



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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November 20, 2020

TO: Agency Directors

FROM: David Schumacher
Director

SUBJECT: UPDATED INSTRUCTIONS TO IMPLEMENT HIRING FREEZE

As you know, Governor Inslee directed state agencies under his authority to implement a freeze on hiring, equipment purchases, and personal services contracts, effective May 18, 2020. We appreciate your efforts in implementing the freeze in your agencies. The savings we achieved have been helpful in managing the significant budget shortfall caused by the global pandemic.

Today the Governor issued [Directive 20-05.1](#), updating the freeze on hiring, equipment purchases, and personal services contracts. As a result, we are revising our instructions for implementing the freeze. **Although the freeze is still in effect, it is no longer necessary to request and receive approval for exemptions from the Office of Financial Management. Agency directors now have the responsibility to approve exemptions to the freeze for the purpose of maintaining critical services in their agencies.** Agencies must maintain internal records for implementation of the freeze and may be asked to provide documentation to OFM.

The only change to the freeze criteria in the directive is a \$5,000 threshold on personal services contracts to coincide with the threshold on equipment purchases. Exemptions on personal services contracts and equipment purchases may be approved for critical state services or agency operations. Other exemptions and guidance that OFM has added through the process can still be found in the FAQ posted on our website.

In regard to the hiring freeze, agencies should not fill a new or vacant position unless it directly impacts public safety, is essential to health and welfare activities, generates revenue, is required to meet statutory mandates, or is related to the state's response to the pandemic.

Please see the attachment for specific criteria for freeze exemptions. Send questions about hiring freeze exemptions to State HR at Hiringfreeze@ofm.wa.gov and equipment purchase and personal services contracts freeze exemptions to ExemptionRequest@ofm.wa.gov.

Thank you for your assistance in continuing to achieve savings through the Governor's freeze directive.

Attachment

Hiring

The hiring freeze applies to all new hires, regardless of fund source or permanent/temporary status. Due to the connection to the health and safety of Washington residents or to the protection of public assets, the following activities are exempt from the hiring freeze:

- Direct custody, supervision, and patient care in corrections and juvenile rehabilitation programs; institutions for the care of veterans and individuals with mental illnesses or developmental disabilities; state psychiatric hospitals; the Special Commitment Center; School for the Blind, and Washington Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth;
- Direct protective services to children and other vulnerable clients of the Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Department of Social and Health Services;
- Washington State Patrol investigative services and field enforcement (troopers);
- Hazardous materials response and emergency cleanup;
- Public health laboratory, and emergency public health and patient safety response;
- Military operations and emergency management within the Military Department;
- Firefighting activities;
- Enforcement officers at the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Liquor and Cannabis Board, State Gambling Commission, and Department of Natural Resources;
- Park rangers at the Parks and Recreation Commission;
- Employees hired on a seasonal basis by the Department of Agriculture for insect detection and inspection and certification of agricultural products; and
- Other positions related to health, safety and welfare and any unforeseen, emergent circumstances involving critical state operations.

Exemption is also granted for activities directly involved in producing revenue:

- Tax and fee collection, auditing and recovery;
- State Lottery operations; and
- Activities necessary to receive or maintain federal funds by the state.

This [hiring freeze exemption tracking log](#) may be useful to you in tracking your hiring activities.

Personal Services Contracts

The freeze on personal services contracts does not include contracts, contract amendments or other agreements related to:

- a cost less than \$5,000, (new addition)
- the protection of life or public safety,
- tax collection or other revenue generating activities,
- those funded exclusively from private or federal funding sources,
- approved information technology projects, and
- other essential categories as provided by guidelines established by OFM.

Equipment Purchases

The freeze on equipment purchases does not apply to equipment:

- with a cost less than \$5,000,
- necessary to protect life or public safety, or
- funded by private or federal grants.

Equipment means furniture, equipment, and software with a useful life of more than one year, typically accounted for in Objects JB, JC and JQ (noted in Section 75.70.10 of the State Administrative and Accounting Manual). The prohibition covers both purchases and leases of equipment (Object EH).