Workload Study Steps Article

In this article we describe the steps your organization can take for completing a workload study. A workload study is an exercise to assist directors and managers with determining how many staff and resources are required to adhere to specified performance standards. The workload study can also provide quantitative justification for adding, reducing, or redirecting budgeted positions and resources within your organization. Workload studies are a integral part of the California State Budget Change proposal process, but many local government agencies utilize them as well.

1. Program Overview

First, focus on gaining an understanding of the programs and work requirements designated as a part of the study. You should first conduct interviews with managers and/or supervisors of the designated programs to develop a programmatic overview, identify key roles of staff, primary work functions, and subject matter experts (SME) within the line staff, and ask for available program procedure/process documentation, duty statements, etc. Additional interviews should be conducted with the designated SMEs to characterize the nature of the program work, outlining major steps and players in the processes, and discussing available methods to quantify the workload.

2. Task and Metric List Development

Initial task lists that capture the entirety of the work performed in the department or studied positions should then be created based on the information gathered during the program overview stage. Meetings with SMEs should be conducted to refine and standardize the task lists to ensure tasks are clear, mutually exclusive, and comprehensive of the studied department or positions. Historical workload volume statistics (e.g. number of licenses processed, number of exams administered, number of enforcement actions taken) linked to the finalized tasks should be defined and requested for three years to identify workload trends.

3. Definition of Backlog and Trends

Backlogged and undone work should be quantified through discussion with program supervisors, a review of historical work metrics, documentation of required overtime and/or missed deadlines, and the use of temporary or external staffing to meet the mandated work requirements. The undone work should be validated through review of department records or reports, workload statistics, documented time records, or second level supervisory review. Additionally, historical work metrics should be reviewed to identify any consistently increasing or decreasing trends in the required workload along with interviews with program supervisors for any pending regulatory or procedural changes that will impact the workload. This information will be incorporated into the total time required and corresponding staffing requirements.

4. Work Allocation Time Study

The standardized task list should then be incorporated into work allocation time study spreadsheets. The time study should then be distributed to all participating supervisors to provide the percentage of time each of their staff spends on each task over the course of a year. The completed spreadsheet should then be reviewed and validated by a second level manager for accuracy prior to finalization.

5. Data Validation and Analysis of Results

Information from the prior steps should then be combined to provide quantitative justification for staffing levels. Specifically, 1) an analysis of the work allocation survey to inform staff time required per key workload volume statistic for each work unit, 2) an assessment of backlogged and delayed work, 3) a projection of workload trends to inform future staffing levels.

The steps outlined above are designed to produce the necessary staffing data that key stakeholders in California State Government (and often other government entities) are interested in. Successfully completing the steps above can help build the business case for adding additional staff.