IRL Council

Second Amended Handbook of Personnel Policies and Practices

Adopted August 21, 2026
IRL Council Board of Directors

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Section 1. Organization Description

On February 24, 2015, the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program lnterlocal Agreement (lnterlocal Agreement) between the FDEP, SJRWMD, SFWMD, Volusia, Brevard, St Lucie, and Martin counties became effective. The IRL Council was created to carry out the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program pursuant to the lnterlocal Agreement, as it may be amended from time to time.

The IRL Council has a Board of Directors ("the Board") comprised of one official and one alternate appointed by each member government. The Board elects a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary each year. Meetings of the IRL Council Board are subject to Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law (Chap. 286, Fla. Stat.) and IRL Council is an agency subject to Florida's Public Records Act (Chap. 119, Fla. Stat.).

Section 2. Introductory Statement

Welcome new employee! We wish you every success here at the IRL Council.

We believe that each employee contributes directly to the IRL Council's growth and success, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our team. We hope that your experience here will be challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding!

This handbook is designed to acquaint the staff with the IRL Council and provide information about working conditions, employee benefits, and some of the policies affecting employment. 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 IRL Council to benefit employees.

No employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question that may arise in the workplace. As the IRL Council continues to grow, the need may arise and the IRL Council reserves the right to amend, 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 and judgment. The only exception to any changes is our employment-at-will policy permitting a staff member or the IRL Council to end the employment relationship for any reason at any time. Employees will be notified of such changes to the handbook as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

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 is important that you, in fact, read this handbook and understand its contents.

Section 3. Employee Acknowledgement Form

The personnel handbook describes important information about the IRL Council, 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 IRL Council voluntarily and acknowledge that there is no specified length of employment. Accordingly, either I or the IRL Council 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. I understand that no verbal or written statement by any IRL Council employee or representative may alter the at-will nature of my employment, except for an employment contract, designated as such, and signed by the Executive Director.

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 IRL Council's policy of employment-at-will. All such revisions are within IRL Council's sole discretion and will be communicated through official notices as soon as practicable under the circumstances. I understand that revised information may amend, revise, supplement, or rescind existing policies. Only the IRL Council 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'S SIGNATURE DATE

_____

EMPLOYEE'S NAME (TYPED OR PRINTED)

Section 4. General Policies

A. Nature of Employment

Employment with the IRL Council 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 IRL Council 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 IRL Council 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, revised, supplemented, or rescinded at any time, at the IRL Council's sole discretion and judgment.

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

B. Equal Employment Opportunity

IRL Council is an equal opportunity employer. In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at the IRL Council will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. The IRL Council does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, national origin, age, veteran's status, genetic information, disability, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law.

The IRL Council will make reasonable accommodations for qualified disabled individuals in all employment matters.

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. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Section 5. Employment Start-Up

A. Employment Application

The IRL Council 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 IRL Council's exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired (and consistent with IRL's at-will employment policy), immediate termination of employment.

B. Employment Reference Checks, Verification of Employment, and Background Investigations

To ensure that individuals who join the IRL Council are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, the IRL Council may check employment references, verify employment, and/or conduct background investigations with respect to applicants.

C. Employee Medical Examinations

To help ensure that employees are able to perform their duties adequately and safely, medical examinations may be required. 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.

D. Immigration Law Compliance

The IRL Council 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. The IRL Council complies with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

E. Family Employment Restriction

No member of the family (i. e., relative) of a permanent full-time, permanent part-time, temporary, or other IRL Council employee who has direct or delegated supervisory authority shall be hired, promoted, or retained on a permanent or temporary basis. 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.

F. 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 IRL Council uses this period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits, and overall performance. Consistent with the at-will nature of all employment with the IRL Council, either the employee or the IRL Council 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 IRL Council 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 IRL Council 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 for further review, counseling, coaching, and evaluation.

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 IRL Council-provided benefits, subject to the terms and conditions of each benefits program.

Section 6. Rules of Employee Conduct

A. Attendance and Punctuality

The IRL Council expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work. Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other employees and on IRL Council. 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, preferably in advance of the anticipated tardiness or absence. 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 IRL Council are public employees and as such are employed for the benefit of the public. Public employees are bound to uphold the Constitutions 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 IRL Council'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.

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the workplace. The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that are considered to be violation warranting dismissal:

- 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 workstation during the workday
- Unauthorized use of telephones, mail system, internet, or other employer-owned equipment
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct

C. Drug and Alcohol Use

While on IRL Council premises and while conducting business-related activities off IRL Council premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. 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. Leave may be granted if the employee agrees to abstain from the use of the problem substance and abides by all IRL Council policies, rules, and prohibitions relating to conduct in the workplace; and if granting the leave will not cause the IRL Council 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, IRL Council employees may be required to submit to drug and/or alcohol testing if there is a cause for reasonable suspicion. Employees who refuse substance testing under these circumstances will be terminated. Certain positions may also require drug-testing upon employment.

The following is a list of some, but not all circumstances that 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.

E. Personal Appearance

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image the IRL Council 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 employee should consult the Executive Director with any questions regarding a definition of appropriate attire.

F. Safety

The IRL Council 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, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

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.

G. 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 IRL Council bulletin boards is prohibited.

H. Security Inspections

Desks, lockers, and other storage devices that are provided for the convenience of employees remain the sole property of the IRL Council. Accordingly, they, as well as any articles found within them, can be inspected by any authorized agent or representative of the IRL Council 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

Executive Director.

I. Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment and Discriminatory Conduct

Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, national origin, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Any employee seeking to report an incident of sexual or other harassing or discriminatory conduct should promptly report the matter to the Executive Director. If the employee believes it would be inappropriate to contact the Executive Director, the employee should immediately contact the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation. Individuals who make complaints have an obligation to assist and cooperate with IRL Council's investigation of such complaints. Any reported complaint of harassment or discrimination will be promptly investigated. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances.

If IRL Council, upon investigation of a harassment or discrimination 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.

J. Smoking

All individuals are prohibited from smoking in any enclosed indoor workplace at the IRL Council in accordance with Florida law. Enclosed indoor workplaces include any place that is predominantly or totally bounded on all sides and above by physical barriers. "Predominantly" generally refers to coverage of more than 50%. Employees unsure of an acceptable location for smoking should consult their supervisor.

Employees who witness individuals smoking in an enclosed indoor workplace should request the individual immediately extinguish that smoking device. If the employee is not comfortable confronting another employee about the violation, he or she should immediately seek assistance from his or her supervisor or the Executive Director.

K. Use of Computer, Email, and Cell Phones

Computers, computer files, the E-mail system, internet access, cell phones, and software furnished to employees are the property of the IRL Council, and are intended for business use. Employees are strictly prohibited from placing any password that has not been given to the Executive Director on a staff office personal computer. Employees should back up their computer files on a regular basis. The use of E-mail or internet access for any non-business purpose is strictly prohibited. To ensure compliance with this policy, computer and E-mail usage may be monitored. Individual office computer hard drives will be audited on a regular basis.

Use of the internet, cell phones 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, must be automatically retained by all employees 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 any message that would be inappropriate if published to the news media. All E-mail is saved on the archive server and will be audited to determine compliance with this policy.

IRL Council strives to maintain a workplace free of harassment and sensitive to the diversity of its employees. Therefore, IRL Council prohibits the use of computers, cell phones, 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, and cartoons is prohibited. 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, computers, and cell phones 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 in accordance with the Public Records Law.

L. 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.

Please notify the Executive Director 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.

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

Section 7. Employee Classification, Compensation and Benefits

A. Access to Personnel Files

Individual personnel files will be maintained and available for examination in accordance with Florida's Public Records Law.

B. Administrative Pay Corrections

The IRL Council 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 Executive Director so that corrections can be made as quickly as possible. Corrections will be made on the next regularly scheduled paycheck.

C. Bereavement Leave

Up to three work days of paid bereavement leave due to the death of a family member or other person, as described below, 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.

IRL Council defines "immediate family" as the employee's spouse, parent or step-parent, child or step-child, 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.

D. Cell Phones

The IRL Council does not require each employee to carry a separate cell phone to conduct IRL Council and IRLNEP business, however the IRL Council recognizes that a significant amount of business is conducted on cell phones. All full-time employees are allowed to submit reimbursement for half of their allowable cell phone bill costs each month. The allowable charges on the bill include the plan, any additional cloud storage, any company fees or surcharges, and any federal taxes or fees. Equipment costs or add-ons such as protection plans are not allowable for reimbursement.

E. 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.

F. Employment Categories

It is the intent of the IRL Council to clarify the employment classifications so that employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. Consistent with the at-will nature of all employment with the IRL Council, 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 IRL Council.

Each employee is designated as either NONEXEMPT or EXEMPT from the minimum wage and overtime requirements of federal wage and hour laws.

- **NONEXEMPT** employees are entitled to minimum wage and 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 the IRL Council Executive Director.

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

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

2. **PART-TIME** employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work less than 30 hours per week. While they do receive all legally mandated benefits (for example, as Social Security and workers' compensation insurance), they are ineligible for all of the IRL Council's other benefit programs. Please contact the Executive Director for additional information.

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

4. **TEMPORARY** employees are those who are hired as interim replacements, to temporarily supplement the work force, 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 and Social Security), they are ineligible for all of the IRL Council's other benefit programs.

Again, regardless of status, all employment with the IRL Council is at-will.

G. Family and Medical Leave

Although the IRL Council is a "covered employer" under the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), it currently does not have any eligible employees for purposes of FMLA.

H. Ethics, Gifts and Gratuities

All employees shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees as set forth in Chapter 112, Florida Statutes.

The IRL Council 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 negligible value which are distributed generally, nor 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.

I. Health Insurance

Employees in the regular full-time and introductory employment classifications may be eligible to participate in the health insurance plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between IRL Council and the insurance carrier. Details of the health insurance plan will be provided by the Executive Director.

J. Holidays

The IRL Council will grant holiday time off to all employees on the holidays listed below.

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day

- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas (December 25)

The IRL Council 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. 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.

K. Jury Duty

Employees in an eligible classification may request up to three days of paid jury duty leave over any one-year period. 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 or are not regular full-time employees, 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.

L. 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. To the extent a non-exempt employee is asked to perform work responsibilities during his or her meal period, he or she should report such issue immediately to the Executive Director.

M. Outside Employment

Subject to written approval from the Executive Director, an employee may hold outside jobs as long as the employee continues to meet the performance standards of his/her job with the IRL Council and such employment does not constitute a conflict of interest or violate applicable law. All employees will be judged by the same performance standards and will be

subject to the IRL Council's scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If the IRL Council determines that an employee's outside work interferes with performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the IRL Council as they are modified from time to time, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he or she wishes to remain with IRL Council.

N. 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. Employees who work overtime without prior authorization will be paid for such overtime. However, they may be subject to disciplinary action for failing to obtain such prior authorization.

Overtime compensation is paid to all non-exempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour law. In this regard, "overtime" means those hours worked by a non-exempt employees which exceed forty (40) hours in a workweek. Overtime pay is based on actual hours worked. Time off on 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 paid to all eligible non-exempt employees at a rate of time and one half.

Employees will receive written notification of the IRL Council's workweek from the Executive Director.

O. 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 working a full-time schedule are eligible to earn and use PTO as described in this policy.

Upon beginning employment, regular and full-time employees and introductory employees working a full-time schedule will begin to earn PTO according to the schedule below. The amount of PTO employees accrue throughout 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 Biweekly	PTO Hours Each Year
Upon initial eligibility	7.38	192
After 5 years	8.31	216
After 10 years	9.85	256
After 20 years	10.15	264

The "PTO Year" under this policy and accrual schedule will be based on an employee's anniversary date.

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 and 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 an employee's PTO Year employees may carry as many as 175 hours of unused time forward to the next PTO Year. Accumulation of hours may exceed 175 hours in a PTO Year; however, an employee may only carry 175 hours forward from one PTO Year to the next and all remaining PTO will be forfeited.

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

P. Retirement Benefits

The IRL Council participates in the Florida Retirement System. All employees will be provided information on the plans available under the Florida Retirement System and the amounts contributed by both the IRL Council and the employee, as determined by the Florida Legislature.

Q. Personnel Data Changes

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify IRL Council of any changes in personnel data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and names of

dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times.

R. Timekeeping

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

Employees should accurately record the time they begin and end their work, as well as the beginning and ending time of each meal period. They should also record the beginning and ending time of any split shift or departure from work for personal reasons. Overtime work must always be approved in writing by the Executive Director before it is performed. Employees who work overtime without prior authorization will be paid for such overtime. However, they may be subject to disciplinary action for failing to obtain such prior authorization.

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.

S. Reimbursement of Travel and Other Expenses

It is the goal of the IRL Council and IRLNEP to provide opportunities for business-related travel to employees to conduct program-related business, provide educational and network opportunities for staff and enhance the visibility of our program at statewide, national and international levels. In recognition of these goals, the IRL Council understands there will be occasions when employees may have to drive, book overnight travel or make other purchases on behalf of the IRLNEP.

Mileage Compensation

IRL Council full-time employees may be compensated for out-of-pocket costs for authorized in-state, job-related travel. This includes compensation for automobile mileage from the office to meeting destinations and return. Mileage will not be reimbursed for home-office commuting.

Mileage compensation is calculated based on federal mileage rates which are adjusted on an annual basis. Legitimate business-related travel includes employee travel to meetings that have the Indian River Lagoon as an issue on an agenda, meetings where the employee is participating as a board or steering committee

member, speaking or giving a presentation, or meetings with agency or NGO partners where the business of the IRL Council or IRLNEP is being discussed. For any other in-state travel, prior permission from the employee's supervisor is required in writing via email.

Employees are expected to limit expenses to reasonable amounts. When travel is completed, employees should submit completed travel expense reports within 14 days after the month the expenses occurred in ends. Reports should be accompanied by receipts for all expenses incurred where reimbursement is being requested.

Per Diem

Per Diem compensation rates are the amounts each traveler is allowed to spend for lodging, meals, and incidentals while on official travel that is requires an overnight stay. **Per Diem is not authorized for local travel (within 50 miles of duty location)**.

Continental US (CONUS) location rates are established and maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA). CONUS rates are usually updated once a year and can be found by visiting the following link: www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

Outside the continental US (OCONUS) location rates are established and maintained by the US Department of State and are generally updated monthly. OCONUS rates are usually updated once a year and can be found by visiting the following link: https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78.

For all CONUS or OCONUS travel, prior authorization is required in advance. Employees requesting CONUS or OCONUS travel must submit a written request at least 60 days in advance of travel by email to his or her supervisor and await a response before making any travel-related purchases. Should an employee incur out-of-pocket expenses without prior authorization, no IRL Council reimbursements will be made.

Reimbursements

All staff will turn monthly reimbursement requests in to the Administrative Coordinator for review and payment. If all documentation is in order, the Administrative Coordinator will inform the staff member via email confirmation that their request is approved and has been submitted for payment. Should there be any discrepancies between the requested amount and the documentation, the Administrative Coordinator will return the request back to the staff member and request revision.

As long as reimbursement requests have been received by close of business on the Monday following a payday, the expectation is that the request will be reviewed, approved and paid in the next pay period. If the request is received outside of this

period, payment may be delayed until the next subsequent pay period.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2025, IRL Council staff will each be allocated a travel budget based on best estimates for domestic travel to meetings within the State of Florida and known CONUS meetings and workshops planned for the upcoming year. Staff members may utilize their travel budgets for mileage reimbursement and for reimbursements associated with in-state and out-of-state travel. Once the employee's travel funds have been expended for the year, no further travel will be authorized and no further reimbursements will be made without written permission by the Executive Director. Budgeted travel funds may not be transferred between staff members.

T. Worker's Compensation Insurance

IRL Council provides a comprehensive workers' compensation insurance program at no cost to employees. Employees who sustain work-related injuries or illnesses should inform the Executive Director 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 IRL Council 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 IRL Council.

U. Work Schedules

The IRL Council office hours are subject to determination by the Executive Director. It is imperative that sufficient coverage of the office is in place at all times during the office hours determined by the Executive Director and/or the Board of Directors. The normal work schedule for full-time employees is eighty hours per pay period. 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.

Section 8. 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 at the end of an employee's introductory 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 are scheduled approximately every 12 months, coinciding generally with the anniversary of the employee's original date of hire. The purpose of the performance evaluation is to evaluate and improve performance so that the individual and organization goals and objectives may be achieved. Performance reviews provide crucial information for personnel decisions such as merit increase, discipline, or termination.

B. Problem Resolution

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

IRL Council 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.

C. Disciplinary Action

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, including but not limited to immediate termination, depending on the circumstances, as determined in the IRL Council's sole discretion and judgment.

In the event of an involuntary termination, the employee will be provided reasons for termination. When the document providing reasons for the termination has the effect of stigmatizing the employee's reputation, and where the employee claims that such reasons are untrue, the employee shall be provided notice of the opportunity to request a "Name Clearing Process."

The purpose of the "Name Clearing Process" is to allow the employee an opportunity to tell his or her side of the story and respond to the charges. The name Clearing Process is not an appeal of the termination or an opportunity to gain restatement. At or prior to the meeting, the employee will have an opportunity to provide his or her position in writing so that it may be included in the personnel file and made part of the record open to the public under Florida's public records laws.

To request a "Name Clearing Process," employees must deliver the request to the Executive Director in writing within ten (10) days of the date of their termination. A meeting may be provided by the IRL Council within ten (10) days of receipt of the employee's request for such meeting. No such meeting will be held if a written request is not timely delivered by the employee. The employee may provide witness statements at or prior to the meeting. The meeting will be held before the Executive Director or his or her designee.

Section 9. 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 IRL Council is at-will, both the employee and the IRL Council have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause, at any time. All accrued, vested benefits that are due and payable at termination will be paid as set forth in this handbook. 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 return of all property, materials, 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 IRL Council may withhold from the employee's check or final paycheck the cost of any items that are not returned when required. The IRL Council 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 IRL Council. Although advance notice is not required, the IRL Council requests at least two weeks written resignation notice from all employees.