



## REDUCTION IN FORCE POLICY

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### I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to prescribe the manner in which covered employees of SC Department of Agriculture (SCDA) are released in an equitable manner should a reduction in force become necessary. A reduction in force may require the separation, involuntary demotion, reassignment, or reduction in work hours of SCDA's covered employees. A reduction in force does not apply to non-covered employees (e.g., probationary employees, temporary employees, temporary grant employees, time-limited project employees, research grant employees, and employees exempt from the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act).

SCDA may implement a reduction in force for one or more of the following four reasons:

- A. Reorganization.
- B. Work Shortage.
- C. Loss of Funding.
- D. Outsourcing/Privatization.

### II. MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

SCDA shall determine the following items prior to developing the reduction in force plan:

- A. What is the reason(s) for the reduction in force;
- B. What area(s) of the agency are to be impacted by the reduction in force [Competitive Area(s)];
- C. What State class title(s) within the competitive area(s) are to be affected [Competitive Group(s)]; and

- D. How many positions in each State class title(s) are to be eliminated.

### III. COMPETITIVE AREAS

SCDA shall determine the competitive area(s) the reduction in force will impact. SCDA should establish a competitive area that is clearly distinguishable from the staff in other areas and where the interchange of employees would not be practical. This competitive area may be the entire agency, a division, an office, a section, a unit, or a geographical location.

### IV. COMPETITIVE GROUP(S)

SCDA shall determine the competitive group(s) based on the State class title(s) within the competitive area(s) that the reduction in force will affect. If the reduction in force is to apply to more than one State class title, each State class title will be treated separately, except where the reductions are to be made in a State class title series (e.g., Auditor I, Auditor II, Auditor III, Auditor IV, Audits Manager I, Audits Manager II) or in State class titles that are part of SCDA's customary career path (e.g., Administrative Assistant, Communications Coordinator, Program Coordinator II, Program Manager I).

### V. POSITION IDENTIFICATION

SCDA shall identify the position(s) within the competitive area(s) and competitive group(s) by identifying the following information:

- A. State Class Title;
- B. State Class Code;

- C. Pay Grade Level, if applicable;
- D. Total number of positions in the State class title within the competitive area; and
- E. Total number of positions in the State class title within the competitive area to be eliminated.

**B. Continuous State Service Points**

Covered employees will receive one retention point for each year of continuous state service after completion of a 12-month probationary period. Six months or more of continuous state service will be considered as one year of service and less than six months of service will receive no retention points.

**C. Exception to Procedure for Retention Point Calculation**

If every position in the competitive area is being eliminated, SCDA is not required to calculate retention points. For positions reestablished within one year of the RIF, in the same competitive area, and in the same State class title, SCDA must calculate retention points at the time of the recall or reinstatement. SCDA must calculate retention points using continuous State service and performance appraisal points based on the effective date of the reduction in force.

**VI. RETENTION POINTS**

SCDA will calculate retention points for covered employees in the competitive area(s) and competitive group(s) to determine which covered employees are to be involuntarily demoted, reassigned, separated, or have work hours reduced. Retention points are based on the total scores of the two most recent annual performance appraisals and the length of continuous State service. The sum of the retention points for performance and length of continuous State service are the total retention points that an employee uses in the competition.

**A. Performance Appraisal Points**

SCDA will determine the total score for an annual performance rating by using the following numerical values assigned to the EPMS performance ratings.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	PERFORMANCE LEVEL ENTERED INTO SCEIS	PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL RESULTS
Outstanding	Exceptional	6
Exceeds Expectations	Exceptional	6
Meets Expectations	Successful	2
Needs Improvement	Successful	2
Unsuccessful	Unsuccessful	0

For employees who have transferred to SCDA whose previous agency utilized more or fewer levels of performance, SCDA will recognize the performance ratings based on the previous agency’s conversion to the three standard levels of performance in the State Employee Performance Management System.

For any year in which the employee does not receive an actual evaluation with a rating, the employee will receive a “Meets Expectations” rating for that year; however, if in the previous year, the employee received a higher than “Meets Expectations” rating, the employee will receive the points for the higher rating.

**VII. SEQUENCE OF REDUCTION IN FORCE**

The order of the reduction in force of covered employees in each State class title(s) shall be determined by the total number of retention points for each employee. If two or more employees affected by a reduction in force have the same number of retention points and not all are to be affected by the reduction in force, SCDA hire date will determine the order of the employees affected. The covered employee with the earlier agency hire date will be retained. If after using the agency hire date to determine the order of the affected employees, a tie still exists, SCDA will use the last four digits of the employee’s social security number. The employee(s) who have lower numbers will be retained.

Bumping rights are provided for covered employees who have accumulated more retention points than those with whom they are competing. Under no circumstances can an employee gain from a reduction in force. Bumping rights are provided only downward.

**VIII. RETENTION OF NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS**

No employee with a lower number of retention points shall be retained in preference to another employee in a competitive area(s) and group(s) with a higher number of retention points except when SCDA determines that a Retention of Necessary Qualifications applies.

If an employee is competing for a position that is not being eliminated and SCDA asserts that an employee with higher retention points who has rights to be placed in that position cannot satisfactorily perform the duties of the position within a reasonable training period the employee with lower retention points may be retained in preference to the employee with higher retention points. SCDA may determine that the employee with higher retention points will not be able within a reasonable training period to satisfactorily perform the duties of the job based on the lack of knowledge, abilities, skills, supervisory responsibilities, or necessary experience.

When a Retention of Necessary Qualifications is used in a reduction in force plan, justification for this retention must be documented and approved by SCDA prior to submitting the reduction in force plan to the Department of Administration's Division of State Human Resources (DSHR) for review and approval for procedural correctness. SCDA should retain documentation to support any retention made on this basis.

## **IX. WRITING THE REDUCTION IN FORCE PLAN**

Once SCDA has made the decisions outlined above and prior to the implementation of a reduction in force, the Commissioner or his designee shall develop the reduction in force plan. This plan must include the following:

- A. The reason for the reduction in force.
- B. The identification of the competitive area(s).
- C. The identification of the competitive group(s) [State class title(s)].
- D. The number of position(s) to be eliminated in each State class title.
- E. A list of the covered employees, in order of retention points, in the competitive area(s) and competitive group(s) to include the following:
  1. Name.
  2. Age, Race, and Gender; and
  3. Retention Points.
  4. Justification of any Retention of Necessary Qualifications used in the reduction in force plan; and
  5. SCDA's efforts to assist employees affected by the reduction in force.

## **X. APPROVAL PROCESS**

Once the reduction in force plan has been completed, SCDA shall submit the following information to the DSHR for review and approval for procedural correctness:

The reduction in force plan as outlined in Section IX:

- A. An organizational chart including each position (designated with the State class title and incumbent's name) within the competitive area(s);
- B. A copy of SCDA's reduction in force policy; and
- C. A sample letter to employees affected by the reduction in force including information as outlined in Section XI, along with:
  1. A list of the employee's recall and reinstatement rights;
  2. The SCDA's procedure for the recall of an employee; and
  3. The employee's grievance rights.

## **XI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REDUCTION IN FORCE**

SCDA shall communicate the following information to each affected employee after DSHR approves the reduction in force plan for procedural correctness and before the reduction in force becomes effective:

- A. The reason for the reduction in force;
- B. The competitive area(s) and competitive group(s) in which the employee competed;
- C. The benefits to which the employee is entitled and the manner in which the reduction in force will affect the employee's State benefits, (e.g., health insurance, optional life insurance, retirement);
- D. The employee's reinstatement rights, (e.g., reinstatement of all sick leave; option of buying back all, some, or none of the annual leave at the rate at which it was paid out);
- E. The employee's recall rights to any position, within the competitive area, that becomes available in the same State class title as the position the employee held prior to the reduction in force;

- F. The manner in which SCDA will notify the employee of any such vacancies; and
- G. The requirements of S.C. Code Ann. Section 8-11-185, which requires SCDA to report information about the employees (separated) in a reduction in force to DSHR.

## **XII. RECALL AND REINSTATEMENT RIGHTS**

An employee affected by a reduction in force has recall and reinstatement rights to a position in State government for one year after the effective date of the reduction in force.

### **A. Recall Rights**

If a vacancy occurs within the competitive area which is in the same State class title as the position the employee held prior to the reduction in force, SCDA will recall employees in the inverse order of the reduction in force. SCDA will notify the employee in writing of the job offer and recall rights. If the employee does not accept the job offer within ten calendar days, the employee's recall rights are waived. Should the employee accept the job offer, SCDA will reinstate the employee's accumulated sick leave and will provide the employee the option of buying back all, some, or none of his annual leave at the rate it was paid out at the time of the separation. Upon returning to employment in an insurance-eligible Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) position, the employee will also be offered insurance benefits as a new hire. The recalled employee may purchase retirement service credit under the leave of absence provision in S.C. Code Ann. Section 9-1-1140(D) for the period of time that the employee was not employed by state government, at cost specified in S.C. Code Ann. Section 9-1-1140(D). When an employee is recalled, this time will not be considered punitive in the determination of retiree insurance eligibility.

### **B. Reinstatement Rights**

An employee separated by a reduction in force may apply for any State job for which he/she meets the minimum training and experience requirements. Should the separated employee accept a job offer to an FTE position, SCDA will reinstate the employee's accumulated sick leave and will provide the employee the option of buying back all, some, or none of his annual leave at the rate it was paid out at the time of the separation. Upon returning to employment in an insurance-eligible FTE position, the employee will also be offered insurance benefits as a new hire.

The reinstated employee may purchase retirement service under the leave of absence provision in Section 9-1-1140(D). When an employee is reinstated, this time will not be considered punitive in the determination of retiree insurance eligibility. If the employee is reinstated to another position, he/she still retains his/her recall rights to a position in the same State class in the competitive area.

## **XIII. GRIEVANCE RIGHTS**

A covered employee who is affected by a reduction in force has the right to file a grievance to SCDA and an appeal to the Department of Administration's State Human Resources Director only if the grievance or appeal is based on improper or inconsistent application of a reduction in force policy or plan.