times, as well as variations in the total hours that may be scheduled each day and week.

## **L. Personnel Data Changes**

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify the R2CTPO of any changes in personnel data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, names and number of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments and other such status reports should be kept accurate and current at all times. If any personnel data has changes, notification to the Chief Financial Officer should be made immediately.

## **M. Paydays**

All employees are paid bi-weekly on every other Friday. There are twenty-six (26) pay periods in each year. Each pay period will include earnings for all work performed through the end of the previous payroll period.

In the event that a regularly scheduled payday falls on a day off, such as a holiday, employees will receive pay on the last day of work before the regularly scheduled payday.

Employees will have their pay directly deposited into a bank account (or multiple bank accounts) by providing to the R2CTPO their bank account information.

Employees will receive an itemized statement of wages when the R2CTPO makes direct deposits.

## **N. Pay Deductions**

The law requires that the R2CTPO make certain deductions from every employee's compensation. Among these are applicable Federal income, social security and Medicare taxes. The R2CTPO must also deduct Social Security taxes on each employee's earnings up to a specified limit that is called the Social Security "wage base". The R2CTPO matches the amount of Social Security taxes paid by each employee. All required deductions will be made by the R2CTPO as required by federal and state law.

The R2CTPO offers programs and benefits beyond those required by law. Eligible employees may voluntarily authorize deductions from their paychecks to cover the costs of participating in these programs. The R2CTPO may establish minimum notification periods for processing voluntary deductions.

## **SECTION 5 RULES OF EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

### **A. Attendance and Punctuality**

The R2CTPO expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work. Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other employees and on the R2CTPO. In the rare instances when employees cannot avoid being late to work or are unable to work as scheduled, they should notify their supervisor as soon as possible in advance of the anticipated tardiness or absence. All employees should provide notice of scheduled absences as required by the R2CTPO.

Poor attendance and excessive tardiness are disruptive. Either may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **B. Conduct and Work Rules**

Employees of the R2CTPO are public employees and as such are employed for the benefit of the public. Public employees are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and the State of Florida, as well as all local government laws and regulations.

Employees are expected to perform their duties in a manner above reproach and to uphold the highest standards of morality, integrity and impartiality when engaged in any work related situation.

Employees are to conduct themselves in a manner that does not damage the public's faith and confidence in the R2CTPO's public service responsibility. Employees should always conduct themselves in a manner which avoids giving the impression that they can be improperly influenced or encouraged to place a private interest above the public good.

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, the R2CTPO expects employees to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all employees and the organization.

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the work place. The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that are considered to be dismissible violations:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Falsification of timekeeping records
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace, while on duty, or while operating employer-owned vehicles or equipment, or while driving on work-related business.
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of employer-owned or customer-owned property
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Violation of safety or health rules
- Smoking in prohibited areas
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, in the workplace
- Excessive absenteeism or any absence without notice
- Unauthorized absence from work station during the work day
- Unauthorized use of telephones, mail system, internet, or other employer-owned equipment
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct

Employment with the R2CTPO is at the mutual consent of the R2CTPO and the employee, and either party may terminate that relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice.

### **C. Drug and Alcohol Use**

While on the R2CTPO premises and while conducting business-related activities off the R2CTPO premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. This policy is not intended to prevent a R2CTPO employee who is attending a R2CTPO sponsored event at which alcohol is served from personally electing to consume an alcoholic beverage served at that event.

The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the workplace.

Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment, and/or required participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation or treatment program. Such violations may also have legal consequences.

Employees with drug or alcohol problems that have not resulted in, and are not the immediate subject of, disciplinary action may request approval to take unpaid time off to participate in a rehabilitation or treatment program through the R2CTPO's health insurance benefit coverage. Leave may be granted if the employee agrees to abstain from the use of the problem substance and abides by all the R2CTPO policies, rules and prohibitions relating to conduct in the workplace, and if granting the leave will not cause the R2CTPO any undue hardship.

### **D. Drug and Alcohol Testing**

In order to maintain the safety and efficiency of its operations and to protect employees and the public, R2CTPO employees may be required to submit to drug and/or alcohol testing if there is a cause for reasonable suspicion of substance abuse. Employees who refuse substance testing under these circumstances will be terminated. The R2CTPO will select a licensed laboratory which will perform the drug and/or alcohol testing in accordance with any applicable federal or state regulations.

The following is a list of some, but not all circumstances, which could be indicators of a substance abuse problem and considered reasonable suspicion:

- Observed alcohol or drug abuse during work hours
- Apparent physical state of impairment
- Incoherent mental state
- Marked changes in personal behavior that are otherwise unexplainable
- Deteriorating work performance that is not attributable to other factors
- Accidents or other actions that provide reasonable cause to believe the employee may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol



If an employee tests positive for drugs and/or alcohol, and if that employee is granted a leave of absence for substance abuse rehabilitation, he or she may be required to participate in an after-care and work rehabilitation program. Upon successful completion of all or part of these required programs, the employee may be released to resume work but will be subject to random substance abuse testing and close performance monitoring to ensure that he or she remains drug free.

## **E. Personal Appearance**

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image the R2CTPO presents to the public. During business hours, employees are expected to present a clean and neat appearance and to dress according to the requirements of their positions. The R2CTPO generally follows a “business casual” approach to office attire unless requirements (meetings, presentations, or field work) of the position or specific duties require more formal or informal attire. The employee should consult the Executive Director with any questions regarding a definition of appropriate attire.

## **F. Recycling**

The R2CTPO is committed to conservation, recycling and reuse whenever practicable and economically feasible. This includes the purchase, use and disposal of products and materials in a manner that will best utilize natural resources and minimize any negative impact on the earth’s environment.

Special recycling receptacles have been set up in the workplace to promote the separation and collection of recyclable materials. Employees are expected to participate in this program.

## **G. Safety**

The R2CTPO provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through regular internal communication channels such as staff meetings, bulletin board postings, memos or other written communications.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the appropriate supervisor. Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations, who fail to report or, where appropriate, fail to remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Except as otherwise permitted by federal or state law, employees are prohibited from bringing into the workplace any item that could create the risk of death or physical harm to others.

In the case of accidents that result in injury, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify the Executive Director. Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and initiate insurance and/or workers' compensation benefits. All employees will provide full support and all necessary information to complete or conduct any required reports, accident form, or investigation that may be required or conducted.

## **H. Sales and Solicitation**

Employees shall not distribute promotional literature or printed solicitation materials of any kind, nor shall they sell merchandise, solicit financial contributions, or solicit for any other cause during working time. The posting of such material on R2CTPO bulletin boards is prohibited.

## **I. Security Inspections**

Desks, lockers, and other storage devices that are provided for the convenience of employees remain the sole property of the R2CTPO. Accordingly, they, as well as any articles found within them, can be inspected by any agent or representative of the R2CTPO at any time, either with or without prior notice. In addition, employees are forbidden from locking their desks or offices, unless a copy of the key is given to the Chief Financial Officer.

## **J. Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment**

Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Any employee who wants to report an incident of sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly report the matter to the Chief Financial Officer. If the employee believes it would be inappropriate to contact the Chief Financial Officer the employee should immediately contact the Executive Director or Chairperson of the R2CTPO Board.

Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal. Employees are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest possible time so that the R2CTPO can take prompt action, as warranted.

Individuals who make complaints have an obligation to assist and cooperate with the R2CTPO's investigation of such complaints. All employees of the R2CTPO have an obligation to assist and cooperate with any investigation being undertaken regarding sexual or other unlawful harassment.

If the R2CTPO, upon investigation of a harassment complaint, determines that an employee has been harassed by another employee, appropriate remedial action will be taken against the offender, up to and including termination.

## **K. Smoking**

Smoking is strictly prohibited throughout the workplace. This policy applies equally to all employees and visitors.

## **L. Use of Computer and E-mail**

Computers, computer files, the E-mail system, internet access and software furnished to employees are the property of the R2CTPO, and are intended for business use. Employees are strictly prohibited from placing any password on a staff office personal computer that has not been given to the Chief Financial Officer. Other than occasional incidental use, the use of e-mail or internet access for any non-business purpose is strictly prohibited and inappropriate usage or violation of this procedure, may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. To ensure compliance with this policy, computer and e-mail usage may be monitored. Individual office computer hard drives may be audited at the discretion of the R2CTPO.

Use of the internet and E-mail is subject to the Public Records Law (Fla. Stat. Chap. 119) and the Government-In-The-Sunshine Law (Fla. Stat. Chap. 286). A copy of all messages, transmitted and received via E-mail will be automatically retained and made available to the public upon request in compliance with the Public Records Law (Fla. Stat. Chap. 119). Employees should not state anything in an E-mail message that would be inappropriate if published to the news media. All E-mail is saved on the archive server and may be audited to determine compliance with this policy.

No aliases are allowed. All E-mail messages shall be credited to the actual author. All employees using E-mail shall be assigned a unique electronic mailbox, accessible by an employee-controlled password. No employee shall use another employees' electronic mailbox or password. Additionally, no E-mail messages shall be transmitted or stored in encrypted form. Further guidance on the appropriate use of e-mail is contained in the R2CTPO's email communication policy.

The R2CTPO strives to maintain a workplace free of harassment and is sensitive to the diversity of its employees. Therefore, the R2CTPO prohibits the use of computers and the E-mail system in ways that are disruptive, offensive to others or harmful to morale. For example, the display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages or cartoons is not allowed. Other such misuse includes, but is not limited to, ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-color jokes or anything that may be construed as harassment or showing disrespect for others.

E-mail may not be used to solicit others for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations or other non-business matters. As all e-mail messages are public information, they must be saved and stored in the appropriate designated location.

The R2CTPO purchases and licenses the use of various computer software for business purposes and does not own the copyright to this software or its related documentation. Unless authorized by the software developer, the R2CTPO does not have the right to reproduce such software for use on more than one computer.

Employees may only use software on local area networks or on multiple machines according to the software license agreement. The R2CTPO prohibits the illegal duplication of software and its related documentation.

Employees should notify the Chief Financial Officer upon learning of any violations of this policy. Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **M. Use of Equipment**

Equipment essential in accomplishing job duties is often expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines.

Employees should immediately notify the Chief Financial Officer if any equipment, machines or tools appear to be damaged, defective or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of damages, defects and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others.

Improper, careless, negligent, destructive, unsafe use or operation of equipment or the alteration of equipment can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **N. Use of Phone and Mail Systems**

Personal use of telephones for long-distance and toll calls is not permitted. Any R2CTPO provided cell-phones are principally for the use of the employee to benefit the employer. Similar to limitations placed on office-phones, personal cell-phone use is prohibited where it results in additional cost to the R2CTPO.

Use of personal cell-phones within the R2CTPO's office should be conducted in a manner that is not disruptive to others or the completion of R2CTPO work activities.

The use of R2CTPO-paid postage for personal correspondence is not permitted.

## **SECTION 6      EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS**

## A. Employment Categories

It is the intent of the R2CTPO to clarify the employment classifications so employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time. The right to terminate the employment relationship at will, at any time, is retained by both the employee and the R2CTPO.

Each employee is designated as either NONEXEMPT or EXEMPT from Federal wage and hour laws. NONEXEMPT employees are entitled to overtime pay under the specific provisions of Federal laws. EXEMPT employees are excluded from specific provisions of Federal wage and hour laws. An employee's EXEMPT or NONEXEMPT classification may be changed only upon written notification by R2CTPO management.

In addition to the above categories, each employee will also belong to one of the following other employment categories:

**REGULAR FULL-TIME** employees are those who are not in a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work the R2CTPO's full-time schedule. Generally, they are eligible for the R2CTPO's benefit package, subject to the terms, conditions and limitations of each benefit program.

**PART-TIME** employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work 30 hours or less per week. While they do receive all legally mandated benefits (such as Social Security, Medicare, workers' compensation insurance and Florida Retirement System benefits), they are ineligible for all of the R2CTPO's other benefit programs.

**INTRODUCTORY** employees are those whose performance is being evaluated to determine whether further employment in a specific position or with the R2CTPO is appropriate. Employees who satisfactorily complete the introductory period will be notified of their new employment classification in writing by the Executive Director.

**TEMPORARY** employees are those who are hired as interim replacements, to temporarily supplement the workforce, or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Employment assignments in this category are of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain that status unless, and until notified of a change in writing by the Executive Director. While temporary employees receive all legally mandated benefits (such as workers' compensation insurance, Medicare and Social Security), they are ineligible for all of the R2CTPO's other benefit programs.

## B. Access to Personnel Files

Individual personnel files will be maintained and available for examination in accordance with Florida's Public Records Act. The personnel file includes such information as the employee's job application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and

salary increases and other employment records. Certain types of confidential records, including documents containing personal medical information, will be kept in a separate confidential personnel file and access to this file will be limited to only those R2CTPO employees with a bona fide operational reason for access and public access will be limited to the greatest extent allowable by law.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the Chief Financial Officer. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files in the presence of an individual appointed by the R2CTPO to maintain the files.

### **C. Administrative Pay Corrections**

The R2CTPO takes all reasonable steps to ensure that employees receive the correct amount of pay in each paycheck and that employees are paid promptly on the scheduled payday.

In the unlikely event that there is an error in the amount of pay, the employee should promptly bring the discrepancy to the attention of the Chief Financial Officer so that corrections can be made as quickly as possible.

Corrections will be made on the next regularly scheduled paycheck.

### **D. Employee Benefits**

Eligible employees at the R2CTPO are provided with a wide range of benefits. A number of programs (such as Social Security, Medicare, and workers' compensation) cover all employees of the R2CTPO in the manner prescribed by law.

Benefits eligibility for some programs is dependent upon a variety of factors, including employee classification. The Chief Financial Officer can identify the programs for which you are eligible. Details on many of these programs can be found throughout this personnel manual.

The following are some of the benefit programs available to eligible employees:

- Auto Mileage Reimbursement
- Bereavement Leave
- Deferred Compensation Plan
- Dental Insurance
- Educational Financial Assistance
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Health Insurance
- Paid Holidays
- Jury Duty Leave
- Life Insurance

- Meal Allowances
- Medical Leave
- Pension Plan (including FSRS)
- Relocation Assistance
- Sam's Club Membership
- Travel Allowances
- Vision Care Insurance
- Paid Time Off

Some of the benefit programs listed above may require contributions from the employee, but most are fully paid by the R2CTPO.

## **E. Health Insurance**

The R2CTPO health insurance plan provides employees and their dependents' access to medical, dental and vision care insurance benefits. Employees in the regular full-time and introductory employment classifications are eligible to participate in the health insurance plan. Eligible employees may participate in the health insurance plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the R2CTPO and the insurance carrier.

A change in employment classification that would result in the loss eligibility to participate in the health insurance plan may qualify an employee for benefits continuation under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Refer to the Benefits Continuation (COBRA) policy for more information.

Details of the health insurance plan are described in the Summary Plan Description (SPD). An SPD and information on the cost of coverage will be provided in advance of enrollment to eligible employees. Contact the Chief Financial Officer for more information about health insurance benefits.

## **F. Benefits Continuation (COBRA)**

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under the R2CTPO's health plan when a "qualifying event" would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Some common qualifying events include resignation, termination of employment, death of an employee, reduction on an employee's hours or a leave of absence, an employee's divorce or legal separation or a dependent child no longer meeting the eligibility requirements.

Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of coverage at the R2CTPO's group rates plus an administrative fee. The R2CTPO provides each eligible employee with a written notice describing the rights granted under COBRA when the employee becomes eligible

for coverage under the R2CTPO health insurance plan. The notice contains important information about the employee's rights and obligations.

## **G. Short-Term Disability**

The R2CTPO provides a short-term disability (STD) benefits plan to eligible employees who are unable to work because of a qualifying disability due to an illness or injury. Employees in the regular full-time and introductory employment classifications are eligible to participate in this STD plan. Under the R2CTPO's plan, eligible employees who wish to participate are responsible for paying the plan premium.

Eligible employees may participate in the STD plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the R2CTPO and the insurance carrier. If the R2CTPO has a reasonable belief that an employee is unable to return to work and perform the required duties of the position, the R2CTPO may require a return to work physical, at the expense of the R2CTPO, or appropriate documentation from the employee's medical provider stating that the employee may return to work and outlining any continuing restrictions.

Disabilities arising from pregnancy or pregnancy-related illness are treated in the same manner as any other illness that prevents an employee from working.

Details of the STD benefits plan, including benefit amounts, when they are payable, and limitations, restrictions and other exclusions are described in the Summary Plan description provided to all eligible employees. Contact the Chief Financial Officer for more information about STD benefits.

## **H. Long-Term Disability**

The R2CTPO provides a long-term disability (LTD) plan benefits plan to help eligible employees cope with an illness or injury that results in a long-term absence from employment. LTD is designed to ensure a continuing income for employees who are disabled and unable to work. Employees in the regular full-time and introductory employment classifications are eligible to participate in the LTD plan.

Eligible employees may participate in the LTD plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the R2CTPO and the insurance carrier. Under the R2CTPO's LTD plan, eligible employees who wish to participate are responsible for paying the plan premium. If the R2CTPO has a reasonable belief that an employee is unable to return to work and perform the required duties of the position, the R2CTPO may require a return to work physical, at the expense of the R2CTPO, or appropriate documentation from the employee's medical provider stating that the employee may return to work and outlining any continuing restrictions.



Details of the LTD benefits plan, including benefit amounts and limitations and restrictions, are described in the Summary Plan Description provided to all eligible employees. Contact the Chief Financial Officer for more information about LTD benefits.

## **I. Educational Assistance**

The R2CTPO recognizes that the skills and knowledge of its employees are critical to the success of the organization. The educational assistance program encourages personal development through formal education so that employees can maintain and improve job-related skills or enhance their ability to compete for reasonably attainable jobs within the R2CTPO. This policy is not applicable to general training completed by an employee as part of their employment with the R2CTPO such as skills enhancement (i.e. – Excel training, project management training) or other career development training that is designed to make an employee more effective and productive. These training seminars, when approved by the Executive Director, will continue to be paid at 100% and are not subject to any reimbursement policy.

The R2CTPO will provide educational assistance to all eligible employees. To maintain eligibility, employees must remain on the active payroll and be performing their job satisfactorily through the completion of each course. Only regular, full-time employees are eligible for educational assistance.

Individual courses or courses that are part of a degree, license or certification program must be related to the organization in order to be eligible for educational assistance. The R2CTPO has the sole discretion to determine whether a course relates to an employee's current job duties or a foreseeable future position. In addition, staff members must request approval for reimbursement for college-level classes from the Executive Director of the R2CTPO, both in advance and in writing. Employees should enroll in the most cost effective course to meet a degree objective (i.e. – taking courses at public institutions of higher education rather than private institutions whenever feasible).

The R2CTPO will reimburse staff members for college-level classes at a rate of no more than two classes per semester, per staff member, and for no more than 75% of the total cost of tuition, books and other class fees. Employees will not be reimbursed for any costs associated with classes if these are covered by any other method (i.e. – financial aid, state or federal grants, etc.). All classes must be taken at universities or colleges that are accredited through one of the following regional organizations: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges or Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, or the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The staff member must provide proof of course completion and must achieve a grade of "B" or better in order to receive reimbursement. Receipts for all requested reimbursement must be provided to the Chief Financial Officer.

At the discretion of the R2CTPO Executive Director, the R2CTPO may make the payment outlined in the preceding paragraph at the time the relevant educational costs were incurred rather than as a reimbursement. Should the employee fail to complete the course with a grade of "B" or better, the employee will be responsible for reimbursing the R2CTPO for all advanced payments over a period of time not to exceed six (6) months. During any period of time where the employee owes money to the R2CTPO under the tuition assistance program, future payments to the employee will only be on a reimbursable basis. In addition, any employee hired after the effective date of this handbook who leaves employment with the R2CTPO will be responsible to repay 100% of educational benefits received for coursework completed within one year prior to the separation date and 50% of the educational benefits for coursework completed more than one year and up to two years prior to the separation date. Coursework completed more than two years prior to separation will not be required to repay any education benefit.

While educational assistance is expected to enhance employee performance and professional abilities, the R2CTPO cannot guarantee that participation in formal education will entitle the employee to automatic advancement, a different job assignment or pay increases.

Employees should contact the Chief Financial Officer for more information or questions about educational assistance.

## **J. Bereavement Leave**

Up to five workdays of paid bereavement leave will be provided to regular full-time employees and to introductory employees each year. Bereavement pay is calculated based on the base pay rate at the time of absence and will not include any special forms of compensation, such as incentives, commissions or bonuses.

Bereavement leave will normally be granted unless there are unusual business needs or staffing requirements. Employees may, with the Executive Director's approval, use any available paid leave for additional time off as necessary.

The R2CTPO defines "immediate family" as the employee's spouse, parent or stepparent, child or stepchild, sibling; the employee's spouse's parent, child, or sibling; the employee's child's spouse; grandparents or grandchildren. Special consideration will also be given to any other person whose association with the employee was similar to any of the above relationships.

## **K. Emergency Closings**

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires or power failures can disrupt operations of the organization. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closing of the work facility.

When operations are officially closed due to emergency conditions, the time off from scheduled work will be paid. Employees in essential operations may be asked to work on a day when operations are officially closed. In these circumstances, employees who work will receive regular pay.

## **L. Holidays**

The R2CTPO will grant holiday time off to all employees on the holidays listed below. Floating holidays may be scheduled with the approval of the Executive Director on the designated floating holiday date, or on any day following that date, but in any event, must be taken prior to the end of that fiscal year (June 30) or it will be forfeited. Floating holidays are not subject to cash reimbursement.

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday (Third Monday in January) (Celebrated as a floating holiday)
- Good Friday (Friday before Easter)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas (December 25)
- Employee's Birthday (celebrated as a floating holiday)

The R2CTPO will grant paid holiday time off to all eligible employees immediately upon assignment to an eligible employment classification. Holiday pay will be calculated based on the employee's straight-time pay rate (as of the date of the holiday) times number of hours the employee would otherwise have worked on that day for full-time or part-time employees. Regular full-time employees and regular part-time and introductory employees are eligible for paid holiday time off.

A recognized holiday that falls on a Saturday will be observed on the Friday before. A recognized holiday that falls on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

If a recognized holiday falls during an eligible employee's paid absence (such as vacation or sick leave), holiday pay will be provided instead of the paid time off benefit that would otherwise have applied.

Paid time off for holidays will not be counted as hours worked for the purposes of determining overtime.

## **M. Jury Duty**

Employees in an eligible classification may request up to two weeks of paid jury duty leave over any one-year period. Consideration for extended paid jury duty leave may be given by the R2CTPO Board on a case-by-case basis for employees selected to serve on a jury of extended duration.

Jury duty pay will be calculated on the employee's base pay rate times the number of hours the employee would otherwise have worked on the day of absence. Only regular full-time employees qualify for paid jury duty leave.

If employees are required to serve jury duty beyond the period of paid jury duty leave, they may use any available paid time off (for example, vacation benefits) or may request an unpaid jury duty leave of absence.

Employees must show the jury duty summons to their supervisor as soon as possible so that the supervisor may make arrangements to accommodate their absence. Employees are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

Either the R2CTPO or the employee may request an excuse from jury duty if, in the R2CTPO's judgment, the employee's absence would create serious operational difficulties.

The R2CTPO will continue to provide health insurance benefits for the full term of the jury duty absence.

Benefit accruals such as vacation, sick leave or holiday benefits will be suspended during unpaid jury duty leave and will resume upon return to active employment.

## **N. Life Insurance**

The R2CTPO provides a basic life insurance plan for eligible employees. Each eligible employee's life insurance policy is equal to one times the annual salary of that employee. The R2CTPO will be responsible for premiums and taxes up to the IRS maximum. The employee will be responsible for taxes on the amount exceeding the IRS maximum.

Employees in the regular full-time and introductory employment classifications are eligible to participate in the life insurance plan.

Eligible employees may participate in the life insurance plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the R2CTPO and the insurance carrier. Contact the Chief Financial Officer for more information about life insurance benefits.

## **O. Meal Periods**

All full-time regular employees, exempt or non-exempt, are provided with one meal period of not less than 30 minutes in length each workday. The Executive Director will schedule meal periods to accommodate operating requirements. Employees will be relieved of all active responsibilities and restrictions during their meal period and will not be compensated for that time.

## **P. Military Leave**

A military leave of absence will be granted to employees who are absent from work because of service in the U. S. Uniformed Services in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Advance notice of military service is required, unless military necessity prevents such notice or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable.

The leave will be unpaid; however, employees may use any available paid time off for the absence. Continuation of health insurance benefits is available as required by USERRA based on the length of the leave and subject to the terms, conditions and limitations of the applicable plans for which the employee is otherwise eligible. Benefit accruals, such as vacation, sick leave or holiday benefits will be suspended during the unpaid leave and will resume upon the employee's return to active employment.

Employees on military leave for up to 30 days are required to return to work for the first regularly scheduled shift after the end of service, allowing reasonable travel time. Employees on longer military leave must apply for reinstatement in accordance with USERRA and all applicable State laws.

Employees returning from military leave will be placed in the position they would have attained, or a comparable one, had they remained continuously employed depending on the length of military service in accordance with USERRA. They will be treated as though they were continuously employed for purposes of determining benefits based on length of service.

## **Q. Overtime Compensation**

When operating requirements or other needs cannot be met during regular working hours, employees will be given the opportunity to volunteer for overtime work assignments. All overtime work must receive the Executive Director's prior authorization. Overtime assignments will be distributed as equitably as practical to all employees qualified to perform the required work.

Overtime compensation is paid to all non-exempt employees in accordance with Federal wage and hour law. Overtime pay is based on actual hours worked. Time off from sick leave, vacation leave, emergency closings or any leave of absence will not be considered hours

worked for purposes of performing overtime calculations. Overtime compensation will be awarded to all eligible non-exempt employees at a rate of time and one half.

Non-exempt employees who work overtime without receiving prior authorization from the Executive Director may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

## **R. Paid Time Off (PTO)**

Paid Time Off (PTO) is an all-purpose time-off policy for eligible employees to use for vacation, illness or injury and personal business. It combines traditional vacation and sick leave plans into one flexible, paid time-off policy. Regular full-time and introductory employees are eligible to earn and use PTO as described in this policy. However, before PTO can be used for employees in their introductory period, a waiting period of 30 days must be completed.

Once employees enter an eligible employment classification, they begin to earn PTO according to the schedule below. The amount of PTO employees receive each year increases with the length of their employment as shown in the following schedule:

### **PAID TIME OFF (PTO) EARNING SCHEDULE:**

Years of Eligible Service	PTO Hours	PTO Hours
	<u>Biweekly</u>	<u>Each Year</u>
Upon initial eligibility	7.38	192
<i>After 5 years</i>	8.31	216
<i>After 13 years</i>	9.85	256
<i>After 20 years</i>	10.15	264

The length of eligible service is calculated on the basis of a “benefit year.” This is the 12-month period that begins when the employee starts to earn PTO. An employee’s benefit year may be extended for any significant leave of absence, except military leave of absence. Military leave has no effect on this calculation.

PTO can be used in minimum increments of one-half hour. Employees who have an unexpected need to be absent from work should notify the Executive Director before the scheduled start of their workday, if possible. The Executive Director must also be contacted on each additional day of unexpected absence.

To schedule planned PTO, employees should make an advance written request for approval from the Executive Director. Requests will be reviewed based on a number of factors, including business needs and staffing requirements.

PTO is paid at the employee's base pay rate at the time of the absence. It does not include overtime or any special forms of compensation such as incentives, commissions, bonuses or shift differentials.

In the event that available PTO is not used by the end of the benefit year, employees may carry as many as 520 hours of unused time forward to the next benefit year. Accumulation of hours may exceed 520 hours in a benefit year; however, an employee may only carry 520 hours forward from one benefit year to the next.

Once an employee has accumulated 240 hours of PTO, that employee is eligible to participate in an annual sell back of hours up to 48. Employees who sell hours back to the R2CTPO will receive compensation for those hours at their base rate of pay at the time of sale. The opportunity to participate in the sell back is available once a year during the month of June.

Upon termination of employment, employees will be paid for unused PTO that has been earned through the last day of work.

## **S. Pay Advances**

The R2CTPO does not under any circumstances provide pay advances on unearned wages to employees.

Any questions concerning deductions taken from your paycheck or how the amount of the deduction(s) was/were calculated should be directed to the Director of Finance and Administration.

## **T. Pension Plans**

In order to provide its employees with the potential for future financial security, the R2CTPO offers a retirement savings plan benefit. As of September 2009, the R2CTPO elected to participate exclusively in the Florida State Retirement System for all future eligible employees. At that time, existing employees were provided an opportunity to participate in the FSRS program or to remain in the existing program offered through Principal. All eligible new employees will participate in the FSRS program and will not have the option to participate in the Principal pension plan. Employee and employer contributions, eligibility for retirement benefits, and all program requirements for the FSRS program are governed by the FSRS.

Some R2CTPO employees remain participants in the Principal purchase pension plan. Employee and employer contributions, eligibility for retirement benefits, vesting, and all program requirements for the Principal plan are governed by the R2CTPO Board. All earnings of the pension plan account continue to accumulate tax-free until the employee receives them as benefits. All requests to begin, modify or end individual voluntary contributions to a pension plan account must be made in writing to the Chief Financial Officer.

Each employee participating in the Principal purchase pension plan will become 100% vested after one year of employment with the R2CTPO. If the employee becomes separated from employment with the R2CTPO prior to achieving one year of service, the employer's contribution to that employee's account is forfeited by that employee. All employee forfeitures remain in the account for the R2CTPO's use in offsetting its next contribution.

An additional deferred compensation plan is also offered that allows all employees to contribute additional funds for retirement on a voluntary basis via payroll deduction.

For more information on the pension plan account, please contact the Chief Financial Officer.

## **U. Time Off to Vote**

Generally, employees are able to find time to vote either before or after their regular work schedule. If employees are unable to vote in an election during their nonworking hours, the R2CTPO will grant up to two hours of either unpaid time off or PTO, if available, to vote.

Employees should request time off to vote from their supervisor at least two working days prior to the Election Day. Advance notice is required so that the necessary time off can be scheduled at the beginning or end of the work day, whichever provides the least disruption to the normal work schedule.

## **V. Travel Expenses**

The R2CTPO will reimburse employees for reasonable business travel expenses incurred while on assignments outside of Volusia County. All out of County business travel must be approved in advance by the Executive Director.

When approved, the actual costs of travel, meals, lodging and other expenses directly related to accomplishing business travel objectives will be reimbursed by the R2CTPO. Employees are expected to limit expenses to reasonable amounts.

Expenses that generally will be reimbursed include the following:

- Airfare or train fare for travel in coach or economy class or the lowest available fare
- Car rental fees, only for compact or mid-sized cars. Please note that employees renting cars for business purposes are required to purchase the additional liability insurance at the maximum amount available and the R2CTPO must be named as the additional insured
- Fares for shuttle or airport bus service, where available; cost of public transportation or other ground travel
- Taxi fares



- Mileage costs for use of personal cars, only when less expensive transportation is not available. Mileage is reimbursed at the IRS current rate
- Cost of standard accommodations for the government or conference rate in hotels, motels or similar lodgings
- Cost of meals to be reimbursed in accordance with the adopted IRS travel regulations based upon the location where the employee is traveling. Please note that employees will not be reimbursed for any meals that are included in the cost of a conference or meeting registration fee. Actual cost of the meal will be reimbursed with receipt; tips are not reimbursable.
- Charges for telephone calls, fax, internet and similar services required for business purposes

When travel is completed, employees should submit completed travel expense reports within 7 days. Reports should be accompanied by receipts for all individual expenses.

Abuse of this business travel expenses policy, including falsifying expense reports to reflect costs not incurred by the employee, can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **W. Witness Duty**

If employees have been subpoenaed or are otherwise requested to testify as witnesses by the R2CTPO or on behalf of work activities associated with the R2CTPO, they will receive paid time off for the entire period of witness duty.

Employees will be granted unpaid time off to appear in court as a witness when requested by a party other than the R2CTPO. Employees are free to use any available paid leave benefit (such as vacation leave) to receive compensation for the period of this absence. The subpoena should be shown to the Executive Director immediately after it is received so that operating requirements can be adjusted, where necessary, to accommodate the employee's absence. The employee is expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

## **X. Workers' Compensation Insurance**

The R2CTPO provides a comprehensive workers' compensation insurance program at no cost to employees. This program covers any injury or illness sustained in the course of employment that requires medical, surgical or hospital treatment. Subject to applicable legal requirements, workers' compensation insurance provides benefits after a short waiting period or immediately if the employee is hospitalized.

Employees who sustain work-related injuries or illnesses should inform the Chief Financial Officer immediately. No matter how minor an on-the-job injury may appear, it is important that it

be reported immediately. This will enable an eligible employee to qualify for coverage as quickly as possible, and be directed to the appropriate medical care provider.

Neither the R2CTPO nor the insurance carrier will be liable for the payment of workers' compensation benefits for injuries that occur during an employee's voluntary participation in any off-duty recreational, social or athletic activity sponsored by the R2CTPO.

## **Y. Moving Expense Reimbursement**

At the discretion of the Executive Director, moving expenses incurred by a duly appointed eligible staff member shall be reimbursed by the R2CTPO up to, but not exceeding \$1000. The R2CTPO Board may authorize an additional amount for the top management position of the agency. Only full-time, salaried professional employees hired to fill a management level position are eligible for moving expense reimbursement.

For specific information regarding the terms and extent of moving expense reimbursement, please contact the Chief Financial Officer.

Employees must request moving expense reimbursement for specific items in advance of the date the expenses are incurred. The R2CTPO will reimburse expenses only if the employee has received advance approval, incurs reasonable expenses and submits satisfactory proof of the expense within 30 calendar days of the date the expense was incurred.

The R2CTPO extends moving expense benefits in an effort to contribute to the success of every employee relocation. However, if an employee separates from R2CTPO services within one year of the relocation, the amount of relocation reimbursement will be considered only a loan. Accordingly, the employee will be asked to reimburse 100% of the moving expense reimbursement.

## **SECTION 7 EMPLOYEE EVALUATION AND DISCIPLINE**

### **A. Performance Evaluation**

Supervisors and employees are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal, day-to-day basis. Formal performance evaluations are conducted prior to the completion of an employee's initial period in any new position. This period, known as the introductory period, allows the supervisor and the employee to discuss the job responsibilities, standards and performance requirements of the new position. Additional formal performance evaluations are conducted to provide both supervisors and employees the opportunity to discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals.

Performance evaluations will be conducted annually, during the month of May. In any area where an employee is rated below a fully satisfactory level, the Executive Director will identify a corrective action plan to be followed by the employee and a review will be conducted every six months until performance improves to at least the fully satisfactory level. The existence of a performance improvement plan does not preclude the R2CTPO or the Executive Director from taking disciplinary action, up to or including termination.

The purpose of the performance review is to evaluate and improve the employee's performance so that the individual and organization goals and objectives may be achieved. Performance reviews may provide crucial information for various personnel decisions such as merit pay increases, commendations, discipline or termination.

Merit-based pay adjustments are awarded by the R2CTPO in an effort to recognize truly superior employee performance. The decision to award such an adjustment is dependent upon numerous factors, including the information documented by this formal performance evaluation process. These adjustments are awarded at the discretion of the Executive Director.

## **B. Problem Resolution**

The R2CTPO is committed to providing the best possible working conditions for its employees. Part of this commitment is encouraging an open and honest atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion or question receives a timely response from the R2CTPO Executive Director.

The R2CTPO strives to ensure fair and honest treatment of all employees. Managers and employees are expected to treat each other with mutual respect. Employees are encouraged to offer positive and constructive criticism.

If an employee disagrees with the established rules of conduct, policies or practices, they can express their concern to the R2CTPO Executive Director. No employee will be penalized, formally or informally, for voicing a complaint with the R2CTPO in a reasonable, business-like manner.

Not every problem can be resolved to everyone's total satisfaction, but only through understanding and the discussion of mutual problems can employees and management develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important to the operation of an efficient and harmonious work environment.

All employees shall have the right at any time to secure consideration of any grievance regarding any disciplinary action taken by the R2CTPO which affects the substantial interest of the employee, except however, probationary employees who cannot appeal their dismissal. The submission of a grievance by an employee shall in no way adversely affect the employee or his employment with the R2CTPO.

1. The aggrieved employee shall have the right and the duty to first personally bring his grievance orally or in writing to the attention of the Executive Director within five calendar days from the date the incident occurred.
2. If the Executive Director is unavailable, or the complaint involves actions of the Executive Director, the employee shall present the problem in writing to the Chief Financial Officer within five calendar days after the incident has occurred.
3. The Executive Director (or Chief Financial Officer) shall review the written complaint and conduct any investigation necessary to establish the facts. The Executive Director (or Chief Financial Officer) shall inform the employee of the results of the investigation and any attempt to resolve the matter within five calendar days of receipt of the written complaint, and shall place a copy of the written complaint and the response in the employee's file.
4. If the employee is not satisfied with the results of this informal dispute resolution procedure, the employee may, within five working days from the date of receipt of the response from the Executive Director (or Chief Financial Officer), apply in writing to the Board Chairman to request a hearing of the grievance at a regular or special meeting of the R2CTPO Board. Where permissible by law, this hearing shall be conducted in a closed session. The R2CTPO Board's action shall be considered final.

### **C. Disciplinary Action**

The purpose of this policy is to state the R2CTPO's position on administering equitable and consistent discipline for unsatisfactory conduct in the workplace. The best disciplinary measure is the one that does not have to be enforced and comes from good leadership and fair supervision at all employment levels.

The R2CTPO's own best interest lies in ensuring fair treatment of all employees and in making certain that disciplinary actions are prompt, uniform and impartial. The major purpose of any disciplinary action is to correct the problem, prevent recurrence and prepare the employee for satisfactory service in the future.

Although employment with the R2CTPO is based on mutual consent and both the employee and the R2CTPO have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause or advance notice, the R2CTPO may use progressive discipline at its discretion.

The disciplinary actions which the Executive Director is authorized to impose consist of the following:

- Oral reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Change in assignment

- Reduction in pay
- Demotion
- Suspension
- Discharge

The actions are not necessarily sequential, and the Executive Director may take any action without prior notice or warning, depending on the nature of the conduct of the employee. Whenever practical, and where warranted, the R2CTPO Executive Director will ensure that an appropriate disciplinary investigation is conducted to reasonably ascertain the facts related to a particular alleged violation by the employee that warrants disciplinary action. The failure to complete a disciplinary action will not prohibit the R2CTPO from taking disciplinary action, up to and including termination, if in the determination of the Executive Director, that one is not warranted and/or more immediate action is required.

Again, notwithstanding the procedures contained herein, employment with the R2CTPO is at the mutual consent of the R2CTPO and the employee, and either party may terminate that relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice.

## **SECTION 8      EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION**

### **A.      Definitions**

Below are examples of some of the most common circumstances under which employment is terminated:

- RESIGNATION – voluntary employment termination initiated by an employee
- DISCHARGE – involuntary termination initiated by the organization
- LAYOFF - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization for non-disciplinary reasons
- RETIREMENT – voluntary employment termination initiated by the employee meeting age, length of service and any other criteria for retirement from the organization

Since employment with the R2CTPO is based on mutual consent, both the employee and the R2CTPO have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause at any time. Employee benefits will be affected by employment termination in the following manner: all accrued, vested benefits that are due and payable at termination will be paid. Some benefits may be continued at the employee's expense if the employee so chooses. The employee will be notified in writing of the benefits that may be continued and of the terms, conditions and limitations of such continuance.

## **B. Return of Property**

Employees are responsible for the return of all property, materials and/or written information issued to them or in their possession or control. Employees must return all property immediately upon request or upon termination of employment. Where permitted by applicable laws, the R2CTPO may withhold from the employee's paycheck, the cost of any items that are not returned when requested. The R2CTPO may also take all action deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

## **C. Resignation**

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to terminate employment with the R2CTPO. Although advance notice is not required, the R2CTPO requests at least two weeks written resignation notice from all employees.

If an employee does not provide advance notice as requested, the employee will be considered ineligible for rehire.

## **D. Exit Interviews**

The Executive Director, or his designee, will conduct an exit interview with all employees prior to their separation of employment with the R2CTPO to determine issues related to the nature of the separation (including reason), suitability of policies and procedures of the R2CTPO, appropriateness of the supervision provided during employment, and other information that may be useful for the R2CTPO to determine relative to its employment practices.

# **SECTION 9 MISCELLANEOUS**

## **A. Solicitation**

In the interest of maintaining a proper business and preventing interference of work and inconvenience to others, employees may not distribute literature or printed materials of any kind, sell merchandise, solicit financial contributions or solicit for any other cause during regular working hours. Employees who are not on working time (e.g., those on lunch hour or break) may not solicit employees who are on working time for any cause or distribute literature of any kind to them. Furthermore, employees may not distribute literature or printed material of any kind in working areas at any time.

In addition, the posting of written solicitations on R2CTPO bulletin boards is prohibited. These bulletin boards display important information and employees should consult them frequently for:

- Required State and Federal Postings
- Internal Policy Memoranda
- Job Openings
- Benefits Information
- Announcements Pertaining to Organization Structure or Change
- Official Agency Functions

No announcements or other information shall be posted on the R2CTPO bulletin boards unless specifically approved by the Chief Financial Officer.

## **B. Visitors in the Workplace**

To provide for the safety and security of employees and the facilities, only authorized visitors are allowed in the workplace. Restricting unauthorized visitors helps maintain safety standards, protects against theft, ensures safety of equipment, protects confidential information, safeguards employee welfare and avoids potential distractions and disturbances.

All visitors should enter through the R2CTPO main entrance. Authorized visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees are responsible for the conduct and safety of their visitors. Any authorized person who becomes disruptive to the organization may be asked to leave by the Executive Director of the R2CTPO in consultation of the supervisor of the staff member who has authorized the visitor. If an unauthorized individual is observed on the R2CTPO's premises, employees should immediately notify their supervisor, or, if necessary, direct the individual to the main entrance.

## **C. Gifts and Gratuities**

R2CTPO staff members are not permitted to accept gifts, gratuities or loans from organizations, business concerns or individuals with whom they have official business relationships. These limitations are not intended to prohibit acceptance of articles of negligible value which are distributed generally, or to prohibit staff members from obtaining loans from regular lending institutions. It is particularly important that all staff members guard against relationships which might be construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage or collusion.

## **D. Political Activity**

All R2CTPO employees are prohibited, to the fullest extent permissible by law, from engaging in any political activity: (1) while at work for the R2CTPO; (2) utilizing the resources (phone, fax, computer, office supplies, etc.) of the R2CTPO; (3) while identifying themselves as an employee of the R2CTPO or as representing the R2CTPO.

Nothing prohibits employees from otherwise participating in, contributing to or supporting any specific candidate or political party.

**SECTION 10      EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

The personnel handbook describes important information about the R2CTPO, and I understand that I should consult the Executive Director regarding any questions not answered in the handbook. I have entered into my employment relationship with the R2CTPO *voluntarily* and acknowledge that there is no specified length of employment. Accordingly, either the R2CTPO or I can terminate my employment at will, with or without reason or notice, at any time. The handbook is neither a contract of employment, nor a legal document.

Since the information, policies and benefits described here are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur, except to the R2CTPO's policy of employment-at-will. All such revisions are within the R2CTPO's sole discretion and will be communicated through official notices. I understand that revised information may supersede, modify or eliminate existing policies. Only the R2CTPO Board has the ability to adopt any revisions to the policies in this handbook.

I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMPLOYEE NAME (TYPED OR PRINTED)