

OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR
STATE OF HAWAII

First Status Report on Job Sharing in Hawaii State Government

Summary

For over a decade, the Legislature has promoted job sharing as an employment option for certain state workers. In Act 244 of 1989, it set up a pilot project to test the efficacy of this concept throughout state government. Included on a voluntary basis in the project are the executive branch, the Department of Education, the University of Hawaii, the Judiciary, the Legislative Reference Bureau, the Office of the Auditor, and the Office of the Ombudsman. The act allows certain permanent, full-time employees to participate.

We found interest in the job-sharing project to be minimal. No state employees have applied, and few agencies within the executive branch are involved. Agency officials cited several reasons for the lack of interest. Employees need full-time salaries, and agencies prefer full-time workers. Certain types of work are not suited to job sharing, and other options are available to those who might want to work part-time. Finally, the job-sharing requirements themselves, because they reduce administrative flexibility, may discourage agencies from participating.

A few factors make it tougher to implement the pilot project. A restriction in Act 244 can keep administrators from filling a job-sharing position vacated by an employee. Job-sharing positions cannot be reconverted to full-time positions until the end of the contract period agreed on by the parties. Another possible hindrance is that the guidelines written by the Department of Personnel Services narrow the choices open to agencies in scheduling the work periods, designating jobs for job sharing, and selecting applicants.

In the meantime, of the four executive departments participating, two were ready to accept applicants and two were developing guidelines. The Judiciary was also developing guidelines. All three legislative service agencies have completed their guidelines and announced the project to employees.

Recommendations and Response

Because the pilot project is still new, we defer detailed recommendations. However, we do propose that the Department of Personnel Services make clear that its guidelines for scheduling work times, designating suitable positions, and selecting applicants are suggestions, not requirements.

In its response, the department said it did not object to our recommendation. It does not believe, however, that the guidelines are the reason so few agencies chose to participate.

Background

As defined by statute, job sharing is the “voluntary sharing of a full-time, permanent employee’s position with another employee, with each working one-half of the total number of hours of work required per month.” Job sharers receive one-half of the salary to which they are entitled and at least one-half of the benefits afforded full-time employees. Act 244 requires participating agencies to develop guidelines and follow certain procedures in bringing the program to their employees.

The Legislature first established job-sharing in a 1978 pilot project in the Department of Education, which ran successfully for six years. In 1982, it created a second project in the public library system, which ran for four years. A third pilot project for nurses in the Department of Health ran from FY1986-87 through FY1989-90.

After monitoring all three of these early projects, the auditor found job-sharing to be a feasible, desirable, and cost-effective work arrangement and recommended that it be made an employment option for all state agencies. The Legislature has made job-sharing a permanent program in the Department of Education for full-time tenured personnel with teaching certificates and in the public library system for all full-time staff.

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