

Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association
Apprenticeship Program
Landscape Management Technician

Human Resources and Crew Management

Employee Handbooks (Taken from the Small Business Administration)

An employee handbook is an important communication tool between you and your employees. A well-written handbook sets forth your expectations for your employees, and describes what they can expect from your company. It also should describe your legal obligations as an employer, and your employees' rights. This guide will help you write an employee handbook, which typically includes the topics below.

Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and Conflict of Interest Statements

Although NDAs are not legally required, having employees sign NDAs and conflict of interest statements helps to protect your trade secrets and company proprietary information.

Anti-Discrimination Policies

As a business owner, you must comply with the equal employment opportunity laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employee handbooks should include a section about these laws, and how your employees are expected to comply. Visit the Employment Discrimination and Harassment page for more information

Compensation

Clearly explain to your employees that your company will make required deductions for federal and state taxes, as well as voluntary deductions for the company's benefits programs. In addition, you should outline your legal obligations regarding overtime pay, pay schedules, performance reviews, salary increases, time keeping records, breaks and bonuses. Visit the following pages for more information.

- Wage & Hour Laws
- Employment Taxes
- Workers' Compensation

Work Schedules

Describe your company's policies regarding work hours and schedules, attendance, punctuality and reporting absences, along with guidelines for flexible schedules and telecommuting.

Standards of Conduct

Document your expectations of how you want your employees to conduct themselves including dress code and ethics. In addition, remind your employees of their legal obligations, especially if your business is engaged in an activity that is regulated by the government.

General Employment Information

Your employee handbook should include an overview of your business and general employment policies covering employment eligibility, job classifications, employee referrals, employee records, job postings, probationary periods, termination and resignation procedures, transfers and relocation, and union information, if applicable.

Safety and Security

Describe your company's policy for creating a safe and secure workplace, including compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's laws that require employees to report all accidents, injuries, potential safety hazards, safety suggestions and health and safety related issues to management.

Safety policies should also include your company's policy regarding bad weather and hazardous community conditions.

Add your commitment to creating a secure work environment, and your employee's responsibility for abiding by all physical and information security policies, such as locking file cabinets or computers when not in use.

The Workplace Safety & Health guide provides information on your legal requirements as an employer.

Computers and Technology

Outline policies for appropriate computer and software use, and steps employees should take to secure electronic information, especially any personal identifiable information you collect from your customers.

Visit the Information Security page related to privacy for more information on your legal requirements as a business owner.

Media Relations

It's a good business practice to have a single point of contact for all media inquiries. Your employee handbook should include a section that explains how your employees should handle calls from reporters or other media inquiries.

Employee Benefits

Make sure to detail any benefit programs and eligibility requirements, including all benefits that may be required by law.

This section should also outline your plans for optional benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans and wellness programs.

Leave Policies

Your company's leave policies should be carefully documented, especially those you are required to provide by law. Family medical leave, jury duty, military leave, and time off for court cases and voting should all be documented to comply with state and local laws. In addition, you should explain your policies for vacation, holiday, bereavement and sick leave.

Required Employee Benefits (Taken from the Small Business Administration)

Employee benefits play an important role in the lives of employees as well as their families. For that reason, the benefits you offer can be a deciding factor for a potential employee's decision to work at your business.

There are two types of employee benefits must provide by law those the employer must provide by law and those the employer offers as an option to compensate employees. Examples of required benefits include Social Security and workers' compensation, while optional benefits include health care insurance coverage and retirement benefits. Both required and optional benefits have legal and tax implications for the employer.

This guide helps employers understand what they need to do to supply employee benefits required by law.

Social Security Taxes

Every employer must pay Social Security taxes at the same rate paid by their employees.

The following sites from the Social Security Administration can help you comply:

- Information and Resources for Employers
- Social Security: Business Services Online
- Employer W-2 Filling Instructions and Information
- Instructions for Hiring Employees Not Covered by Social Security

Unemployment Insurance

Businesses with employees may be required to pay unemployment insurance taxes. If your business is required to pay these taxes, you must register with your state's workforce agency, which can be found on our State and Local Tax page

Workers Compensation

Businesses with employees are required to carry Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage through a commercial carrier, on a self-insured basis, or through the state Workers' Compensation Insurance program. Visit the Workers' Compensation page for more information.

Disability Insurance

The following states and territories require businesses to provide partial wage replacement insurance coverage to their eligible employees for non-work related sickness or injury:

- California
- Hawaii
- New Jersey
- New York
- Puerto Rico
- Rhode Island

Leave Benefits

The majority of common leave benefits offered by employers are not required by federal law, and are offered to employees as part of the employer's overall compensation and benefits plan. These leave benefits include holiday/vacation, jury duty, personal leave, sick leave and funeral/bereavement leave. However, employers are required to provide leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Family and Medical Leave

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles employees up to have 12 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave during any 12-month period for any of the following reasons:

1. Birth and care of the eligible employee's child, or placement for adoption or foster care of a child with the employee
2. Care of an immediate family member (spouse, child, parent) who has a serious health condition
3. Care of the employee's own serious health condition

FMLA requires group health benefits to be maintained during the leave as if employees continued to work instead of taking leave. FMLA applies to private employers with 50 or more

employees, and to all public employers. Visit the Department of Labor's website for more information.

Optional Employee Benefits (Taken from the Small Business Administration)

In addition to required employee benefits, businesses can provide optional benefits and incentives that can improve the lives of their employees and families.

This guide will help explain legal and tax implications of these benefits and highlight some common employee incentive programs.

Health Plans

Group health plans

Businesses that offer group health plans must comply with a federal law. Visit DOL's Health Benefits Advisor interactive Website for a step-by-step guide on how to determine which laws apply to your business.

DOL also provides guides to understanding your fiduciary responsibilities under a group health plan and reporting and disclosing employee benefit plans. For more information, visit DOL's website.

Affordable Health Care Act

The Affordable Care Act aims to lower health care costs for small business owners and expand coverage options for employees. To learn about the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit and find more resources about the law, visit the Health Care and Health Care Reform page.

COBRA Benefits

Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) provides certain former employees, retirees, spouses, former spouses, and dependent children the right to temporarily continue health coverage at group rates. Businesses are required to provide COBRA benefits when employees are terminated or laid off. The following Department of Labor (DOL) resources describe an employer's requirements under COBRA:

- [An Employer's Guide to Group Health Continuation Coverage Under COBRA](#)
- [COBRA Continuation Health Coverage Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Retirement Plans and Pensions

The federal government has a wide range of resources to help small business owners select a plan retirement or pension plan for their employees including the following:

- Small Business Retirement Savings Advisor
- Choosing a Retirement Solution for Your Small Business
- Tips for Selecting and Monitoring Service Providers for Your Employee Benefit Plan
- Small Business Guide to Federal Pension Insurance

Visit the following resources to learn more about specific retirement or pension plans for your small business:

- Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) Retirement Plans for Small Business
- SIMPLE IRA Plans for Small Businesses
- Payroll Deduction IRAs for Small Businesses
- 401(k) Plans For Small Businesses

Employee Incentive Programs

A small investment in providing incentive programs for your employees can pay large dividends. These programs can help boost morale through engagement and reward, stimulate productivity and encourage group participation in your business success. The following are just a few of many incentive programs your small business can offer employees:

- **Flex time:** One of the biggest reasons work-at-home business owners enjoy what they do is not necessarily that they are their own boss, but that they can work the hours that work for them. Likewise, offering the opportunity for flexible hours can be a great incentive for attracting and retaining high performing and motivated employees.
- **Family events:** Your business success depends not only on your employees, but also the support of their families. Plan company functions and events that are oriented towards employees and their families such as picnics, movie nights, take your child to work days - the choice is yours and doesn't need to break the bank.
- **Project completion perks:** Incentivizing employees for goal-oriented project completion is a great way to build a team but also to engage and stimulate your employees to support your business objectives. This can involve recognizing individual achievement or team success. Consider catered lunches, on-site massage therapy, and other perks to keep employees motivated as they work towards a team goal.
- **Workplace wellness programs:** What better way to show your investment in your employees than to help them invest in their wellness? And it doesn't have to involve a

great deal of money or administrative work. Survey your employees' wellness priorities - whether it's losing weight, quitting smoking, or enhancing the workplace team environment. From there, compile a calendar or schedule of activities. Wellness initiatives can also be tied to incentives and perks. Incentivize employees to quit smoking by offering a prize or bonus to those who quit or look for ways to encourage other healthy lifestyle choices such as introducing a 30-minute lunchtime team walk.

- **Corporate memberships:** Discounted or free corporate memberships can help promote employee wellbeing (e.g. gym memberships) while also enabling and promoting company goals. Recreational or entertainment memberships can act as venues for client entertainment and can be tax deducted.