



ADAPTING TO STAFF CHANGES AND NEW STAFF TRAINING

JUNE 2024

CONTEXT OF STAFFING SITUATION AT THE ILLINOIS EPA

- The Illinois EPA was established in July 1970.
- Staffing levels: 1996-2002
 - ~ **1200** employees....
- Staffing challenges:
 - **Multipole hiring freezes** limited new hires.
 - Approximately **650** employees in 2016 (lowest point of Agency employment)
 - Hiring freeze lifted in 2018
- Staffing levels: 2024
 - ~ **720** employees – “*at capacity*” for Agency/State

GENERAL ISSUES WITH STAFF TURNOVER

- **Loss of manpower:** Less staff to manage overall workload.
 - This can become a significant issue where there are *hiring freezes* or long delays in the hiring process.
- **Loss of knowledge and experience**
 - Can be a special problem if outgoing staff had a unique role/responsibility within the organization or possessed unique knowledge. Also a problem if they were the only staff implementing a program.
- **Loss of interpersonal connections:** New hires do not know whom they need to communicate with (either internally or externally) or whom to go to with their questions or challenges.





GENERAL ISSUES WITH STAFF TURNOVER

- **Time and expenses needed to train new staff:** Entry level staff will lack required skills and knowledge and need to be trained to perform required duties according to Agency policies, processes, and procedures.
- **Duties and responsibilities reassigned:** As staff leave and new staff are hired, certain duties and responsibilities may be shifted or reassigned. It will take time for the new and existing staff to develop the skills needed to implement programs.



NEW STAFF BRING BENEFITS!

- New staff bring **new skills** to the organization.
 - GIS software and computer programming
 - Project management
 - Monitoring
 - Communication/Social Media
- New staff EQUAL **new ideas** to innovate the traditional programs.



STAFF TRAINING



- Encourage and give a list of essential training that will acclimate the staff as well as give them a better understanding of their job, duties, responsibilities, and Agency policies.
 - Design this around their specific job position.
 - Include links of webinars and encourage research of job-related webinars, trainings, and videos.
- Implement a 12-month Training Plan (transferred staff – 4-month timeline).
 - Identify specific goals, objectives, responsibilities, and deliverables with due dates.
 - Base plan on SOPs and work checklists and timelines.
 - Supervisor reviews work products and provides feedback as a learning opportunity – coworkers also provide staff training through daily interactions.
- Workshops
 - *Send staff to workshops, training, and to the field*
 - *Let them get hands-on experience, networking, and gain knowledge from outside sources.*

ADAPTING TO STAFF TURNOVER

- Creation and continued updates of **written** Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - All the steps for performing duties are written down and should be easy to find; and this helps ensure continuity of operations and eases training.
- **Direct training** of new hires with outgoing staff
 - *Not always possible*: there may be a considerable length of time between when staff leaves and the new staff is available to replace them.

ADAPTING TO STAFF TURNOVER, CONT.,

- **Cross-training** of program staff.
 - Ensures that multiple staff know how to perform the general and critical tasks.
 - Process allows a review of how the tasks and duties are performed which can lead to simplified/streamlined the process.
 - *Identifies what steps are extraneous or unnecessary to achieve the overall goal. This helps determine needed long-term program changes.*
- Investigate and adapt new technology, as available to **automate** tasks and programs.
- Last resort – **borrow** staff from other programs for short-term coverage of critical components.

TYPES OF SOPS

- **Lists of all the standard duties**, tasks, and responsibilities of the position.
 - i.e., what are the tasks that the staff is expected to accomplish.
- **Step-by-step instructions** for how to perform duties (i.e., how to properly collect a water quality sample, how to properly review a grant proposal, etc.).
- Instructions on how to **read/interpret certain documents** (like NPDES permits).
- Instructions on how to **use certain equipment** (i.e., how to calibrate a water quality probe).
- List/explain all the **acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon** staff may encounter.
- Lists of all the **document codes/filing codes** staff may encounter within their organization.
- **Safety manuals** (for field work).

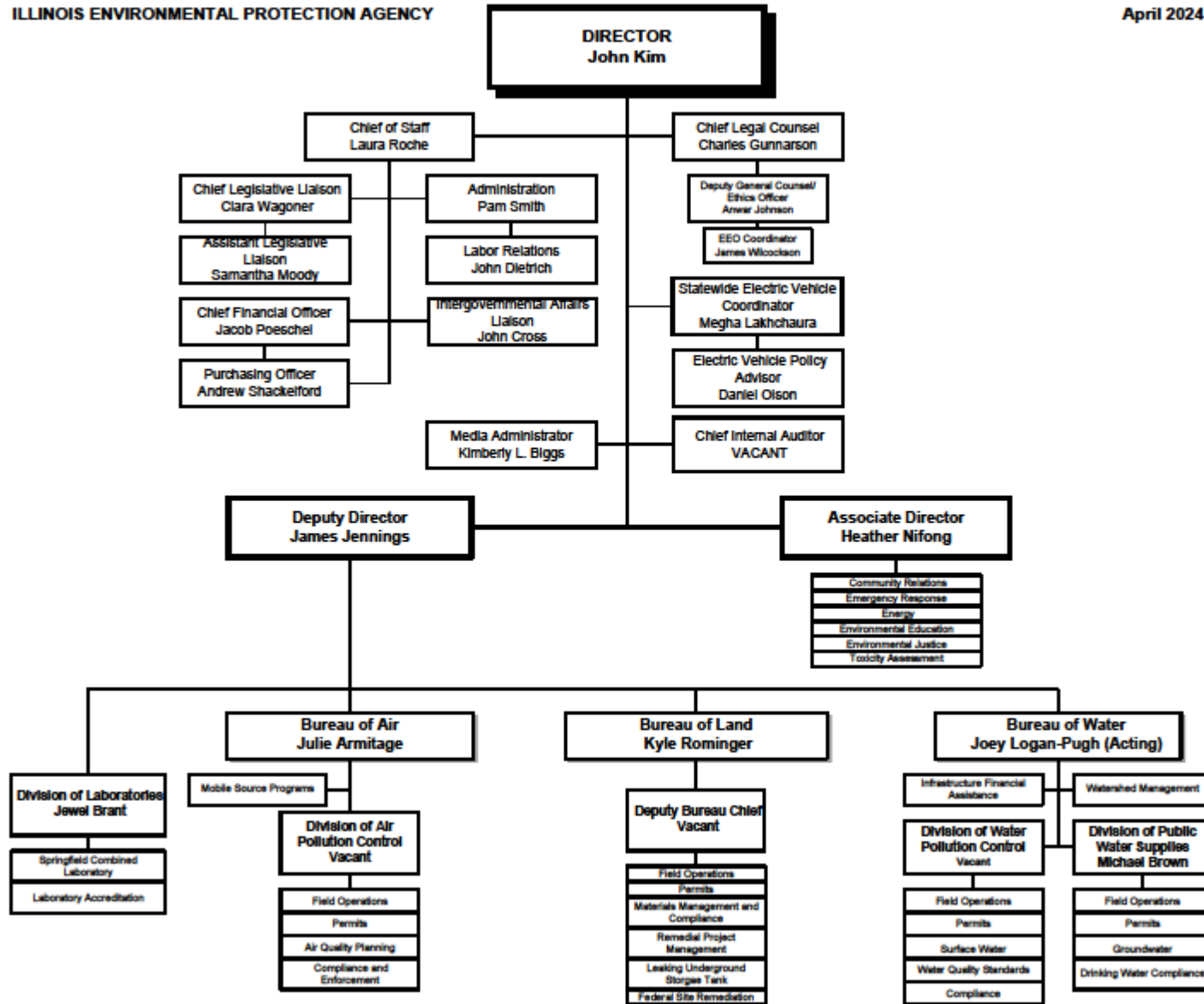
TYPES OF SOPS CONT.,

- Lists of **quick reference answers** to recurring questions or problems.
- List of all programs / databases staff will need to perform the job.
- Lists of contact **people** staff need to know to fulfill the duties of the position, with emphasis on their roles/responsibilities within the organization:
 - i.e., who is responsible for field sampling, data management, permitting, public outreach, and whom they may they need to contact at other organizations (State agencies, NGOs, etc.) and at the federal level, etc.
 - **Organizational/hierarchy charts** and **internal directories** of the organization are also useful.

ILLINOIS EPA ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

April 2024



- Breakdown of Agency structure:
 - Agency
 - Bureau
 - Division
 - Section
 - Unit
 - Special Programs (NLRS)
- Facilities:
 - Headquarters
 - Agency lab
 - Regional offices

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

- Illinois EPA Watershed Management Section Webpage:
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