

# INSTITUTE OF ARCTIC BIOLOGY

## A Department Level Human Resource Solution

### BACKGROUND

UAF departments have experienced several years of across the board reductions to their Fund 1 budgets. The impacts of these cuts have been felt mostly in the administrative support areas. With additional across the board reductions anticipated as part of the BOR's compact plan with the Governor for FY20-FY22, Deans and Directors will again look to find cost savings and efficiencies in their already depleted departments. This department level shared services proposal is a potential model for departments to partner with others to address staff reduction in administrative support functions.

### PROPOSAL

IAB is proposing to create a shared/collaborative HR/Payroll business model to process department level human resource administrative and transactional tasks. Departments proposed to be served are:

- Biology & Wildlife – Identified as a department to be served because 34 out of 38 faculty have a joint appointment between IAB and Biology & Wildlife. Providing all HR functions throughout the academic year and summer would alleviate the workload for the CNSM HR Coordinator and free up time for them to provide additional services to CNSM faculty, student and staff.
- College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences – Identified due to being collocated in adjacent buildings and sharing functions such as research and large recharge centers (Sikuliaq and Toolik). Already being done successfully. (see Proof of Concept section below)
- Other departments needing temporary or full time support that are collocated and/or share core functions

By collaborating with other units that share faculty, are collocated and/or share core functions (i.e. research, recharge centers, etc.), departments are able to provide the necessary services while:

- Goal #1 Maintaining Responsiveness
- Goal #2 Reducing HR processing delays caused by staff absences and turnover
- Goal #3 Encouraging best practices through collaboration at the transactional level

Currently, IAB has two highly qualified human resource personnel that have the capacity to provide department level services either as the primary service provider (via a Service Level Agreement) or as the dedicated backup for other department HR personnel for one to two additional departments depending on level of service requested. IAB HR could expand to add one more full or part-time coordinator if more than two partner departments are identified.

Services to be provided include all HR administrative and transactional tasks through the entire employee life cycle:

- Recruitments (MyUA)
- Submissions of Position Description
- Job Forms
- HR Onboarding – Partner departments will be responsible for department specific onboarding activities

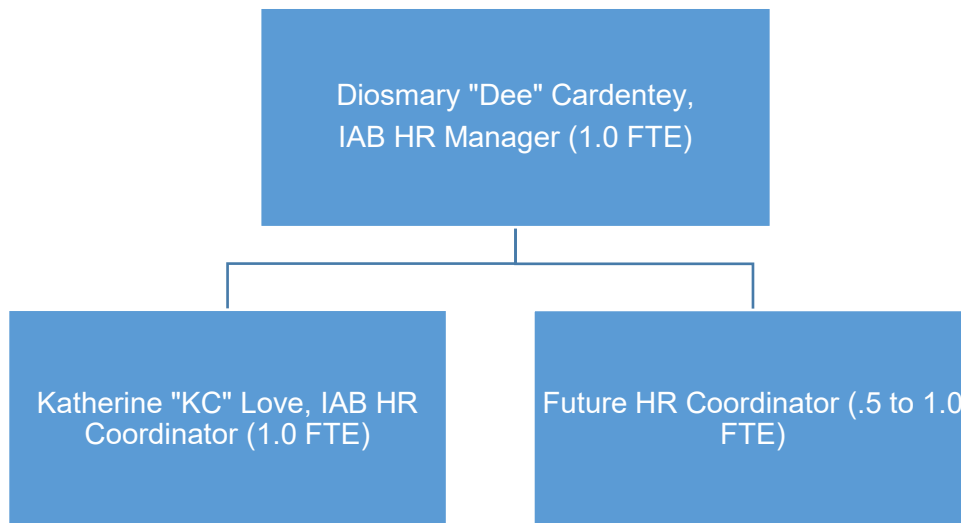
- Employee Terminations Paperwork – Partner departments will be responsible terminations decisions and communications to employees
- Labor Distribution Changes
- Additional Assignments
- Contract Extensions
- Student Research and Teaching Assistantships
- Processing Payroll
- Employee queries
- VISA Applications (H1B, J1) for International Employees and Student Interns

Proposed Service Standards:

- Requests for services sent to group mail monitored by HR Staff and IAB Management (uaf-iab-hr@alaska.edu)
- Responsiveness – Acknowledge receipt of emails the same day & response within 24 hours. Phone calls will be answered immediately & response within 24 hours
- Turnaround times will depend on service type and needs of the department requesting service
- Availability – On going or as needed by requesting department

## Organizational Structure

IAB HR currently consists of two (2) staff members, an HR Manager and a HR Coordinator. Each IAB HR staff member is responsible for all HR administrative and transactional tasks requested by the PI / Faculty. IAB HR staff work with the faculty's Grant Technician to ensure the proper funding source is being used and it has the necessary budget for the proposed action. As shown in the following organizational chart, an additional HR Coordinator can be hired as additional partner departments are identified. .



IAB has the physical space to add an additional position if more than two additional collaborating departments are identified. With departments facing additional across the board budget reductions, most departments are having to choose not to replace departing administrative support staff and rely on the remaining staff to pick up the additional workload. These position become hybrids (i.e. Fiscal Officer/PPA, Grant Tech/Admin Assistant, Purchasing

Tech/Travel Coordinator, etc.) that make it difficult to be subject matter experts in all areas of responsibility. The ability to partner with IAB HR will help partner departments to focus on other high priority support functions such as PIO, student recruitment, fiscal management, proposal development, and others.

## Estimate Cost Savings

Estimated costs savings for collaborating departments will depend on the level of service provided by the IAB HR office. For short-term agreements such as filling in during extended absences (i.e. FML), real dollars savings will depend on the difference between the hourly rates of the HR Coordinators as well as the number of work request received. It's harder to quantify the savings to a department for maintaining continuity of HR processes without any gaps in service. For long-term agreements with partners to provide the full range of HR services, the savings is anticipated to be at minimum a .5 FTE. At a grade 77 step 12 that equates to a \$37,239 savings per year.

## Funding

- IAB HR/Payroll will be appropriately staffed, funded and supported by the Institute of Arctic Biology.
- IAB HR/Payroll shared services is funded by each partner department based on the processing volume for their employees.
- It's recommended that payment is made by cost transfer instead of direct charging labor to partner departments.

## Proof of Concept

Since December 2019, IAB HR has successfully provided departmental HR support for CFOS after the departure of their Fairbanks based HR Coordinator. IAB HR has received positive feedback from CFOS regarding the responsiveness and accuracy of the services provided. For on-going full HR support, there is a potential savings \$\$ (.5 FTE) for each partner department. In addition to the increase functionality of a department not having to train a new HR Coordinator which could take six months to a year.

## SWOT Analysis

Strength:

- Department level solution to help address ATB reductions
- Potential cost savings for partner departments
- Accountability by using a Service Level Agreement
- No requirement UAF Central Administration to reallocate funds
- Maintain direct, customer focused services

Weakness:

- Solution is not initially scalable beyond the departments proposed. Additional half or full-time FTE may be required if more than 1 or two partner departments are serviced.
- Loss of supervisory control for departments being serviced

Opportunities:

- Department level solution can be duplicated by other departments for various administrative functions
- Encourages the sharing of best practices between departments

- Streamline and standardize HR processes for all partner departments to provide a higher level of service in support of the recent UA HR reorganization.

Threats:

- A centralized or shared services HR office for department level transactions
- Continued cuts to department level administrative support functions
- Inefficient HR policies and/or procedures that slow down transactions

## **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

To provide long term support to partner departments, a service level agreement (SLA) will be developed. The SLA will cover the HR processes, the service expectations for those processes and a metric for measuring the success of meeting those expectations. There are many examples of existing SLA's to use as templates, but each agreement will be developed to meet the particular needs of the partner departments.

## **SUMMARY**

This shared services proposal assumes continued across the board reductions at the department level and a larger centralized solution is not forthcoming (i.e. centralizing all department level HR transactions into one office). This proposal recognizes existing department level solutions where department administrators are relying on existing staff to do whatever it takes to get the job done as efficiently and effectively as possible. Recognition of this department level shared services model as a legitimate long or short term solution by the UAF Administration would help remove any "stigma" associated with having department level transactions provided by another "department".