Highway/DPW Hiring Process Step-by-Step

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This resource breaks down the highway/DPW hiring process into the following phases:

1. Recruitment
2. Onboarding
3. Team building
4. Retention
5. Building the Pipeline for Future Staff

These detailed steps will equip you to refine your hiring process, ensuring that your Highway/DPW team is skilled, cohesive, and ready to meet the demands of your community.

Recruitment

Additional Resources

- VLCT PACIF's Steps to Hiring Well(opens in a new tab)
- Pre-Employment CDL Driver Qualification Checklist(opens in a new tab)
- Commercial Motor Vehicle Operations Manual for Municipalities
- Commercial Motor Vehicle Operations Manual for Municipalities FAQs

Engaging Job Descriptions

- Craft detailed job descriptions that attract the right candidates by clearly outlining responsibilities and qualifications.

- Use templates from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns as a foundation. See VLCT's Job Descriptions Toolkit (opens in a new tab)on our website, which contains job description templates for Highway Supervisor and Highway Maintenance Worker and our Sample Job Descriptions(opens in a new tab).

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Competitive Compensation and Benefits

- Review existing pay scales or create new ones if necessary.

- Research salary ranges and benefits packages in similar positions across Vermont towns to remain competitive. See VLCT's Compensation & Benefits Report(opens in a new tab).

- Research salary ranges and benefit packages for similar positions in the private sector.

Compelling Job Advertisement

- See VLCT's What to Include in an Employment Ad(opens in a new tab).

- Create clear and attractive advertisements that highlight job benefits, training opportunities, and the importance of roles like CMV Driver Licensing. Employee benefits are a major attraction for potential applicants! Be sure to list them all!

- Note available on-the-job training and pre-employment screenings, including physicals, drug/alcohol testing and criminal background checks, and note any non-negotiables, such as plow truck drivers being available for after-hours on-call work November – March. You don't want to surprise candidates with these items or waste time considering people who will refuse to be drug tested, etc.

- Ensure compliance with wage disclosure laws effective July 1, 2025. Act. 155 (opens in a new tab), which the Governor signed into law on June 4, 2024, generally requires employers with five or more employees to disclose in their written advertisements for Vermont job openings the compensation (or range of

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compensation) they expect to pay for the position at the time they create the advertisement.

Legal Job Application Forms

- For Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators, this is not a standard job application. Download a sample CDL job application(opens in a new tab) or contact VLCT PACIF for more information.
- Inquiries about salary history are not allowed on employment applications, Vermont Law on Fair Employment Practices, 21 V.S.A. § 495m.
    - An employer shall not:
        - Inquire about or seek information regarding a prospective employee's current or past compensation from either the prospective employee or a current or former employer of the prospective employee;
        - require that a prospective employee's current or past compensation satisfy minimum or maximum criteria; or
        - determine whether to interview a prospective employee based on the prospective employee's current or past compensation.
- See VLCT's Sample Employment Application(opens in a new tab) for non CDL Drivers.

Select Recruitment Channels

- Utilize multi-channel recruitment by posting on the town website, on Vermont Local Roads (VLR) Listserv, and VLCT's Classifieds webpage(opens in a new tab) (we get over 5,000 hits more month on our Classifieds page!), newspapers, job boards, and social media.

- With job boards, such as Indeed, you can post either a free* or paid job listing, also known as a Sponsored Job. Free listings are shown in relevant job seeker

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search results but then fall back in search as new jobs are added over time. Paid job listings are prioritized in relevant search results and retain their optimal visibility for as long as they're sponsored; so they're seen more often by job seekers. To take advantage of the benefits of paid posting, consider placing a monthly cap on pay-per-clicks that fits within your advertising budget. One town has reported excellent results from using a budget of $10/day (about $300/month) for sponsored postings.

- Partner with local schools and host job fairs to widen the reach.

- Encourage current employees to share the opening with their networks including private contractors. One of the benefits of involving your current employees is that the employees feel engaged to be a part of spreading the word about the opportunity. Another added benefit is that an employee is unlikely to mention the opening to anyone that doesn't appear to be a good fit.
- Applicants will have questions! Make sure you connect with the Hiring Supervisor to get a good, comprehensive understanding of the position you're hiring for so that you are able to answer questions candidates have in real time and not go back and forth.
- Pro tip: Acknowledge job applications promptly (within 24 hours) and set a timeline (perhaps 3-5 days) for consideration of applications as they come in and let applicants know whether or not their application will move forward with the Town.

Conduct Interviews

- See VLCT's guidance on Lawful Interviews(opens in a new tab).

- Pre-screen candidates to find out more about them and their interest in the job is a time saves time in the process and weeds out those who aren't motivated or

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have the qualifications for the position you are hiring for.

- Organize interviews with a consistent set of questions to evaluate skills and fit.

- Be mindful of Vermont's Open Meeting Law when conducting interviews.
- Remember: during any contact with you as their potential employer, including the interview, the potential employee is evaluating whether your town is a good place to work – use this opportunity to share information about the work environment, culture and job security.
- If your Selectboard will be conducting interviews, be mindful of Vermont's Open Meeting Law when conducting interviews.

- Maintain confidentiality of applicants.

Additional Checklist for CDL Drivers

As detailed in VLCT PACIF's Commercial Motor Vehicle Operations Manual for Municipalities, (opens in a new tab)there is an additional pre-employment checklist for CDL Drivers:

- The **driver qualification file elements** from previous employers in accordance with §391.23 **(required)**. This includes employment record, accident history, and alcohol and drug testing records for the preceding three (3) years from any DOT regulated employer. If the records are not obtained from prior employer(s), evidence of the attempt must be retained. All above documents must be maintained per §391.53. Download the sample Employment History and CDL Drug & Alcohol Testing Request form(opens in a new tab) or contact VLCT PACIF(opens in a new tab) for more information.

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- A **full pre-employment query of the FMCSA Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse** must be completed per §382.701(a)(1) **(required).** Employers are prohibited from hiring a driver who has a drug and alcohol violation, except where the Clearinghouse query demonstrates successful completion of substance abuse treatment, return-to-duty testing, and follow-up testing (see §382.701(d) for more information). The prospective driver must give specific consent for a full query and will need their own Clearinghouse account(opens in a new tab) to do so.

- **Pre-employment motor vehicle records check** results for the prior three (3) years from each state in which the driver has operated a commercial motor vehicle in accordance with §391.23(a)(1) (**required).** This may require contacting states other than Vermont. A copy of the Vermont DMV motor vehicle records request(opens in a new tab) is available on the Vermont DMV website.

- Acceptable **pre-employment drug test results or exemption form** filled out by previous employer (**required**). NOTE: VLCT recommends that each new employee undergo pre-employment drug testing(opens in a new tab) and that the municipality not use the exemption. Contact VLCT PACIF's testing partner (opens in a new tab) to schedule the pre-employment test.

- The certificate of driver's road test issued to the driver in accordance with §391.31(e), or a copy of the driver's CDL in accordance with §391.331 **(required).** VLCT/PACIF recommends that an actual road test be given to potential new hires.

- **The DOT certified medical examiner's certificate** of the driver's physical qualification to drive a commercial motor vehicle as required by §391.43(f) or a

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legible photographic copy of the certificate. Note: As outlined in the FAQs section of VLCT PACIF's Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) Operations Manual for Municipalities, this is a "best practice" recommendation, as municipalities are typically exempt from this requirement. VLCT PACIF suggests that the municipality establish a policy requiring CDL drivers to maintain their medical certification card. This best practice should start at hire and continue through the duration of employment.

- **PACIF's CMV FAQs**(opens in a new tab) provides easy-to-understand responses and guidance for commonly asked questions about administering and complying with State and Federal commercial motor vehicle requirements. If you have a question that is not on the list of FAQs or if you have a specific situation or question regarding the operation of this important program, please contact your Town's PACIF Loss Control Consultant or the HR Team at VLCT PACIF, 800-649-7915.

Make an Offer

- Choose the best candidate after thorough discussions and reference checks.

- Extend a formal offer with clear terms and conditions, including necessary credential provisions.
- VLCT PACIF recommends that offers for CDL positions be conditional, meaning that the Town will offer you this position as long as you satisfactorily complete the following conditions (drug test, criminal background, etc.). PACIF recommends that candidates don't give notice to their current employer until all of the contingencies are resolved -- it becomes harder to rescind an offer once the person has taken steps in reliance on the offer.
- **Pro Tip:** Many Towns offer employment contingent upon the new hire obtaining their CDL within a set period of time. If this is the practice in your town, the offer

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should also be contingent upon successful completion of a drug test. If the person fails the test, you should rescind the offer of employment.

Action Tips

- Regularly update job descriptions and compensation data to keep them current.
- Consider offering referral bonuses to employees who help recruit new hires.

Onboarding

Key Strategies

- See VLCT PACIF HR Team's March Workplace Matters on Onboarding. The slides are here(opens in a new tab).
- Comprehensive orientation sessions that introduce new hires to your town's culture and expectations and provide relevant safety training.
- Assign mentors for new hires.
- Regular feedback and check-in meetings.

Action Steps

- Prepare an onboarding checklist, see Sample New Hire Checklist(opens in a new tab)
- Schedule a welcome lunch or meet-and-greet

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Team Building

Key Strategies

- Plan team-building activities that encourage collaboration and camaraderie.
- Establish channels for open communication and regular feedback.
- Recognize and celebrate team and individual achievements to boost morale.

Action Tips

- Plan quarterly team outings
- Implement a suggestion box for team ideas

Retention

Key Strategies

- Offer competitive salaries and benefits to retain talent.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Conduct regular satisfaction surveys to identify and address areas for improvement.

Action Tips

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- Develop clear career advancement pathways.
- Implement recognition programs to appreciate and motivate employees.

Building the Pipeline for Future Staff

Key Strategies

- Form partnerships with local training institutions to create a talent pipeline.
- Support apprenticeships and internships to develop future employees.
- Promote career opportunities in schools to attract young talent.
- Offer resources and partnerships with technical centers and driving schools for CMV training and testing, unless your municipality provides an entry level driver training program in house.

Action Tips

- Host informational sessions on licensing and career paths.
- Maintain strong relationships with educational institutions for ongoing recruitment.

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