



Personnel Policy



Mission:

Leverage partnerships and procure funding to connect Northwestern Vermont via Open Access Fiber to ensure opportunity for all homes and businesses in our region.

Vision:

Break the barriers to Internet access for all in our communities.

Philosophy:

We seek to fulfill our mission in a collaborative, fun, and open-hearted work environment where every person's individual talents and experiences contribute to our success and where that success is shared by every person.

Non-Compete:

During employment at NWFx, employees agree to not directly or indirectly participate as an owner, partner, director, officer, supervisor, employee, agent, or consultant in any business entity or organization which engages in or is involved in any business (a) which directly or indirectly competes with the business or, to the extent you are aware of it, the proposed business of NWFx unless approved by the Executive Committee. All employees will be asked to adhere to all NWFx CUD's policies, including the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Should you engage in non-competitive employment in addition to NWFx, it must be outside of our regular business hours and done on your own equipment and with your own supplies.

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Harassment Policy: For all employees and colleagues to have a safe and comfortable workplace environment that allows employees to perform their duties. There will be no harassment toward an individual due to age, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, place of birth, physical or mental condition, health coverage status, vaccination status, genetic information, veteran or military status, or other protected category under state and federal law. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated; this includes physical touch as well as inappropriate suggestions and vulgar language to an employee. There will also be no tolerance for retaliation of an employee report such events or participating in an investigation. All harassment will be investigated and, if deemed appropriate, will result in termination of employment.

This harassment policy and the complaint process thereunder applies to members of the NWFx Governing Board and business partners, vendors, and subcontractors.

Any employee who believes they have been the target of illegal harassment or who believes they have been subjected to retaliation for having brought or supported a complaint of harassment is encouraged to directly inform the offending person or persons that the conduct is offensive and must stop. If the employee does not wish to communicate directly with the alleged harasser or harassers, or if direct communication has been ineffective, the person with the complaint is encouraged to report the situation as soon as possible to their supervisor. If the employee does not wish to communicate with their supervisor or if communication with their supervisor has been ineffective, they may communicate with the chair of the Governing Board.

NWFx will attempt to keep any investigation of a complaint as confidential as possible, except as may be reasonably necessary to complete an investigation successfully. It shall be a violation of this policy for any employee who learns of an investigation or complaint to take any retaliatory action that affects the working environment of any person involved in this investigation.

If the allegation of illegal harassment is supported by the investigation, NWFx will take appropriate corrective action. Both the complaining person and the accused will be informed of the results of an investigation and the organization will take steps to make the offending behavior stop and to prevent retaliation. Any employee, supervisor, or agent who the organization determines has illegally harassed another employee will be subject to sanctions appropriate to the circumstances, ranging from a verbal warning, up to and including dismissal. If the allegation is not supported by the investigation, both parties will be informed of that fact. If the complainant is dissatisfied with NWFx action or is otherwise interested in doing so, they may file a complaint by writing or calling the following state or federal agencies:

Vermont Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Unit 109
State Street, Montpelier, VT 05609
(802) 828-3171
(802) 828-3665 (TDD)

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission John F. Kennedy Federal Building 475
Government Center, Boston, MA 02203
(800) 669-4000
(800) 669-6820 (TTY)

NWFX condemns racism and welcomes all people, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and will protect these classes to the fullest extent of the law. As an organization, we formally condemn discrimination in all of its forms and commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community. NWFX has and will continue to be a place where individuals can work without fear and freely express their opinion.

Breastfeeding Policy: For the health of a new mother and child, breastfeeding breaks will be allowed. They will be scheduled during the day to accommodate workflow and the mother's needs. An appropriate time will be allowed for employees to set up and clean the pump and express milk.

Alcohol & Substance Abuse Policy: Alcohol and substance abuse pose a threat to the health and safety of our employees. Alcohol and substance use is not permitted by employees while on NWFX time. Selling, distributing, and using any drugs that are not prescribed and or using them in a way that contradicts how they are prescribed to you is prohibited and can result in termination.

Smoking Policy: This is a tobacco-free workplace.

Equipment Policy: Please use any computer or phone, or other property supplied by NWFX only for work-related purposes. Do not install or replace anything on the equipment or property without consulting with your supervisor. If any maintenance is needed on a device, let your supervisor know.

Electronic Communication Policy: This policy is intended to protect NWFX computer systems and electronic information. For purposes of these policies, the following definitions apply:

"Computers" are defined as desktop computers, laptops, handheld devices (including but not limited to smartphones, electronic tablets, and cell phones), computer software/hardware and servers, and VPN fobs.

"Electronic communication" includes e-mail, text messages, telephones, cell phones and other handheld devices (such as cell phones, smartphones, or writing tablets or iPads), fax machines, and online services, including the Internet and social media.

"Information" is any information created by an employee using NWFX computers or any means of electronic communication, including but not limited to data, messages, multimedia data, and files. The following general policies apply:

- All electronic communications are considered public records.
- Electronic information created by an employee using any computer or any means of electronic communication is also the property of NWFX and remains the property of NWFX.
- Information stored in NWFX computers and file servers, including without limitation customer lists and information data, is the property of the NWFX.
- Violation of any of the provisions of this policy, whether intentional or not, will subject employees to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Remote Work Policy: In lieu of having a physical office, NWFX may allow employees to work remotely. Our goal is to enable our employees to work flexibly and create a balance between work and home. To

maintain appropriate productivity and performance, remote employees should choose a work environment with a reliable internet connection that supports the employee's ability to dedicate their full attention to their job duties. If ever in a public area, employees must take all reasonable steps to ensure confidentiality and security of any confidential information. NAFX will provide the equipment needed to work remotely; however, employees are responsible for household-related costs such as internet service. Employees are reminded during working hours they must comply with all existing policies and are expected to ensure the protection of any NAFX equipment and maintain regular password maintenance.

Performance Management and Annual Reviews: We believe in honest conversations and are committed to continual constructive feedback within NAFX. Conducting annual performance goals offers the opportunity to reflect upon the year's accomplishments and assess your personal evolution.

Each year will begin with a review/discussion of NAFX's annual goals. These goals will evolve or change yearly to reflect what we want to accomplish in terms of our work, supporting our own culture, and meeting our financial objectives.

NAFX goals will guide employees and their supervisors to create individual goals for the year. These goals should ensure an employee is progressing and benefitting the goals of NAFX as well as their professional growth.

Employee Payroll Policy: The workweek for all employees begins on Monday and ends that Sunday. All employees are responsible for submitting their timesheets for approval to the supervisor by Friday. Employees will be paid via direct deposit every Friday for hours worked the week prior.

- **Paycheck Deductions:** We are required by law to make certain deductions from your paycheck each time one is prepared. These include, but are not limited to, Federal and State (Vermont) income taxes and your contribution to Social Security and Medicare. These deductions will be itemized on your check stub. The amount of the deductions may depend on your earnings and on the information you furnish on your W-4 form. Any change in name, address, telephone number, marital status, or the number of withholdings must be updated immediately to ensure proper credit for tax purposes. The W-2 form you receive each year indicates how much of your earnings were deducted for these purposes. Voluntary deductions such as benefit premiums and retirement contributions will be based on benefits eligibility and benefits selection.

Whenever court-ordered deductions are to be taken from your paycheck, you will be notified. According to the Federal Wage Garnishment Act, three or more garnishments may be cause for dismissal.

- **Transportation Mileage & Reimbursements:** All employees using personal vehicles for NAFX business receive mileage reimbursement at the federal rate. All mileage needs to be kept in a mileage log, and the mileage must be submitted to the treasurer within one month of occurrence; the log needs to show the number of miles driven, the reason for the mileage, and the employee's signatures and supervisor's signatures.

If you incur business-related expenses, submit the expense amount, the reason for the expense, and the signed receipt to the treasurer within one month. If you do not retain your receipt, you may not be reimbursed.

- **Errors In Pay:** Every effort is made to avoid errors in your paycheck. If you believe an error has been made, tell your supervisor immediately. We will research the situation and ensure that any necessary correction is made properly and promptly.
- **Paid Holidays:** NWFx will observe the following holidays for all employees, and Full-Time employees will be paid for the day.
 - New Year's Day
 - Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
 - President's Day
 - Town Meeting Day
 - Memorial Day
 - Independence Day
 - Bennington Battle Day
 - Labor Day
 - Veteran's Day
 - Thanksgiving Day
 - Christmas Day
 - Christmas Holiday (12/24 or 12/26)
- **Paid Time Off Policy:** Please notify the Chair as far in advance as possible for time off. Paid time off must be used in whole-hour increments. Unused PTO hours will not be rolled over and will not be paid at the end of the year. 120 hours of PTO will be given to Full-Time employees to be used after 60 days of employment.
 - Employed 0-3 Years: 120 PTO Hours
 - Employed 3-5 Years: 160 PTO Hours
 - Employed 5+ Years: 200 PTO Hours

Part time employees will accrue paid time off in alignment with their years of service, prorated to their actual hours worked. Upon termination, any unused PTO will be compensated according to the number of months worked in the current year, after deducting the PTO already used.

Examples:

- Full time employee in their first three years of employment will earn 3 weeks of PTO (120 hrs.) per 12 months = 10 hours a month. An employee that works 8 months that takes zero PTO and leaves the company on September 1st would be paid out at 10 hours per month for 8 months for a total of 80 hours. Any PTO taken in the last 8 months will be subtracted from that amount.
- Part time employee in their first three years of employment accrues .058 PTO per hour worked.
- If the employee has used more PTO than they have accrued, the excess amount will be deducted from their final paycheck and any benefits payout.

Policy changes approved by the Governing Board on January 23, 2025 will be retroactive to the start of the calendar year, January 1, 2025.

- **Sick Time Policy:** Sick time is paid time off for sickness, medical appointments, and personal or family emergencies. Immediately all full-time employees will get 40 hours of sick time, and part-time employees will get 20 hours of sick time. Unused sick time will not be paid out at the end of the year but can be rolled over.
- **Parental Leave Policy:** Employees Full or Part-Time that have given birth or adopted a child will be compensated 50% of their weekly pay for 12 weeks for parental leave. Parental leave will be granted to Full or Part Time employees for a spouse or partner that has given birth at 50% of their weekly pay for up to 4 weeks. Compensation will be based on your current hourly rate and will be deposited weekly as your normal paycheck would be.
- **Bereavement Policy:** Bereavement time is for all employees to make arrangements and attend a service for a family member. NAFX employees will be given seven paid days of bereavement leave per death for Spouse or Partner, Parent, Grandparent, Sibling, Child, and in-laws under the same titles. Bereavement time must be used within two months of death and does not have to be, but ideally, would be consecutive days.
- **Break Time Policy:** For any day that an employee works, a minimum of 6 hours a 30-minute paid break is encouraged to be taken. Take reasonable additional shorter breaks as needed and as the workload allows for that workday.
- **Increases In Pay:** NAFX recognizes that salary is an important part of an employee's total compensation. It is our intent to provide an annual increase to go into effect in the first month of the calendar year. The Executive Committee will determine the salary increase amount prior to the new calendar year. Cost of living and other market adjustments will be taken into consideration, as well as performance. Mid-Year increases may also be given to the entire staff upon the discretion of the Executive Committee. Salary and hourly rate increases will be the same percentage for all NAFX employees.

Benefits: Benefits may change year to year.

- **Health Insurance:** Reference Benefits Summary sheet for current coverage.

When employment is terminated, your health insurance coverage will end at the end of the month in which your employment is terminated. Although NAFX is not subject to COBRA laws, you may extend your health insurance using the COBRA guidelines.

- **Dental Insurance:** Reference Benefits Summary sheet for current coverage.
- **Vision Insurance:** Reference Benefits Summary sheet for current coverage.

- **Retirement:** Reference Benefits Summary sheet for current coverage.
- **Disability:** Reference Benefits Summary sheet for current coverage for Group Life Insurance, Short-Term, and Long-Term Disability.

Discipline and Discrimination: There are times when employees may fail to meet the work standards of NWFX, fail to exhibit proper conduct or professional attitude, or fail to adhere to NWFX policies or procedures successfully. There are situations that may cause discipline, up to and including immediate termination. Whether to take corrective action and what action to take is solely within NWFX discretion.

Ending Employment: Vermont is an employment-at-will state. This means that you can choose to terminate employment with NWFX CUD at any time for any reason—and vice versa. Nothing in these policies changes this at-will relationship. With all employment separations, all NWFX property must be returned immediately, and benefit coverage will end based on the plan description. You will receive your final paycheck in accordance with Vermont State law.

- **Resignations:** If you anticipate having to resign your position with us, you are expected to notify your supervisor at least two weeks in advance of your planned departure date. You may not use paid leave time of any kind to extend your employment or within four workweeks of your anticipated employment end date unless approved by your supervisor at the time of resignation.

Anyone who fails to come to work for three consecutive days without notifying their supervisor may be considered voluntarily terminated.

- **Involuntary Terminations:** If we decide to discontinue the employment relationship and you are discharged, your next paycheck will contain all outstanding compensation.

In the event of a layoff due to lack of work, NWFX CUD, where possible, will give a two-week notice or extend two weeks of severance in lieu of notice. The final paycheck will be processed in accordance with Vermont State law.

Terminology:

These policies are intended only as guidelines and do not constitute an employment contract or binding promises. No changes in any benefits, policy, or rule will be made without due consideration of the mutual advantages, disadvantages, benefits, and responsibilities. We will keep everyone informed of modifications with a ten (10) day notice. This employee handbook should serve as a guide.

NWFX CUD will provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals. Employment decisions are based on our determination of merit, qualifications, and abilities regardless of race, religion, color, age, gender, marital status, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, pregnancy, disability or perceived disability, positive HIV-blood related test results or veteran status. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, corrective action, termination, and access to benefits and training opportunities.

Every position at NWFx is classified as one of the following:

Full-Time (FTE)

These employees are regularly scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week and are eligible to receive full benefits, subject to the conditions and limitations of each benefit plan.

Part-Time (PTE)

These employees are regularly scheduled to work less than the full-time schedule but at least 20 hours each week.. Part-time employees are generally eligible to receive benefits, subject to the conditions and limitations of each benefit plan. Bonuses, PTO accruals, education, and other forms of leave are prorated based on the number of scheduled hours.

Part-Time-Non Benefited

These employees are regularly scheduled to work less than 20 hours each week. Employees in this category will not be eligible for most benefits offered by NWFx.

Temporary Employee

Occasionally we may hire employees for specific periods of time or for the completion of a specific project. Any employee hired under these conditions will be considered a temporary employee and is not eligible for benefits except where required by Federal or State law. Internships are considered temporary employment.

Non-Exempt and Exempt Employees

Non-exempt and exempt status refers to provisions under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that guide whether a position is eligible for overtime pay. Overtime is allocated to all non-exempt positions when an employee has worked more than 40 regular hours in a workweek or more than eight hours in one day. Paid leave, such as holiday, sick, or vacation pay, does not apply toward worked time. NWFx CUD requires non-exempt employees to account for their time precisely to comply with standards regarding overtime wages. Overtime must be approved in advance by the supervisor.

If a position is considered "exempt," employees in that position are therefore ineligible for overtime pay. Exempt positions are those where the role itself meets certain professional, executive, or administrative criteria outlined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Legal: If any provision of this Personnel Policy is subsequently declared by legislative or judicial authority to be unlawful, unenforceable, or not in accordance with applicable laws, statutes, State of Vermont and/or the United States of America, all other provisions shall remain in full force and effect until a substitute provision can be adopted.

Date:	Revisions	Approval
May 2022	Initial	NWFX Governing Board
January 2023	No changes	NWFX Governing Board
April 2024	Amended to add increases in pay	NWFX Governing Board
January 2025	Amended PTO	NWFX Governing Board

Signed by:

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