

Schedule F: Agency Workforce Plan

Agency Overview

The Texas cattle fever tick played a pivotal role in the 1893 creation of the Livestock Sanitary Commission, which was renamed the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) in 1959. Since that time, the TAHC and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have worked cooperatively with livestock producers on animal health issues in furtherance of the agency's vision, mission, and philosophy.

The Agency is overseen and guided by thirteen Commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor, representing all segments of the livestock industry and the public. The Governor designates a member of the Commission as the presiding officer or chair. The Commissioners then appoint an Executive Director who supervises the agency's activities. The TAHC operating budget is prepared and approved by the Commissioners on an annual basis, whereas the TAHC has specific statutory authority and responsibility to control and eradicate any disease or agent of transmission that threatens the livestock and poultry of Texas, as outlined in Chapters 161 through 168 of the Texas Agriculture Code. The Agency is vested with the responsibility of protecting all livestock, exotic livestock, domestic fowl, or exotic fowl, from diseases listed in Section 161.041 of the Texas Agriculture Code. The TAHC is authorized to act to eradicate or control any disease or agent of transmission for any disease that affects livestock, exotic livestock, domestic fowl, or exotic fowl, regardless of whether or not the disease is communicable, even if the agent of transmission is an animal species that is not subject to the jurisdiction of the commission. In order to perform these duties and responsibilities, the TAHC is authorized to control the sale and distribution of veterinary biologics except rabies vaccine; regulate the entry of livestock and fowl into the state; and control the movement of livestock and fowl within the state.

The emergency management department's role has expanded as the number of natural disasters in the state has escalated. In addition, the emergency management team continues to prepare Texas for potential foreign animal disease incursions in the nation. In 2020, the Texas Division of Emergency Management formally designated the TAHC as the lead coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function 11 (Agriculture and Natural Resources) response at the state operational level.

As Texas hones its competitiveness in the global food market, TAHC programs support animal agriculture, focusing on the control and eradication of domestic diseases and ensuring the necessary infrastructure exists to reduce the risk of newly emerging diseases, foreign animal diseases and exotic pests. Efficient and effective surveillance is pertinent to detecting disease early in order to mitigate it effectively. The wildlife disease interface presents an increasing number of challenges and the need to collaborate with other wildlife agencies. Veterinarians and veterinary epidemiologists oversee the diagnosis of diseases, and assure appropriate tracing of the movement of exposed or infected animals, to determine the origin of infection and minimize the transmission of disease.

At the height of the cattle brucellosis eradication campaign, more than 350 employees worked for the TAHC, most of whom were livestock inspectors testing cattle for brucellosis. Since that time, the TAHC has dropped its full-time equivalent workforce by almost 40%, while maintaining a basic infrastructure of cross-trained staff capable of handling a variety of diseases and species of animals.

The TAHC workforce is comprised of livestock inspectors, veterinarians, veterinary epidemiologists, field investigators, and administrative staff.

The TAHC is funded by a combination of state general revenue funds, federal cooperative funds (USDA) and fee based revenue. For the 2022-2023 Biennium, the TAHC authorized workforce is 220.2 for full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) for both 2022 and 2023. As in the past, riders in the General Appropriations Act provide contingency authority for the TAHC to add additional FTEs when federal funds are allocated for salary costs; none of these contingent FTEs count against the agency FTE cap. The TAHC will continue to request this contingency authority.

Despite the reduction in agency staffing and funding over the past decade, the TAHC's role in animal agriculture in Texas continues to expand and become more complex, particularly in light of emerging diseases and its growing role related to emergency management. Within the constraints of our current human and financial resources, the TAHC strives to serve all aspects of animal disease control and eradication programs, emergency management preparation and response events, and foreign and emerging disease roles and regulations to maximize our resources to the greatest extent possible. Continued cattle fever tick infestations, and cattle tuberculosis outbreaks as well as new novel and emerging diseases require the agency to closely monitor resources and allocate them appropriately.

A. Agency Vision, Mission, Philosophy

Vision: Through the cooperative efforts of the TAHC, animal producers, and allied industry groups, the animal population of Texas is healthy and secure.

Mission: The mission of the TAHC is:

- to protect the animal industry from and/or mitigate the effects of domestic, foreign and emerging diseases;
- to increase the marketability of Texas livestock commodities at the state, national and international level;
- to promote and ensure animal health and productivity;
- to protect human health from animal diseases and conditions that are transmissible to people; and
- to prepare for and respond to emergency situations involving animals.

The agency accomplishes this mission by conducting agency business in a responsive, cooperative and transparent manner.

Philosophy: The TAHC will carry out its mission with honesty, openness, and efficiency. We will use the best available resources, technology and trained personnel to achieve the agency goals. We will listen to and respect the opinions and concerns of the people of Texas. We will encourage and promote open communication between all parties. We will strive to continuously develop new, or enhance existing relationships among government, industry, and private citizens to realize our vision of a healthy and secure animal population in Texas.

B. Strategic Goals, Objective, and Strategies

Goal 1: Protect/Enhance Animal Health

To protect and enhance the health of Texas animal populations, facilitating productivity and marketability while sustaining low risk of disease exposure to humans.

Objective 01-01: To minimize the impact of disease on Texas animal populations by reducing or eradicating diseases; and to enhance preparedness for emergency response by increasing staff activities devoted to emergency preparedness.

Strategy 01-01-01 Field Operations

Monitor, control and/or eradicate diseases and infestations through statewide field-based animal health management and assurance programs.

Strategy 01-01-02 Diagnostic/Epidemiological Support

Provide epidemiological expertise and parasite identification services for diseases and parasites of regulatory importance to the animal agriculture industries in Texas.

Strategy 01-01-03 Promote Compliance

Promote voluntary compliance with legal requirements by providing education or information, and to resolve violations through effective use of legal enforcement and compliance activities.

Strategy 01-01-04 Animal Emergency Management

Provide preparedness and response activities to serve and protect animals and animal agriculture through training and planning assistance for local jurisdictions regarding animal related issues during hazards and disasters, in addition to responding to and mitigating the effects of threats to animals and animal agriculture such as foreign and emerging animal diseases, natural disasters, or acts of terrorism.

Goal 2: Indirect Administration

The Texas Animal Health Commission is committed to efficient and effective management of the agency's staff, its financial resources, and its assets, including equipment, supplies and fleet vehicles.

C. Impact of Growing Animal Health Programs on TAHC Strategies

Potential new animal health management programs, existing animal health programs, and increased regulatory requirements, at both the federal and state levels, are expected to impact agency workload priorities and workforce structure over the next five years. The TAHC must manage limited state and federal resources appropriated to the agency for a growing list of animal health diseases, programs, projects, and initiatives, which will impact the TAHC's resource and workforce needs.

Current Workforce Profile (Supply Analysis)

A. Critical Workforce Skills/Functions

To fulfill the mission of the TAHC, employees must have a variety of necessary skills and job functions. These include:

- Veterinary medical knowledge
- One Health knowledge
- Knowledge of epidemiology principles, risk analysis, and risk management skills
- Expertise in new and emerging domestic and foreign animal disease identification and control
- Safe and effective techniques for tissue and blood sample collection
- Livestock evaluation and safe handling
- Use and maintenance of personal protective equipment to safeguard against highly infectious emerging diseases and agents used for treatment

- Emergency management planning and response (local and state level)
- Development and delivery of public information presentations
- Supervisory and general management skills
- Collaboration, negotiation, public relations, and customer service skills
- Project management skills
- Strategic planning and business plan development and implementation skills
- Technical writing skills to develop employee manuals, policies and procedures, forms, templates and procurement documents; grant writing skills
- Employment law, recruitment, compensation and benefits, and employee relations skills
- GIS development / GPS mapping skills
- General computer knowledge and data entry skills
- Information technology skills to include cybersecurity knowledge, cloud services and mobility solutions, software development, database administration, systems administration analysis, webmaster duties, business analysis, network engineering, electronic data management, and hardware and software maintenance skills
- Budgeting, contract management, fee collection and documentation
- Knowledge and training in logistics and supply management; fleet and asset management
- Knowledge and experience in records retention
- Knowledge and experience in safety and health rules, regulations, and standards
- Knowledge and experience in regulatory compliance and administrative procedures
- Strong analytical, investigatory, problem solving, conflict management, and communication skills
- Knowledge and training in cross-department competencies
- Comprehensive audio, video and editing skills
- Interagency and stakeholder relations skills including knowledge of the legislative process

B. Workforce Demographics

In FY 2020, the TAHC’s workforce was comprised of 62.7% males and 37.3% females, 58.1% of employees were 40 years of age or older and 31.9% of employees had at least 10 years of service with the agency.

The following table compares the percentage of African American, Hispanic American, and Female TAHC employees for fiscal year 2020 to those reported by the State for fiscal year 2020. We are ahead in Technology for African Americans and ahead in Office/Administration and Administrative Support for females. The TAHC will continue to work, to address the under-representation of African American, Hispanic American, and female employees in other categories.

	<i>African American TAHC %</i>	<i>African American State%</i>
Officials/Administration	4.3%	12.03%
Professional	2.2%	13.91%
Technical	20.0%	18.54%
Administrative Supportive	0.0%	13.36%

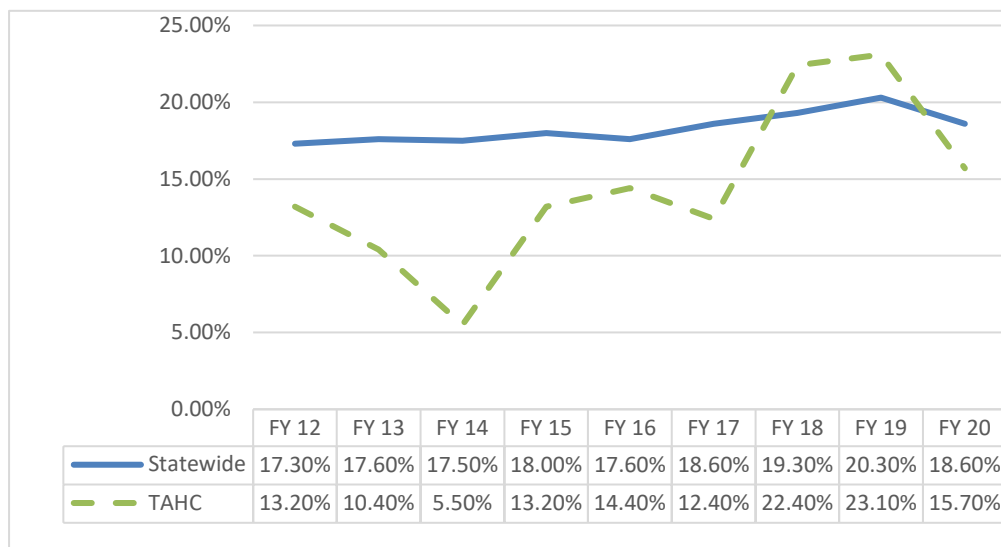
	<i>Hispanic American TAHC %</i>	<i>Hispanic American State%</i>
Officials/Administration	8.7%	15.72%
Professional	26.6%	18.29%
Technical	6.7%	26.31%
Administrative Supportive	30.3%	33.74%

	<i>Female American TAHC %</i>	<i>Female American State%</i>
Officials/Administration	39.1%	55.69%
Professional	30.2%	58.74%
Technical	20.0%	61.10%
Administrative Supportive	93.9%	81.71%
<i>*For the purpose of this report. Professional and Para-Professional categories were combined.</i>		

C. Employee Turnover

Based on turnover statistics published by the State Auditor’s Office for voluntary separations, involuntary separations, and retirements by agency employees, including interagency transfers, the TAHC had historically enjoyed a lower-than-average turnover rate, except during the 2012/2013 biennium when layoffs were required due to budgetary constraints. The TAHC employee turnover rate for FY 2020 was 16.9% as illustrated in the graph below. This turnover rate is high for the TAHC, mainly in part due to retirements and lack of competitive salaries.

Turnover Rate Comparison: TAHC Versus Statewide



During fiscal year 2020, there were 25 resignations, three inter-agency transfers, four retirements, one at-will termination, one dismissal for cause, and three resignations in lieu of termination.

D. Retirement Eligibility

The TAHC continues to face the challenge of losing many long-tenured staff to retirement, and this trend is expected to continue through the next 10 years. With an aging workforce and a projection of more than 28.38% of its authorized FTEs eligible to retire over that period of time, the agency must plan strategies for filling these vacancies with knowledgeable and skilled personnel.

Future Workforce Profile (Demand Analysis)

The focus of the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) has shifted towards emergency response rather than regulatory support within states. In addition, the USDA-APHIS is unable to retain port veterinarians nationwide so USDA employees in Texas are often deployed to provide veterinary support at the ports. The number of disease outbreaks has increased nationwide which often demands USDA personnel stationed in Texas to deploy to support other states. Likewise, Texas has also seen an increase in the number of outbreaks as well as growth in the diversity in numbers of some livestock and poultry sectors. These factors require additional financial and human resources. The TAHC continues to strive to support the livestock and poultry industry and producers with broad disease surveillance plans, routine regulatory enforcement on all disease programs, and an increased involvement in marketability issues. One Health issues, including zoonotic diseases, vector-borne diseases, food safety and security, and other health threats shared by people and animals continue to be a priority. Adequate resources are needed to promote and protect public and animal health. As a result, TAHC inspectors and veterinarians will play a greater role in protecting the economic viability of the livestock and poultry industries in Texas. It is critical for the TAHC to recruit, hire and retain highly skilled personnel to occupy these positions.

The TAHC must continue to address the issues of competitive salaries in order to recruit and retain livestock inspectors and veterinarians who perform the key functions of the agency.

The agency continues to address salary equity for veterinarians in regional management and field operations, as well as the agency's livestock inspector salaries, but they are still below that of comparable positions in other agencies.

The TAHC has more livestock inspector positions than any other classification. The agency is always looking for ways to address pay inequities. Recruiting and retaining livestock inspectors in South Texas and other parts of Texas will continue to be difficult until the agency is able to ensure equitable pay.

Succession plans for retaining critical knowledge, skills, and abilities as long-tenured staff retire is also a significant challenge for the agency, and one that is difficult to administer with limited position redundancies and a small staff. The agency will continue to provide on-the-job training and encourage outside training to staff in an effort to ready them for positions vacated by tenured staff who retire.

A. Critical Functions

- The TAHC needs to be able to attract and retain veterinarians trained in epidemiology, and large animals, a specialty area where a nation-wide shortage exists. Large animal veterinarians are becoming scarce as more graduating veterinary students are opting to go into companion animal practice. In order to attract and retain large animal veterinarians and epidemiologists, the agency must pay at or above similar jobs in Texas state government, other states, USDA-APHIS, and comparable private entities.
- The emphasis of TAHC's livestock inspectors, veterinarians, and epidemiologists has shifted from a program geared toward cattle brucellosis eradication to one that encompasses a variety of species (cattle, hogs, sheep and goats, horses, chickens, deer, and exotic livestock and poultry) and their corresponding diseases and conditions. One Health issues, the challenge of the wildlife interface, and emerging diseases present challenges as well.
- Career ladders must be continuously reviewed, updated and implemented for all staff in the agency, pursuant to TAHC's governing statutes.
- It is imperative the agency keeps up-to-date with technological changes for animal disease tracking. Therefore, the agency must be able to recruit, hire, and retain staff who have the knowledge and expertise to understand, trouble-shoot, and update these technologies such as Core-one, GIS/GPS programs, cloud services, and mobile solutions.
- Expert managerial skills and abilities are needed to continue strong leadership within the agency and to oversee and coordinate complex programs. The agency will need to ensure that core management training modules are developed and managerial training opportunities are provided.
- To be able to capitalize on funding that is available from various sources, including the federal government, the agency should have skilled grant writers to assist in securing needed funding.
- Each biennium the agency is asked to provide additional services and to handle new projects, many times without additional funding or funding sources. To ensure that these projects are accomplished with maximum efficiency, the agency needs to train or employ staff with project management skills and expertise.
- The need to retain animal emergency management planners to assist local jurisdictions and industry partners develop sound animal emergency response plans will continue and grow in the future.
- All TAHC staff must be trained and ready to undertake new roles and responsibilities when animal emergencies arise. To do so, staff must be adequately trained in utilizing the federal government's incident command structure and be able to activate the structure to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources as a result of either human or natural-phenomena caused events.
- The need to retain and recruit investigators knowledgeable in state and federal animal health requirements and investigations is critical to the success of regulatory programs and enforcement.
- The need to retain veterinarians knowledgeable in all aspects of veterinary medicine, including large and exotic animals, is an integral part of the agency when animal emergencies arise.

B. Expected Workforce Changes

- A smaller ratio of veterinary and epidemiology staff-to-livestock inspectors is desirable to adequately manage domestic and foreign animal disease. With the growing list of animal species and disease types with which all staff must be knowledgeable, the demand on veterinary and epidemiology staff will increase resulting in a larger ratio than desired.
- Livestock inspectors', investigators' and veterinarians' duties are also evolving. Technological changes are occurring rapidly, with increased technological usage of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Global Information Systems (GIS), laptop computers, and automated animal identification collection technologies (i.e., Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags for animals) etc. While these technological changes should aid field staff in the efficient and effective performance of duties, these are new skill sets that have been added to their jobs. It is expected that technological changes will continually alter their duties and responsibilities in the future.
- Field staff must be able to effectively communicate with market owners and livestock producers, and to educate them on state and federal requirements pertaining to the sale, movement, quarantine and disposal of livestock, poultry and exotic animals. Public speaking and effective communication skills are critical.
- Staff skilled in effective grant writing is desirable to ensure the agency is awarded funding from federal sources to perform the duties and responsibilities required of staff.
- Retirements of long-tenured staff with vast institutional knowledge of the agency and Texas' livestock and poultry industries will leave the agency with knowledge gaps in its workforce that must be addressed. The agency plans to bridge this gap through on-the-job training, recruitment strategies, and pertinent internal and third-party training of staff.
- Conversion to electronic documents will increase the need for enhanced data management systems. This, in turn, will require training and recruitment of staff knowledgeable in these data management systems.

C. Anticipated Increases in Number of Employees Needed

- Due to the livestock/poultry growth rate in Texas, the increased responsibilities of the field inspectors, veterinarians, epidemiologists, and compliance personnel could increase the number of employees needed.
- Because of the continued complexities involved in recognizing, categorizing and effectively planning for eradication efforts of new and emerging animal diseases, more veterinary and epidemiological staff will be required to face future demands.
- The continued effort to address cattle fever ticks in South Texas and other disease issues along the Rio Grande continues to stretch agency human and financial resources.
- The wildlife interface hinders effective disease response and continues to present additional and unique challenges. For this reason, a wildlife biologist might be needed to work with issues related to nilgai and white tailed deer.
- Due to future demands and ever evolving technology, additional FTEs may be needed to adequately address and monitor the agency's project management duties and responsibilities.
- Due to future demands and ever-evolving legal complexities, additional FTEs may be needed to adequately address the agency's legal and compliance duties and responsibilities.
- Global trade is ever increasing and additional FTE's may be needed to respond to disease introductions and risks of disease introductions posed by animal and product movement.

D. Future Workforce Skills Needed

- Veterinary medical knowledge
- Knowledge of One Health issues
- Knowledge of epidemiology principles, risk analysis, and risk management skills
- Expertise in new and emerging domestic and foreign animal disease identification and control
- Safe and effective techniques for tissue and blood sample collection
- Livestock evaluation and safe handling
- Use and maintenance of personal protective equipment to safeguard against highly infectious emerging diseases and agents used for treatment
- Emergency management planning and response (local and state level)
- Knowledge and experience in development and analysis of secure food supply plans
- Development and delivery of public information presentations
- Supervisory and general management skills
- Collaboration, negotiation, public relations, and customer service skills
- Project management skills
- Strategic planning and business plan development and implementation skills
- Technical writing skills to develop employee manuals, policies and procedures, forms, templates and procurement documents; grant writing skills
- Employment law, recruitment, compensation and benefits, and employee relations skills
- GIS development / GPS mapping skills
- Information technology skills to include cybersecurity knowledge, cloud services and mobility solutions, software development, database administration, systems administration analysis, webmaster duties, business analysis, network engineering, electronic data management, and hardware and software maintenance skills
- Budgeting, contract management, fee collection and documentation
- Knowledge and training in logistics and supply management; fleet and asset management
- Knowledge and experience in records retention
- Knowledge and experience in safety and health rules, regulations, and standards
- Knowledge and experience in regulatory compliance and administrative procedures
- Strong analytical, investigatory, problem solving, conflict management and communication skills
- Knowledge and training in cross-department competencies
- Interpersonal skills
- Interagency and stakeholder relations skills including knowledge of the legislative process

Gap Analysis

A. Anticipated Shortage of Employees

The agency's current FTE count includes 21 temporary FTEs to aid the agency in its battle to stop the spread of Texas cattle fever ticks outside the permanent quarantine zone in South Texas. With the tick's continued spread, the TAHC will request to extend these temporary employees for the foreseeable future.

Veterinarians, epidemiologists and livestock inspectors may be needed in greater numbers as the Texas Animal Health Commission's role in dealing with new and emerging animal diseases evolves and needed skill sets change. The agency's involvement in emergency response for the state of Texas continues to grow beyond the current FTE allocations in that area. To meet regulatory and statutory requirements, supervisory and administrative support staff will need to be hired as the labor force is increased.

The TAHC's ability to recruit and retain needed staff will continue to be limited by the agency's state and federal funding.

B. Critical Skills Shortage

- The agency has found it very difficult to hire and retain qualified veterinarians, epidemiologists and livestock inspectors, especially in the South Texas area. The agency is seeking new and innovative ways to recruit and retain employees for these positions.
- Veterinarians, epidemiologists, and livestock inspectors must continually learn and develop increased skills and knowledge to: work with new and emerging disease issues, communicate with various producers and industry groups about the agency's programs, and publicly address a variety of audiences.
- The agency will need to work to ensure that training opportunities are provided to all staff to address new technological developments to ensure the workforce maintains the skillset needed to work with increasingly sophisticated databases, software, GIS/GPS equipment, security infrastructure, cloud technology, and data networks.
- Management staff will need to enhance strategic planning skills and to develop skills in business process planning, information management, and execution.
- Grant writing skills for select staff will be required in the future.
- Existing staff should be trained or new staff hired to provide critical project management skills for the agency.
- All staff train and practice the use of an incident command structure so the agency will be ready and capable of fulfilling its required emergency management roles and responsibilities.

Strategy Development

The TAHC will work toward achieving the following goals intended to address workforce competency gaps and the overall anticipated shortage of staff.

A. Organizational Structure

Goal: Ensure that employees are allocated appropriately to cover workload demands.

Action Steps:

- Analyze current allocations and geographic distribution of employees.
- Develop strategic allocations or distribution of employees based on analysis and projection of future mission priorities.
- Maintain a cost-effective management-to-staff ratio to ensure maximum productivity and accountability of employees.

B. Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Goal: Ensure that key recruitment resources are identified and succession plans are developed and implemented to most effectively accomplish the agency's mission.

Action Steps:

- Identify factors that prevent the agency from successfully competing with other employers and develop strategies to address those factors.
- Identify and contact potential resources for minority recruitment, especially in those areas of underrepresentation in the agency's workforce, in all areas of the state.
- Analyze reasons for employee turnover and identify trends.
- Continue to participate in the Survey of Employee Engagement; analyze results, and develop strategies to address areas needing improvement.
- Update human resources policies and procedures to address the findings of these analyses.
- Develop tools and identify strategies that place emphasis on work-life balance for employees.
- Provide supervisory and management skills training.
- Identify positions for which succession planning is critical; implement training plans to ensure knowledge, skills and abilities are developed.
- Continue to timely review position salaries, job duties and tasks assigned to strive for salary parity with other state and federal agencies and the private sector.
- Continue to implement alternate work schedules, flexible leave and performance leave to strengthen employee morale and retention.
- Continue to offer the employee wellness program and encourage staff to participate.

C. Career Development and In-Service Training Programs

Goal: Ensure that staff is equipped with necessary and appropriate skills and knowledge to most effectively accomplish the agency's mission.

Action Steps:

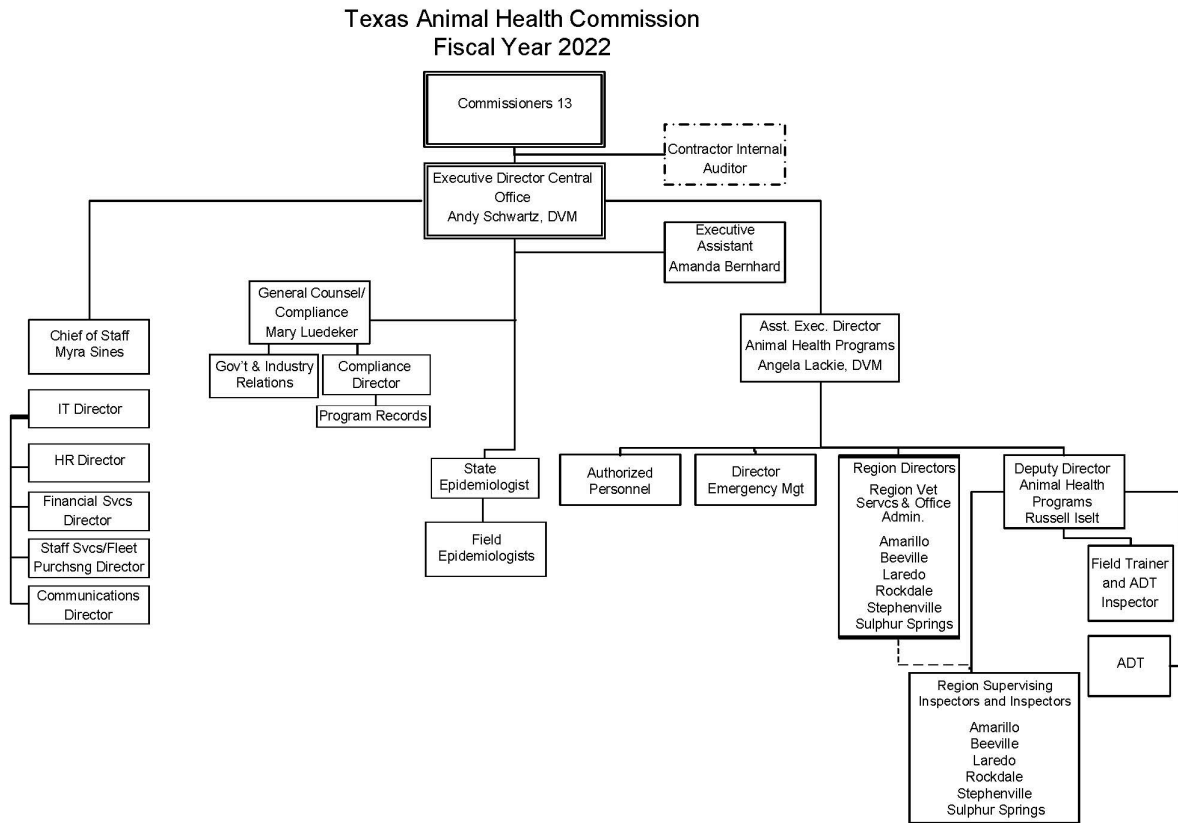
- Provide training opportunities for veterinarians to achieve required continuing education units for veterinary licensing; to achieve designated epidemiologist status in a number of diseases; and, to update knowledge and skills in new and emerging animal diseases.
- Support and encourage staff attendance at job-relevant conferences and training programs.
- Establish specific job requirements for necessary skills development.
- Based on identified skill requirements, allow employees to utilize on-line training tools and/or research training sources that are cost-effective.
- Conduct in-house management conferences to focus on leadership skills development and application.
- Encourage employees who seek new challenges by assigning special projects and encouraging cross-training.
- Ensure that TAHC managers participate in both internal and external seminars to enhance and further develop managerial skills.
- Update and/or establish career ladders for eligible staff.

Workforce Plan Evaluation and Revision

The agency's Workforce Plan will be implemented with the Strategic Plan. It will be reevaluated biennially to determine if adjustments need to be made due to changes in disease diagnoses, changes in technology, or workload shifts.

The Human Resources Department will work in collaboration with executive staff and division directors to ensure that agency workforce is adequately trained, up-to-date on technological advances that may change the way we do business, and to ensure that planned or unexpected turnover and/or retirements do not leave the agency with knowledge and skill gaps that would essentially prevent the agency from achieving its strategic goals.

Current Organizational Chart – Fiscal Year 2022



Legend
 Dotted box = contractor
 Dotted line = indirect supervision

Schedule G: Workforce Development System Strategic Plan

Not applicable.