

# OTSEGO NOW



Employee Handbook  
Effective January 2016

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Welcome

Welcome to Otsego Now!

Starting a new job is exciting, but at times can be overwhelming. This Employee Handbook has been developed to help you become acquainted with our Agency and answer many of your initial questions.

As an employee of Otsego Now, you are a very important part of our Agency. Your contribution cannot be overstated. Our goal is to provide the finest-quality professional services to a wide variety of constituents. Your work directly influences our Agency's reputation.

We hope that you will find working for Otsego Now a rewarding and enjoyable experience. We strive to have an "open door" policy and encourage all employees to feel free to present questions about the policies in this employee handbook, or any other concerns your manager, the COO or to me, the CEO.

Sincerely,

Alexander "Sandy" Mathes, Jr  
CEO

## **1.2 About the Employee Handbook**

This handbook has been prepared to introduce employees to Otsego Now. It will acquaint employees with the policies and procedures that apply to all employees of the Otsego Now, hereafter referred to as the "IDA" or "Agency".

It is presented as a matter of information only, and its contents should not be interpreted as a contract between the IDA and any of its employees. This handbook and any supplemental attachments provided, if applicable, provide answers to most of the questions about the IDA's policies, procedures, and benefit programs. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the COO or CEO. Employees are responsible for reading and understanding this employee handbook.

Neither this handbook, nor its provisions, constitutes a contract or a contractual commitment of continued employment. None of the provisions of this handbook, including the disciplinary policy, constitute a promise of how the IDA must treat employees prior to termination.

Please read this handbook carefully, keep it handy for future reference, and become familiar with its contents. This handbook is only a summary of the Agency's policies, so please review it with the COO or CEO if there are any questions.

Otsego Now reserves the right to amend, revise, and remove all policies in the employee handbook. This employee handbook supersedes all previous management memos that may have been issued on subjects covered herein. The control copy is maintained by the COO.

## **1.3 "At Will" Employment**

Employment with the IDA is "at will," which means that employment can be terminated at any time by the employee or by the Agency for any reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice. There is no contract of employment, either expressed or implied, other than "at will." No circumstances arising out of employment will alter the "at will" employment relationship, unless expressed in writing and signed by an officer of the Agency.

## **1.4 Otsego Now History**

The IDA had for years shared space and staff at the Otsego County offices until 2014 when the Agency obtained its own space and equipment, hired its own staff and created its own website. The IDA works with existing businesses in the county providing tax incentives, investment, counsel and support and seeks to attract new companies to the region. The Center for Workforce Development partners with local and regional employers to help with workforce skills and training needs. As a public benefit corporation, Otsego Now drives economic growth through innovative, strategic initiatives and partnerships.

The IDA's mission is to prepare shovel-ready sites for new businesses and industries and bring jobs and wealth creation to the region through transformational projects. Otsego Now works daily to build a skilled and sustainable workforce and education pipeline; cultivate a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem; and ensure a modern infrastructure to grow local companies, attract new investment and prepare the communities for growth.

In building and strengthening the local communities, Otsego Now is working towards making Otsego County more relevant and attractive to outside entities seeking vibrant locations and a predictable process to move and start companies and bring jobs to the region.

## 1.5 Partners

The sum of the parts is always greater than the whole. This simple axiom speaks volumes about the way an organization pursues its goals.

To build a sustainable regional economy and dynamic quality of life, diversity of opinion and approach is not only encouraged but is absolutely necessary. The IDA has created a powerful alliance of leading companies, academic institutions, community organizations, and government officials, uniting them in vision and commitment to action and results.

## 1.6 Definitions

For the purpose of this employee handbook, the following terms are defined as:

Management - An individual who has been designated by the IDA to assign, direct, and inspect the work of a designated group of employees. Management makes the recommendation to hire, promote and terminate employees. They are available for questions or concerns regarding employment at Otsego Now.

Employee - An individual who is employed by the Agency as a full-time, part-time, or temporary employee. An independent contractor or an individual who works for a temporary employment organization is not considered an employee.

Anniversary Date - The date of an employee's first day of employment with the Agency.



## **2. FAIR TREATMENT POLICIES**

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### **2.1 Equal Opportunity Employer**

The Agency's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy is designed to apply recruiting, hiring, promotion, compensation, and professional development practices without regard to race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital or familial status, domestic violence victim status, sexual orientation, genetic predisposition or carrier status, veteran status or any other protected characteristic as established by federal and state law.

This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment including, but not limited to: recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, benefits, training, and social and recreational programs.

Each employee is responsible for helping the IDA maintain a climate that provides equal opportunity for all.

### **2.2 Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policies**

Otsego Now strives to maintain a workplace environment free from harassment and discrimination, and to communicate steps available for employees to utilize when they believe they have been subjected to inappropriate treatment under the Agency's policy.

All full-time, part-time temporary employees and contracted individuals are covered under this policy. Every person in the Agency must be treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. The unfair treatment of employees, customers, vendors, and third parties with whom the Agency has business dealings, will not be tolerated. Otsego Now specifically prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital or familial status, domestic violence victim status, sexual orientation, genetic predisposition or carrier status, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established by Federal and State law.

Harassment and discrimination may take many forms. Treating another employee who is a member of a protected category identified above in the Agency's Equal Employment Opportunity Statement in a disparate or unequal manner is discrimination. Harassment is a form of discrimination and includes subjecting anyone to unwanted advances, intimidation, or other inappropriate visual, verbal, or physical contact based upon an individual's protected status when submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the individual or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

**Examples of prohibited contact include:**

- Offering or implying an employment-related reward (such as a promotion or raise) in exchange for sexual favors or submission to sexual or other harassing conduct.
- Threatening or taking a negative employment action (such as termination, demotion, denial of a leave of absence) when sexual or other harassing conduct is rejected.
- Making or using derogatory comments, epithets, jokes or comments about an employee's body or dress.

- Intentionally touching of another person or other unwanted intentional physical contact (including patting, pinching, brushing against another person's body, assault or blocking a person's movement)
- Whistling, staring or leering at another person.
- Asking unwelcome questions or making unwelcome comments about another person's sexual activities, dating, personal or intimate relationships, or appearance.
- Giving sexually suggestive or flirtatious gifts.
- Sending sexually suggestive or derogatory letters, notes, emails, texts, other electronic messages or voice mail.
- Displaying or circulating pictures, objects, or written materials (including graffiti, cartoons, photographs, pinups, calendars, magazines, figurines, novelty items) that are sexually suggestive or that are directed towards a person because of the person's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or other protected basis.

Workplace harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships. It refers to behavior which is not welcome and is personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive. It is unlawful for males to sexually harass females or other males and for females to sexually harass males or other females. Workplace harassment is unlawful whether it involves coworker harassment, harassment by a manager, a board member, a member, partner or harassment by persons doing business with or for Otsego Now. Also prohibited is harassing or discriminatory treatment of employees because of their association with members of a protected category.

In following a policy of fair treatment for all, the Agency will take disciplinary action up to and including termination against any person harassing, discriminating or otherwise acting inappropriately during or in relation to employment.

An employee who believes that they have been subjected to workplace harassment or discrimination by anyone is encouraged - but not required - to promptly tell the person that the conduct is unwelcome and ask the person to stop the conduct. A person who receives such a request must immediately comply with it and must not retaliate against the employee for rejecting the conduct.

## **2.3 Violence in the Workplace**

Otsego Now considers the safety of its employees, vendors, suppliers, customers, guests, visitors, and the general public to be of paramount importance. The Agency considers any act or threat of violence to include: intimidation, harassment, and/or coercion violence as legitimate, and takes immediate appropriate action, including the involvement of law enforcement and prosecution to the fullest extent of the law. Any employee who hears about or who becomes aware of any act or threat of violence should immediately inform his or her manager. The IDA has zero tolerance for any employee who threatens, intimidates, or infers violence against any person or property employed with the Agency.

**Firearms and Weapons** - Employees are prohibited from possessing firearms or weapons of any kind while on the Agency's premises; in Agency or personal vehicles while conducting business for the IDA; or at any other location during working hours or while representing Otsego Now.

## 2.4 Complaint Procedure/Non-Retaliation Statement

The complaint procedure at the IDA provides different persons to whom an employee may report harassment or discrimination. Employees who believe they have experienced or witnessed a job-related harassment or discrimination should contact the COO or CEO immediately.

All employees must inform the COO or CEO immediately if approached by an employee alleging harassment or discrimination.

The IDA will conduct an immediate, thorough, and, to the extent possible, confidential investigation upon receipt of a report of harassment or discrimination. The Agency will take appropriate steps to protect the identity of the complainant, witnesses, and the alleged harasser from unnecessary disclosure.

Complaint Procedure – The IDA will follow all procedures of fair treatment when the Agency investigates.

**Step 1:** Report the incident first to the COO or CEO.

**Step 2:** A comprehensive and confidential-as-possible investigation will begin.

**Step 3:** The investigator will interview the employee, the accused harasser, and witnesses (if appropriate), and review any documents or other supporting evidence.

**Step 4:** If the IDA determines that prohibited harassment, discrimination or other inappropriate conduct or violation of policy has occurred, the Agency will take effective remedial action commensurate with the circumstances. An employee who is found, after an appropriate investigation, to have engaged in harassment or discrimination or other inappropriate behavior will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Step 5:** The individual making the complaint will receive an appropriate response when the investigation has ended. Any employee who is not satisfied with the Agency's response to their original complaint is required to report their dissatisfaction in writing to the COO as soon as possible after being notified of the final decision.

The Agency follows all procedures of fair treatment when investigating a complaint. All complaints will be promptly and discreetly investigated by a member of Management who is not involved in the alleged incident. The result of the complaint investigation is designed to stop the inappropriate conduct and prevent any future occurrences.

Non-Retaliation - Employees can raise concerns or make reports without fear of retaliation. The IDA is committed to ensuring that no employee who opposes a discriminatory practice, who makes a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or participates in an investigation pursuant to the Agency's complaint procedure, or hearing conducted by a governmental enforcement agency be subject to retaliation. The Agency prohibits retaliation of any kind, in or out of the work environment and will not tolerate it.

Retaliation includes any conduct, whether or not workplace or employment-related, directed at someone because he or she opposed a discriminatory practice, made a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or participated in such an investigation. All parties involved in an investigation will be reminded of the Agency's prohibition on retaliation this during the investigation. Prohibiting retaliation will ensure that reasonable employees will not deter from making or supporting a charge of discrimination or harassment.

Otsego Now wants individuals who make complaints and serve as witnesses, to inform Management if they have received treatment they believe is retaliatory. Allegations of retaliation will be promptly investigated by the Agency. Individuals, who have committed acts of retaliation, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Otsego Now trusts that all employees will act in a professional and responsible way toward other employees to maintain a pleasant working environment free of discrimination and harassment.

### **3. CODE OF ETHICS**

#### **3.1 Otsego Now Standards of Conduct**

The Agency recognizes its unique role as a leader in the community, and its responsibility to its members, partners, and as a public benefit corporation to set high standards for performance, honesty, professionalism, volunteer and charitable activities, and ethical conduct. Otsego Now adheres to the Code of Ethics, Part 16 S, Section A-1 of the General Municipal Law. This can be found in the Agency policy manual. All employees, contracted individuals, board members, interns and volunteers are expected to follow all provisions of the Code of Ethics at all times and in all transactions.

#### **3.2 Conflict of Interest Policy**

It is the policy of the Otsego Now that all employees, contracted individuals, board members, interns and volunteers exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions touching upon their duties to the Agency, its resources, and purpose. In their dealings with and on behalf of the Agency, their judgments and determinations shall be guided by a rule of honest and fair dealing between themselves and the IDA. The Agency's Conflict of Interest Policy adheres to Part 10, Sections 1001 – 1006 of the General Municipal Law. This can be found in the Agency policy manual. All employees, contracted individuals, board members, interns and volunteers are expected to follow all provisions of the Conflict of Interest Policy at all times.

#### **3.3 Whistleblower Policy**

Every member of the board of Otsego Now, all officers, and employees thereof, in the performance of their duties shall conduct themselves with honesty and integrity and observe the highest standards of business and personal ethics as set forth in the Code of Ethics. The Agency's Whistleblower Policy adheres to Section A-3 of the General Municipal Law. Any dishonest and /or unethical acts may be reported without fear of retaliation. This can be found in the Agency policy manual. All employees, contracted individuals, board members, interns and volunteers are expected to follow all provisions of the Whistleblower Policy at all times.

#### **3.4 Community Relations & Telephone Etiquette**

Proper use of our telephones can save time and create a favorable impression for the Agency. Please observe these principles when using the telephone:

- Answer the telephone promptly and with a "smile in your voice".
- Identify Otsego Now.
- Transfer calls correctly.
- Give accurate and careful information, and answer all questions to the best of your ability.
- Hang up carefully.

All inquiries from any news media are to be referred to the CEO/COO. Unless designated by the CEO, no employee other than the CEO/COO is authorized to make any statements to the media on behalf of the Agency.

### **3.5 Responsibilities to Volunteers**

The volunteers who serve Otsego Now through its Board of Directors, or otherwise, are crucial to the success of the Agency. In order to assist volunteers to serve effectively and to obtain satisfaction from their service, Otsego management and staff will:

- Support volunteers so they can perform to their highest level of ability, while receiving adequate personal satisfaction.
- Treat all volunteers with fairness, equity, and respect, providing appropriate mechanisms for their views and interests to be expressed.
- Involve volunteers at appropriate levels and phases of the decision-making process.
- Assist in the development and the understanding of the roles of volunteers and employees, respectively. Set clear standards of performance for volunteers and appropriately recognize their contributions.

### **3.6 Personal Gain**

Employees shall not solicit or accept any gratuities, gifts, or favors, other than promotional gifts of nominal value, for themselves or their families. Employees shall not use Agency resources for personal gain, or to facilitate outside employment.

### **3.7 Accepting Gifts**

Accepting or giving a gift in a business setting can create a sense of obligation or the appearance of obligation. A gift can be anything of value, including such items as a ticket to a sporting event or play, a non-business meal, a bottle of wine, a free service, a special discount, or an all-expense paid trip to a conference, trade conference, or trade show.

The Agency forbids employees, as well as members of their immediate families, from accepting gifts from contractors, vendors, consultants, or similar business contacts doing business with or seeking to do business with Otsego Now, unless all six of the following conditions are met.

The value of the item must be less than \$75, and the value of all gifts from one business contact during a 12 month period must not exceed \$250. A gift that exceeds either value must be approved by the COO.

1. The item is customary and does not create any appearance of impropriety.
2. The item imposes no sense of obligation on the receiver.
3. The item results in no special or favored treatment.
4. The item could not be considered extravagant, excessive, or too frequent considering all of the circumstances, including the employee's ability to reciprocate at the Agency's expense.
5. The item is not concealed in any way.

If circumstances make it appropriate to accept a gift that exceeds either value threshold, the Agency will retain the following documentation:

1. The identities of the giver and recipient of the gift.
2. The date the COO approved the gift.
3. A brief description of the gift.
4. The business reason for the gift.
5. An estimated value of the gift.

A gift is no longer considered a gift if within 30 days the recipient either (1) returns the gift to the giver or (2) reimburses the value of the gift to the giver from personal funds.

In addition to the restrictions on gifts, employees and members of their families must never accept a loan or payment from a contractor, vendor, consultant, or similar business contact under terms that aren't available to the general public.

### **3.8 Vendor Relations**

Vendors are treated fairly to avoid favoritism or appearances of impropriety. All vendors are given the opportunity to offer or qualify their products or services on a competitive basis. Competitive bidding is conducted in a fair and professional manner, giving no special preferences or advantages to any vendor. All products and services are purchased under the purchasing policy, which adheres to this Code of Ethics.

## **4. GENERAL POLICIES**

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### **4.1 Confidentiality**

As an employee of Otsego Now, employees are under an obligation not to reveal any confidential information that may be learned about the IDA research or corporate affairs, or the affairs of the members or partners during the course of your employment. Carelessness about this important obligation may subject the employee and Otsego Now to legal recourse. Confidential information may consist of research results, corporate information, financial or legal documents, the business plan, etc. All such information must be kept absolutely private and confidential. A breach of this confidentiality policy constitutes grounds for corrective action, including but not limited to, immediate termination and possible legal recourse.

### **4.2 Protecting Proprietary Information**

Proprietary information, including professional and technical knowledge, know-how, and the experience developed in the course of the business activities of the Organization, is an asset that must be protected. Much of the information developed in research, service, marketing, sales, and finance is original in nature and essential to our continued success. All employees have an obligation to protect this information and not disclose it to outsiders.

Intellectual property and proprietary information are valued assets. Patents, trademarks, trade names, copyrights, trade secrets, and other technical and business information including data, designs, and processes, comprise intellectual property. Protecting the Agency's information is the responsibility of every employee and everyone shares a common interest in making sure it is not improperly or accidentally disclosed.

Do not discuss the Agency's confidential business with anyone who does not work for the IDA. In addition, only authorized employees are permitted to access Agency files, lists and records. Any violation of this policy may result in immediate termination.

### **4.3 Community and Public Relations**

The Agency's reputation has been built on excellent service and quality work. Maintaining this reputation requires the active participation of every employee.

The opinions and attitudes that members have toward the Agency may be determined for a long period of time by the actions of one employee. It is sometimes easy to take a member or community partner for granted. If done, the IDA runs the risk of losing not only that partner, but also his or her employees, friends, or family who may also be community partners or prospective community partners.

Each employee must be sensitive to the importance of providing courteous treatment in all working relationships.

### **4.4 Work Product Ownership**

All Agency employees must be aware that the IDA retains legal ownership of the product of their work. No work product created while employed by Otsego Now can be claimed, construed, or presented as property of the individual, even after employment by the IDA has been terminated or the relevant project is completed.



This includes written and electronic documents and files, lists, email, audio and video recordings, system code, and any concepts, ideas, or other intellectual property developed for the IDA, regardless of whether the intellectual property is actually used by the Agency.

Although it is acceptable for an employee to display and/or discuss a portion or the whole of a certain work product, one must bear in mind that information classified as confidential must remain so even after the end of employment. Supplying other entities with certain types of information may constitute a conflict of interest. In any event, it must always be made clear that work product is the sole and exclusive property of Otsego Now. Independent contractors and temporary employees must be particularly careful in the course of any work they discuss doing, or actually do, for a competitor of the Agency.

An employee must promptly disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest, in writing, to his or her manager. Approval will not be given unless the relationship will not interfere with the employee's duties or will not damage the Agency's relationship.

## **4.5 Employment of Relatives**

Otsego Now has no general prohibition against hiring relatives. However, a few restrictions have been established to help prevent problems of safety, security, supervision, and morale.

While the Agency will accept and consider applications for employment from relatives, close family members (such as parents, grandparents, children, spouses, brothers and sisters, or in-laws) generally will not be hired or transferred into positions where they directly or indirectly supervise or are supervised by another close family member. Further, such relatives generally will not be placed in positions where they work with or have access to sensitive information regarding a close family member, or if there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

## 5. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

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### 5.1 Hiring Procedures

Selection Process – Otsego Now selects and hires individuals on the basis of many factors including, but not limited to, their ability, education, professional experience, skills, and cooperative spirit. The selection process includes a written application, personal interviews, and reference checking. Information regarding protected status obtained through social media, or any other source, is not considered in our hiring decisions.

Employment Application – All applicants must complete an employment application and provide the Agency with complete and accurate information regarding their qualifications. Misrepresentations or omissions on an application form may remove applicants from consideration for employment. If misrepresentations or omissions are discovered after hiring, the Agency may exercise disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Criminal Convictions - Applicants must inform the Agency of criminal convictions as a pre-condition of employment. Unfair discriminatory practices against applicants or employees previously convicted of one or more criminal offenses are prohibited. Otsego Now cannot deny employment or act adversely in relation to employment regarding such individuals, unless: a.) There is a direct relationship between a criminal offense and the position to be held by the applicant or currently held by the employee; or b.) Granting employment or other employment-related opportunity would involve unreasonable risk to the Agency property or the safety or well-being of employees or the general public.

Employment Background Check - An applicant's employment references may be verified after making an offer of employment. Employees may be asked to sign an authorization form to release background information as a part of the hiring process.

Eligibility to Work in the United States - An employee must complete a Department of Homeland Security's I-9 Form on the first day of work. If an individual cannot verify his/her right to work within three days of hire, Otsego Now must terminate his/her employment.

Driver's License/Insurance - Employees expected to drive on behalf of the IDA, must provide the Agency with current and acceptable motor vehicle driving information. Employment and job assignment will be conditional pending the receipt of a satisfactory report from the State Department of Transportation or Division of Motor Vehicles, and other state and federal databases.

All employees who work in a position that requires driving will maintain a current New York State Driver's license, which is free from any traffic violations throughout the duration of their employment. Employees who are in a position that requires driving will utilize their own personal vehicle.

If an employee receives a ticket for a moving violation, the employee is required to notify his/her manager within three business days of the ticketing offense. Driving privileges for the Agency may be revoked until further notice, and may also impact continued employment.

Employment of Minors - All minors (anyone less than 18 years of age) must provide an official working permit. The minimum age for an employee is age 16, when and if the IDA hires minors.

Rate of Pay Acknowledgement - All new hires will receive in writing: their rate of pay and regular pay day. For non-exempt, overtime-eligible employees, the notice will include the regular hourly rate as well as the overtime rate. New hires must sign an acknowledgment of the required notice.

## 5.2 Introductory Period

All new employees are in an introductory period for the first 60 days of employment. This introductory period gives an employee the opportunity to become familiar with the specific duties and responsibilities of the new position. During this period, the employee's manager will review information about performance requirements, Agency policies, and other necessary information. The purpose of the introductory period is to give new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether or not the new position meets their expectations. The Agency uses this period to evaluate the employee's job performance, work habits, attendance, cooperation, and potential development in the position. At the end of introductory period, a written evaluation may be completed by the employee's manager.

If the employee is retained after this period, the length of service will be calculated from the first day of work, during and after introductory period.

## 5.3 Employee Definitions

Regular, Full-Time Employees are those employees who work at least 35 hours per week in a position planned to last longer than six months and maintain continuous employment status.

Regular, Part-Time Employees work less than 35 hours per week in a position planned to last longer than six months on a schedule approved by their manager.

Per Diem, Temporary or Seasonal Employees may work full-time or part-time and are hired for a particular project or a finite period of time.

"Non-Exempt" Employees - At the time you are hired, the position for which an employee was hired is classified as either "exempt" or "non-exempt". Federal and State law mandates that employees with certain wages and duties are entitled to overtime pay for time worked in excess of forty (40) hours per work week. These employees are referred to as "non-exempt" and receive overtime pay at a rate of 1.5 times their regular rate of pay.

"Exempt" Employees - are employees who are exempt from the Federal and State law's minimum wage and overtime requirements. Only bona fide executive, administrative, professional and outside sales employees who meet certain requirements are classified as "exempt" status. If you are an "exempt" employee, you will be advised that you are in this classification at the time you are hired, transferred or promoted.

Otsego Now strives to fully comply with FLSA regulations. Any questions regarding your job classification, time worked, overtime calculations or employee definition may be directed to the COO without fear of retaliation.

## 5.4 Hours of Operation

Otsego Now is a service organization dedicated to providing quality support to current partners and future businesses. Therefore, it is important that our employees maintain consistent, accessible business hours. Generally all employees will work a standard schedule. From time to time employees may need to change their schedule to meet business needs. Notice will be given as far in advance as possible.

General business hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Management must approve all work hour exceptions to this. Employees may be requested to work additional hours including evenings and weekends if the business requires it.

Employees are expected to report to work on time at 9:00 am, or a time pre-approved by the immediate manager, and work for the entire day. The start time also refers to arriving at an off-site location. If an employee is going to report late to work they should call or email their manager before his/her starting time. Permission must be obtained from the immediate manager or another member of Management to leave the office prior to standard close of business. This would also include working through lunch and leaving early.

Excessive tardiness or early departure from the office, with or without permission, is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Requests for alternative work schedules are subject to the review and approval of the immediate manager and/or the COO.

## **5.5 Staff Meetings**

Staff meetings are held as necessary. Employees are expected to arrange their schedules to attend and be active participants at meetings.

## **5.6 Personnel Records**

All hiring records, employee data, payroll information, and employment history are kept in the central file maintained by the COO. Employee files are the property of the Agency and access to the information contained therein is restricted.

In order to protect the privacy of the Agency's employees, information in an employee's personnel file is considered confidential. Access to such information is limited to the employee's immediate manager and COO.

A current employee may review his or her file while accompanied by the COO and upon request with reasonable notice. Misuse or improper appropriation of information of any employee's personnel file will subject the individual to dismissal and/or other appropriate legal remedies.

Employees are asked to help keep the Agency informed about any major change that may affect their employment status. Failure to inform the IDA of these changes may cause delays in payments or loss of benefits.

Important changes to report include:

- Change in credentialed or licensing status
- Name, address, and all telephone numbers
- Marital status
- Change of beneficiary
- Number of dependents
- Authorized payroll deductions
- Emergency contact and telephone numbers
- Additional education and special training courses completed

## **5.7 Attitude**

Attitude, more than anything else, will affect the results an employee achieves. In order for employees to have a positive attitude towards others, they must first have a positive attitude towards themselves. The fact that an employee was selected for his or her job indicates the potential to do well. Employee's qualifications are generally evident when they are interviewed.

Employees should always regard their work with a sense of accomplishment. An employee who views his or her work as second rate will lose in the long run. In order to sustain a positive attitude, employees must keep the requirements of their job foremost in their minds. It is important that an employee not "unload" personal problems on other employees or members.

Employees must develop a positive attitude toward each other. Every employee contributes in some way to the satisfaction of the clients served. Employees need to practice cooperation and teamwork because if they are uncooperative to each other the coordination of efforts suffers. An employee's work will go more smoothly when the support of co-workers can be depended on.

## **5.8 Teamwork**

Teamwork cannot be over-emphasized. Every job has a clearly defined job description, but an employee's responsibilities are never limited to these parameters. It is the expectation that all employees will modify their usual responsibilities whenever necessary and appropriate. This type of teamwork provides a more efficient work environment, a tightly bonded staff and, ultimately, better client satisfaction.

Otsego Now's leadership team has worked diligently to develop the best set of policies and procedures used to manage the programs. It is expected that all employees follow policies and procedures with precision. It is by taking seriously the existing policies and regulations that Management discovers their effectiveness or flaws and continue to evolve the business. The IDA encourages professional feedback. Employees are one of the Agency's most important resources.

## **5.9 Performance Reviews**

Employee performance is important to the Agency. The employee's manager will review the job progress within the Agency on a regular basis; within one month of the employee's anniversary date and help to set new job performance goals.

Salary increases are generally merit-based with recommendations to the Board. The Board must approve all wage changes.

New employees will generally be reviewed at the end of their 60-day introductory period.

## **5.10 Promotions, Transfers, and Demotions**

Otsego Now strives to provide the maximum advancement potential for current employees and to make employment attractive to qualified individuals. Promotions are granted without regard to race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital or familial status, domestic violence victim status, sexual orientation, genetic predisposition or carrier status, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established by federal and state law.

The Board of Directors must approve or deny all promotions, transfers, and demotions.

### **5.11 A Word about Employee Relations**

Otsego Now is committed to providing the best possible climate for maximum development and goal achievement for all employees. The practice is to treat each employee as an individual. The Agency seeks to develop a spirit of teamwork; individuals working together to attain a common goal.

In order to maintain an atmosphere where these goals can be accomplished, the Agency provides a comfortable and progressive workplace. Most importantly, there is a workplace where communication is open and problems can be discussed and resolved in a mutually respectful atmosphere. Otsego Now takes into account individual circumstances and the individual employee.

Otsego Now firmly believes that with direct communication, the Agency can continue to resolve any difficulties that may arise and develop a mutually beneficial relationship.

### **5.12 Talk to Management**

The Agency encourages employees to bring questions, suggestions, and complaints forward. The Agency will carefully consider each of these in the continuing effort to improve operations.

If an employee has a problem, they should present the situation to their manager so that the problem can be settled by examination and discussion of the facts. The Agency believes that the manager is able to satisfactorily resolve most matters.

If there are still have questions after meeting with the manager, or if an employee would like further clarification on the matter, request a meeting with the COO/CEO. The COO/CEO will review the issues and meet with the employee to discuss possible solutions.

The employee's suggestions and comments on any subject are important, and the Agency encourages employees to take every opportunity to discuss them with Management. An employee's job will not be adversely affected in any way because they choose to use this procedure. While the Agency provides employees with this opportunity to communicate their views, please understand that not every idea, suggestion, or complaint can be implemented or resolved to satisfaction. Even so, Otsego Now believes that open communication is essential to a successful work environment and all employees should feel free to raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

If at any time an employee does not feel comfortable speaking with their manager or the next level of management, discuss concerns with any other member of management with whom the employee feels comfortable.

## **6. COMPENSATION**

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### **6.1 Compensation Philosophy**

Otsego Now strives to pay salaries that are competitive with those in the community and industry, recognizing individual effort and contribution to the Agency's success.

- The wage and salary plan classifies each position based on:
- Knowledge and ability requirements
- Variety and scope of responsibilities
- Physical and mental job essentials

Established wage or salary ranges are reviewed periodically and adjusted as necessary.

### **6.2 Pay Period & Pay Dates**

The payroll workweek runs from Monday of one week through Friday of the second week. All employees are paid every other Friday. In the event the pay date would fall on a holiday the date will be moved to the day prior to the regular pay date. All non-exempt employees are required to submit timesheets upon the completion of each pay period (two weeks), which is on a Friday. Exempt employees report any PTO taken to the COO.

### **6.3 Direct Deposit**

Employees find it convenient to have their regular paycheck automatically deposited in their bank account. The COO has the required form for signing up for direct deposit or changing information/accounts.

### **6.4 Payroll Deductions**

Various payroll deductions are made each payday to comply with Federal and State laws pertaining to taxes and insurance. Deductions will be made for the following:

- Federal and State Income Tax Withholding
- Social Security (FICA)
- State Disability Insurance (SDI)
- Deferred Compensation Plan (if applicable)
- Simple IRA (if applicable)
- Voluntary insurance plans (if applicable)

At the end of each calendar year, employees will be supplied with their Wage and Tax Statement (W-2) Form. This statement summarizes income and deductions for the year. Any questions regarding these deductions should be directed to the COO.

Whenever court-ordered wage assignment or garnishment deductions are to be taken from an employee's paycheck, the employee will be notified. Any other mandatory deductions to be made from the paycheck,

such as court-ordered attachments, will be explained whenever the Agency is ordered to make such deductions.

## **6.5 Error in Pay**

Please report any payroll discrepancies immediately to the COO. If an error is made, the COO will discuss ways to rectify the error with the employee.

## **6.6 Reporting Time**

By law, Otsego Now is obligated to keep accurate records of the time actually worked by “non-exempt” employees. This is done by a time record. The time record is the only way the Agency knows how many hours have been worked and how much is to be paid. The time record indicates when an employee arrived and when they departed. Employees are responsible for their time document. If an error is made on the document, the employee must make the correction and the manager must initial the correction.

Otsego Now has no expectation that non-exempt employees will perform work, including responding to e-mail, voicemail, or texts, while on any form of leave and that if a non-exempt employee performs work, the employee must obtain advance authorization and the employee must track the time.

Exempt employees are required to record and report to the COO all PTO for each pay period at the end of each pay period.

## **6.7 Telecommuting**

A telecommuter is an employee who works for Otsego Now and who has been authorized to work from home or an off-site remote office for some part of the regularly scheduled workweek. The Agency considers telecommuting to be a viable work option for certain employees that, when properly implemented and administered, benefits both Otsego Now and the telecommuter.

Telecommuting does not change the basic terms and conditions of employment. Telecommuters remain subject to the Agency’s employment policies and procedures and must secure all electronic and hard copy work.

For example, all confidentiality and non-compete policies apply to the telecommuter’s work site, Otsego Now should be notified immediately of any violation of Agency policy that occurs while telecommuting. Entering into a telecommuting arrangement does not guarantee continued employment and does not change the “at-will” nature of the employment relationship.

Scheduled Workweek: All telecommuting arrangements must be pre-authorized by the COO, in advance. A telecommuting employee must be accessible during regular work hours while working from a home office or any other remote office. Partner work and related relationships must be the primary focus for the telecommuter during a scheduled workweek.

Telecommuters who are non-exempt employees must complete a daily time record, or enter time worked by calling in to work at the beginning of the workday followed by a call in at the conclusion of the workday. All telecommuters must also take his or her required meal breaks. Non-exempt telecommuters must obtain prior approval before working any overtime. All telecommuters should make arrangements with their manager for tracking the work they perform while at home or an off-site location.



## **6.8 Overtime Pay**

On occasion, it may be necessary to perform overtime work in order to complete a job on time or attend an event. All overtime must be approved in advance by the manager. When it is necessary to work overtime, employees are expected to cooperate as a condition of employment.

Overtime is generally announced in advance and may involve the entire staff or specific operation. This type of overtime becomes part of the required workweek of the people who are involved. If an employee needs to be excused from performing scheduled overtime, they must speak with their manager. He or she will consider the situation and the requirements of the department or operation in deciding whether the employee may be excused from performing the scheduled overtime.

Non-exempt employees are paid one and one-half (1½) times their regular rate of pay for any time over forty (40) hours per week. Lunch breaks and other forms of paid time off are not included in calculating overtime.

## **6.9 Meal Periods**

The time when lunch periods are scheduled vary, depending on the need for coverage. The manager will set the employee's lunch period schedule.

Non-exempt employees are expected to take the full-allotted time for lunch and are requested not to perform any work during their regularly scheduled lunch period, unless specifically requested to do so by their manager. In that event, the lunch will be rescheduled and the employee will be paid for the time that is worked. It is important to return to work on time at the end of the lunch period.

Employees who work longer than six (6) hours after the last meal period will be given an additional 30 minute unpaid meal period.

## **6.10 Compensation Reviews**

A merit increase is awarded to recognize added skills, knowledge, or responsibilities that make an employee more valuable to the position and the Agency.

Merit increases may be considered for all employees. It should be made clear that there is no guarantee that an increase will be granted; it is strictly based upon the IDA's current financial condition and how the employee has performed in his/her position.

## **6.11 Expense Reports**

The COO will process employee expense reports, including reimbursement requests, and credit card expenses. They will be reimbursed on a non-taxable basis. The only exception is if an employee must expend a significant amount of money on behalf of the Agency, then the employee will be reimbursed immediately.

Expense reports should be submitted on a monthly basis, no later than the last business day of the month. All appropriate receipts and documentation should be attached and the manager sign-off should be secured before submitting to the COO.

## **6.12 Travel Reimbursements**

Travel, when necessary, must be consistent with the business objectives of the Agency. The following ensures fair treatment of employees through procedures and guidelines for authorized business travel.

Air Travel: Air travel must be via the most direct and economical means. Employees are advised to use special economy, coach, or comparably priced fare types for domestic travel. Business Class travel is not allowed unless granted prior approval by the COO/CEO.

Auto Rental: Employees can request either compact or intermediate sized cars. Rentals for other types, such as luxury and specialty cars, are not permitted except with prior approval by the COO/CEO.

Hotel: Employees are expected to select moderately priced lodging that is convenient to their business destination.

Meals and Incidental Expenses: Meal reimbursement during travel is based on the national index per-diem average for the location being visited. Situations often arise where prudent judgment and customary business practice indicates the furtherance of the Agency's business will be best accomplished by incurring the expense involved as host of a business meal. The Internal Revenue Service regulations set forth the following qualifications: It must be a quiet business meal in a restaurant, hotel dining room, eating club, or similar place where the surroundings and atmosphere are conducive to and at which a bona fide discussion actually takes place.

Personal Vehicle Travel: Authorized business travel with a personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS reimbursement rate.

Employees who use the corporate credit card must retain receipts for any travel purchases to submit with corporate credit card expense forms. Employees submitting personal expense reimbursement forms must also submit receipts as proof of purchases in order to be reimbursed by the Agency.

## 7. PAID TIME OFF

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### 7.1 Holiday Time

Otsego Now observes and is closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Columbus Day
Martin Luther King Day	Veteran's Day
Presidents' Day	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Friday after Thanksgiving
Independence Day	Christmas Eve
Labor Day	Christmas Day

When a holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday will be observed as the holiday. If a holiday falls on Saturday, the preceding Friday will be observed as the holiday. Holidays that fall within approved Leave is counted as Holiday Pay and not charged against Paid Time Off balances.

Fulltime Regular employees receive 7 hours of base rate pay and is not counted towards hours worked. This benefit is available upon hire.

### 7.2 Paid Time - Off (PTO)

Otsego Now uses a Paid Time-Off (PTO) system that combines vacation, personal leave, and sick leave into a single pool of paid leave. The Agency's approach to PTO for vacation, personal, and sick time provides all eligible, full-time and part-time employees, who 14+ hours per week with flexibility and responsibility in determining when and how to use time off benefits.

All eligible employees are encouraged to maintain balance in their lives by using Paid Time-Off (PTO) days during the anniversary year in which it is allotted. It works on the premise that employees are professionals and will take time off around work demands and customer needs. The effectiveness of the program is based on a partnership between the employee and the Agency. With the exception of emergencies or unexpected illnesses, all PTO must be scheduled in advance and approved by the manager, or COO.

Paid Time Off is allotted as per outlined in the Employment Agreement each employee receives and is available for use after successful completion of the 60 day introductory period.

All requests for PTO usage and/or unpaid time off should be made in writing to the manager as far in advance as possible in order to avoid scheduling and staffing problems. Every effort will be made to grant PTO request at the time desired. In the event of a scheduling conflict, employees with seniority will be given priority.

One full day of PTO is equivalent to 7.0 hours of PTO. A half day of PTO is equivalent to 3.50 hours. PTO usage is applied in hourly increments. Up to two weeks of PTO can be carried past the employee's anniversary date, but no more than five weeks may be held at any time.

Employees may review their PTO balance at any time. Any questions regarding the usage of PTO allocations and PTO balances should be directed to the COO. Any errors in PTO records must be brought to the attention of the COO.

Unscheduled or unauthorized lateness or absences will automatically be deducted from the PTO balance. Employees will not receive PTO during unpaid leaves of absence or other periods of inactive service.

Upon voluntary separation of employment, unused PTO balances are paid in the final paycheck for all employees who have completed the 60 day introductory period.

## **8. ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE POLICIES**

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### **8.1 Absence or Lateness**

Habitual absence or lateness has a negative impact on business objectives and may inhibit the Agency's ability to effectively interact with and produce high quality work for the partners of the IDA. If an employee is going to report late to their work-site, he or she should call or email their immediate manager or a member of Management one hour before his/her starting time. Leaving messages with the administrative assistant or other employees is not allowed as a proper form of notification.

Excessive tardiness or early departure from the work-site, with or without permission, is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. A written record of each employee's absences or lateness will be available through the COO. Please contact the COO if you would like to review the employee file.

### **8.2 Early Closings due to Inclement Weather/Building Safety**

As Otsego Now is located in the Northeast, there may be instances when the office is closed or closes early due to inclement weather or an interruption of utility operations. The COO will communicate to all employees if the office will be closed for the day or will close early.

Time taken when the office is open will be charged against any PTO balance. If PTO is exhausted, time not worked is unpaid for Non-Exempt employees.

### **8.3 Bereavement**

Otsego Now understands the need for an employee to take time off to handle the emotional and practical aspects of coping with a death in the family. In the event of death of an immediate family, an employee may have time needed up to five paid days, to handle family affairs and attend the funeral. "Immediate family" is defined as: current legal spouse, child, stepchild, grandchild, sibling, or parent.

Up to three days will be granted in the event of a death of an employee's grandparent, brother or sister-in-law, or mother or father-in-law.

Requests for leave to attend funerals of other individuals not listed above must be made to the employee's immediate manager and will be credited against PTO.

### **8.4 Jury Duty**

While it can be difficult to be away from work for an extended period of time, Otsego Now recognizes the importance of jury duty and encourages each employee to perform his or her civic duty. Employees will receive pay for the first week of work missed due to jury duty for hours normally worked. All other time will be unpaid; however, employees may elect to use available PTO.

A copy of the summons should be submitted with the request to the COO. The Agency expects employees to return to their job if excused from jury duty during the regular work schedule.

## 8.5 Witness Duty

An employee may take time off without pay to exercise their rights under state law as the victim of a crime or violation, or on account of the required attendance as a witness in a criminal proceeding. In this circumstance, an employee may apply their unused paid time off balance during the leave. Employees are requested to notify their manager of the need to take time off as far in advance as is possible, but in no event later than on the date prior to taking witness duty.

## 8.6 Leaves of Absence

Otsego Now recognizes that there may be instances when employees may require time off from their jobs for various reasons. A Leave of Absence may be granted for the certain types of leaves described below or to care for a family member. Leave may be granted upon the submission of a valid and acceptable health care provider's certification that either describes an employee's inability to perform the functions of his or her position or the need to care of a family member. A health care provider's written certification must state when the need for leave began and when the employee is expected to be able to return to work.

Leave of Absences are unpaid. Otherwise, time away from work will be applied to the employee's PTO balance.

Disability Leave - For employees needing to file a non-work related disability claim, it is the responsibility of the employee to request a Disability Form from the COO. The employee is responsible for having the form completed by the physician. PTO (if available) may be used for this type of leave.

Workers' Compensation Leave - Any injury, no matter how minor it appears, must be reported immediately to a member of management. An Employers' First Report of Injury Form must be completed and if appropriate, first aid may be administered. Otsego Now will file the required paperwork with the Insurance Agency. Do not submit any medical insurance card and payment should not be made for medical expenses until the Insurance Bureau's determination of benefits. PTO cannot be used while on Workers Compensation leave.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits employers and other entities covered by GINA Title II from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, the Agency asks employees not provide any genetic information when responding to this request for medical information.

'Genetic information,' as defined by GINA, includes an individual's family medical history, the results of an individual's or family member's genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual's family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual's family member or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

During Leave of Absences, the employee or physician needs to regularly communicate with the Agency, (at least once a month) to keep the IDA informed of any changes in the employee's condition and expected date of return. Although not guaranteed, the Agency may be able to return the employee to the same or similar position held prior to the disability leave, subject to staffing and business requirements. If an employee does not return on the expected date, Otsego Now will assume the employee has voluntarily quit.

When able to return to work, employees are asked to give at least one week's advance written notice. Employees returning from a short-term disability or Worker's Compensation leave may be required to provide medical documentation within 30 days of their return-to-work date certifying their ability to perform their job essential duties.

Should an employee's attendance or job performance suffer during the period preceding and/or following a leave of absence, Otsego Now will reasonably accommodate the employee to the extent provided by law.

### **8.7 Military Leave (Active and Reserve Service)**

Otsego Now will comply with laws that protect the job rights of employees absent on military leave. In accordance with Federal and State law, it is the Agency's policy that no employee or prospective employee will be subjected to any form of discrimination on the basis of that person's membership in or obligation to perform service for any of the Uniformed Services of the United States. Specifically, no person will be denied employment, reemployment, promotion, or other benefit of employment on the basis of such membership. Exceptions may occur when contracts end, and in turn the jobs related to that contract end.

No person will be subjected to retaliation or adverse employment action because such person has exercised his or her rights under this policy. If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of this policy, the employee should immediately contact their manager or the COO/CEO.

Otsego Now will comply with all Federal and State laws in terms of job reinstatement applications and benefits. Please see the COO for more comprehensive information about Military Leave benefits.

### **8.8 Leave for Spouse of Member of Armed Forces**

An employee who is the spouse of a member of the armed forces of the United States, National Guard, or Reserves, must be allowed up to 10 days of unpaid leave when the employee's spouse who has been deployed during a period of military conflict to a combat theater or combat zone of operations is on leave from such combat service.

### **8.9 Time Off for Voting**

An employee who does not have sufficient time outside of his or her working hours to vote may take off up to two hours at the beginning or end of their regularly scheduled hours, with pay, to allow them to vote. Any additional time off for this purpose will be without pay. Sufficient time is defined as four consecutive hours either between the opening of the polls and the beginning of the work shift or between the end of the shift and the closing of the polls. Employees must notify their manager no more than ten and not less than two days before the election of the need to take time off to vote.

## 9. BENEFITS

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Otsego Now has established a variety of employee benefit programs designed to assist employees and eligible dependents in meeting the financial burdens that can result from illness and disability, and to help plan for retirement. This portion of the Employee Handbook contains a very general description of the benefits to which employees may be entitled. Please understand that this general explanation is not intended to, and does not, provide employees with all the details of these benefits. Therefore, this handbook does not change or otherwise interpret the terms of the official plan documents. Employee rights can be determined only by referring to the full text of the official plan documents, which are available for examination from the COO.

Please note that nothing contained in the benefit plans described herein shall be held or construed to create a promise of employment or future benefits, or a binding contract between the Agency and its employees, retirees, or their dependents, for benefits or for any other purpose.

In addition to receiving an equitable salary and having an equal opportunity for professional development and advancement, employees may be eligible to enjoy other benefits which will enhance job satisfaction. A good benefits program is a solid investment in the IDA and its employees. It not only insures the loyalty of long-time capable employees, it also helps to attract talented newcomers who can help the Agency grow. Otsego Now will periodically review the benefits program and will make modifications as appropriate to meet the needs of the employees.

The Agency reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to amend, modify, or terminate, in whole or in part, any or all of the provisions of the benefit plans described herein, including any health benefits that may be extended to retirees and their dependents. Further, the Agency reserves the exclusive right, power, and authority, in its sole and absolute discretion, to administer, apply, and interpret the benefit plans described herein, and to decide all matters arising in connection with the operation or administration of such plans.

In the event of any contradiction between the information appearing in this handbook and the summary plan descriptions and the information that appears in the master contracts or master plan documents which the Agency have subscribed to, the master contracts or documents shall govern in all cases.

All active, regular employees working 35 hours or more per week are eligible for most employee benefits as outlined in the employee agreement. Retirement plan eligibility is defined in accordance with the Plan document. Temporary employees are not eligible for most benefits. Deductions are through regular payroll, many on a pre-tax basis.

Coffee is provided at the main office throughout the work day for employees and visitors. Granola bars are purchased and available for visitors and may be utilized by staff occasionally.

### 9.1 Annual Benefit Allotment

Otsego Now offers its regular, full-time employees an annual dollar allotment based upon their employee agreement, position with the Agency and as determined by the Management and approved by the Board of Directors. The allotment is to be used for any combination of benefits offered by the Agency or a benefit that the employee has from an outside source provided adequate arrangements for reimbursement can be arranged.



## 9.2 NYS Healthcare Exchange

After January 1, 2014, the Affordable Care Act mandates that all workers ineligible for health insurance through their employer seek insurance coverage through the Federal or State's Individual Healthcare Exchange or risk paying penalties.

Participants arrange coverage and premium payments directly through the Exchange. Otsego Now does not share the cost of premiums through an Individual Healthcare Exchange; however, the Exchange offers subsidies to help pay for premiums depending on income levels and other criteria.

## 9.3 Simple IRA/Deferred Compensation Plan

Otsego Now established a Simple IRA Plan so that employees who wish to do so could contribute funds toward their own retirement on a tax-deferred basis.

Otsego Now offers a Deferred Compensation Plan that is administered by New York State. Eligible employees may enroll at any time.

## 9.4 Parking

The Agency recognizes the issues with parking in the downtown area. Employees may park at the lot at Dietz Street as well as the parking garage that is accessible across Main Street at no cost. Employees are asked to observe all parking regulations when visiting partner and other business-related locations.

## 9.5 Professional Development

Otsego Now will pay the cost of professional development training for employees with prior approval of the employee's manager and the COO/CEO. The training must be relevant to the mission of the IDA and/or enhance the skills of the employee in performing their job as solely determined by the COO/CEO.

## 9.6 Mandated Benefits

State Disability Insurance (DBL) - New York State disability benefits are available as a benefit to all employees who become disabled and unable to work due to a non-work related injury or illness after completing four weeks of employment.

The determination of whether an employee is eligible for disability benefits is made by the insurance carrier. Eligible employees are paid a benefit after being out of work for seven consecutive days. Eligible employees are covered for the period of disability specified by their physician, up to a maximum of 26 weeks.

Employees contribute a small amount towards New York State Disability insurance through a required weekly payroll deduction (SUI). The remaining portion is paid by the Agency.

Social Security/Medicare - Social Security and Medicare coverage entitles employees and their families to certain health and retirement benefits based on income and the number of years worked. Social Security Tax payments are deducted from pay according to IRS rates. Otsego Now matches this contribution with additional contributions to the same Social Security and Medicare funds. Additional information concerning Social Security and Medicare benefits can be obtained from your local Social Security office.

Unemployment insurance – Otsego Now regularly makes payments to both New York State and to the Federal Government for Unemployment Insurance benefits. These benefits are paid to employees directly

from New York State should they become unemployed and if qualified for assistance as defined by the State Unemployment Insurance Laws.

Workers' Compensation - This insurance provides financial protection to employees and their dependents in case the employee is injured, becomes ill, or dies as a result of employment. Benefits include:

- Paid medical expenses - provided treatment is furnished by a physician approved by the state and the Agency insurance carrier.
- Disability payments for loss of work time starting after the designated state waiting period. The amount of benefits received is determined by State law and extends for approximately 26 weeks.
- Death benefits paid to the dependents of employees with the amount also determined by State law.

Job related injury or illness benefits are paid by Workers' Compensation Insurance carriers. To receive Workers' Compensation benefits, an employee must report any work-related injury to their manager immediately, complete a written claim form and seek medical treatment and follow-up care as required. All claims and notices should be given to the employee's manager.

The cost of Workers' Compensation is paid completely by the Agency and is dependent upon gross wages, type of work performed, and accident/injury history. Workers' Compensation insurance is a major expense in the overall insurance package and it is to everyone's advantage to maintain a safe and accident-free work environment. All rates, payments, and types of benefits are regulated by law and can be resolved only through the insurance carrier or the state Workers' Compensation Board.

## 10. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

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### 10.1 Standards of Conduct

Groups of people who are working together for any purpose require certain guidelines pertaining to their conduct and relationships. Accordingly employees must be aware of their responsibilities to the Agency and to their co-workers. Otsego Now strives to take a constructive approach to disciplinary matters to insure that actions that would interfere with operations or an employee's job are not continued.

Every employee is expected to follow the rules and regulations set forth within this Employee Handbook. All businesses are required to establish rules of conduct in order to ensure the efficient and orderly operation of their workplace. If an employee chooses to ignore the policies, programs, and expectations set forth by management, appropriate disciplinary action will commence. There are two broad categories into which disciplinary problems may fall:

- Infractions so severe that instant dismissal is required, and
- Infractions and behaviors that require disciplinary action, but may not necessary result in termination.

Otsego Now feels that it is critical to the success of the Agency that employees understand the conduct and behavior that is expected of them. As such, employees will be held responsible for knowing the consequences that may occur as a result of inappropriate actions.

The policies outlined in this section of the Employee Handbook are not intended to scare, threaten, or intimidate. Rather, the goal is to establish a high level of staff morale, productivity, and a pleasant work environment that results from a clearly defined disciplinary policy.

### 10.2 Dress and Personal Appearance

Otsego Now is a professional business and employees should always convey a professional image. Employees are expected to maintain an appropriate appearance that is businesslike, neat, clean, and professional.

When meeting with stakeholders (including but not limited to) partners, government officials and other policy makers, appropriate attire for a male is business attire including dress slacks, dress shirt, sport jacket or suit, and tie. Tennis shoes or other sport footwear is not acceptable.

When meeting with stakeholders (including but not limited to) partners, government officials and other policy makers, appropriate attire for a female is business attire including dresses, pant suits, dress slacks, or coordinating business separates.

The Agency observes a Casual Friday at the main office. Clean, neat jeans or similar pants may be worn. All clothing worn must be free of stains, rips or tears, not in a deteriorated condition or have symbols or slogans that could be considered offensive or have political/personal messages. Footwear must be appropriate for a business office setting. A scheduled meeting with stakeholders on a Friday either at the office or a partner site may require cancelling the specific Casual Friday. The COO will communicate this situation. The COO will also direct an employee to go home and change to appropriate clothing when necessary.

### **10.3 Maintaining Discretion in Common Areas**

Loud and intrusive conversation should not take place in any public areas.

Radios, phones, and other latest audio-visual equipment are only allowed in defined workspaces and should not be heard beyond that designated space. This policy includes extended working hours or days.

All public areas and workstations should be kept organized and neat. Work areas should be kept neat enough for a co-worker to function efficiently in an employee's absence. Employees should refrain from posting any signs or slogans in view of others without first obtaining permission from their manager.

### **10.4 Smoking Policy**

Smoking is prohibited inside all facilities owned, leased or operated by Otsego Now. If an employee is at a client's work-site, the employee should comply with the client's rules regarding smoking.

### **10.5 Driving, Driver's License, and Driving Record**

An employee whose work requires driving their personal vehicle for Agency business must submit and maintain a valid driver's license and a driving record acceptable to the IDA insurance carrier. Any changes in an employee's driving record must be submitted to the COO immediately. Employees driving during the work day are responsible for all accidents, fines, or traffic violations incurred while performing work on behalf of the Agency.

In accordance with New York State regulations, an employee should not make or receive calls or texts while driving on Agency business unless a headset or a hands-free device is used. Texting while driving is prohibited.

### **10.6 Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

The Agency is committed to providing a safe work environment and to establishing programs that promote the highest standards of employee safety and health. Such policies are intended to enable every employee to achieve the maximum level of job satisfaction and individual productivity possible. The abuse of alcohol and drugs has been proven dangerous in the workplace to the user, other employees, as well as the general public, and also causes poor job performance, all of which are contrary to the IDA's goals.

Otsego Now reserves the right to drug and alcohol test under several different conditions including randomly, post-accident, and under reasonable suspicion (which must be based on specific reliable observations about the employee's appearance, behavior, speech, or body odors). Some examples would be unsteady gait, odor of alcohol on the breath, slurring speech, aggressive or abusive language or behavior, disorientation, or lethargy.

Otsego Now wants to prevent any accidents or injuries, especially those that are the result of improper medication or substance use. Some prescribed substances may produce side effects that may present a safety hazard for other employees, the Agency, our customers, or the public. Employees must inform their manager or the COO of any prescription or other drugs they are taking which may affect their work performance. The Agency may ask an employee to provide proof that a licensed physician prescribed or recommended the medication and that they are following the instructions.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines that address the issues of alcohol and drug abuse, and to take all steps necessary to insure a drug-free workplace.

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the workplace. Employees who are convicted under any Federal and State criminal drug statute must inform the Agency within five days of the conviction. Employees who plead guilty or “no contest” to such a violation must likewise inform the Agency of such a plea. The IDA is required to notify a Federal contracting organization within ten days after receiving notice of a workplace conviction, and to impose a sanction upon the convicted employee or require satisfactory participation in a rehabilitation program.

Compliance with these rules is a term and condition of employment with the Agency.

Employees who violate this rule are subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. Disciplinary action up to and including termination will be taken if any employee:

- Uses illegal drugs or abuses legal drugs during working hours;
- Drinks alcoholic beverages during work hours that impairs or affects job performance; or drinks alcoholic beverages to excess at an IDA sponsored event;
- Possesses alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs on IDA premises, including storage of such substances in the employee’s vehicle when located on IDA property;
- Reports to work under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs;
- Engages in illegal on or off the job activities, which adversely affect the employee’s performance or adversely affects the IDA’s reputation or standing in the community;
- Tests positive for illegal drugs, abuse of legal drugs, or alcohol influence and or use.

The Agency reserves the right to require an employee to submit to a drug or alcohol test for employees after a work-related accident, or if the Agency has reason to believe the employee may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. An Agency designated laboratory or physician will administer the test. The employee will be required to sign a consent form and release allowing both the testing and the disclosure of the test results to the Agency.

Any employee refusing to consent to a drug or alcohol test or the release of such test results to the Agency will be immediately terminated.

A positive result to a drug or alcohol test will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees with a confirmed positive test result may, at their option and expense, have a second confirmed test conducted on the same specimen. An employee will not be allowed to submit another specimen for testing.

Agency desks; filing cabinets, etc. remain the property of the IDA and are subject to inspection by the Agency at any time. An employee should have no expectation of privacy with regard to items stored on Agency property.

Employees and their possessions, including their vehicles located on Agency property, are subject to search if the IDA has reason to suspect possible drug and/or alcohol abuse. Refusal to cooperate with the request to conduct such a search may result in discipline up to and including termination. The Agency will cooperate with law enforcement authorities if there is reason to suspect an employee is engaged in the sale, possession, or use of illegal drugs.

## **10.7 Progressive Discipline**

Although the intent of any disciplinary action is to modify behavior to create a professional, safe, and efficient business environment, some behaviors may require immediate dismissal. Random checks will be performed in order to ensure compliance.

In arriving at a decision for proper action, the following may be considered:

- The seriousness of the infraction.
- The past record of the employee.
- The circumstances surrounding the matter.

When immediate dismissal is not required, the following is the recommended escalation policy for disciplinary action:

- First Offense: verbal warning with objective benchmark for correction.
- Second Offense: written warning with objective benchmark for correction, to be placed in employee personnel file. The written warning will be removed from the employee file after 12 months without a reoccurrence of the issue.
- Third Offense: Dismissal.

This policy is not intended to be comprehensive and does not alter the “at-will” relationship between the employee and Otsego Now.

## **10.8 Investigations of Current Employees**

Otsego Now may occasionally find it necessary to investigate current employees, where behavior or other relevant circumstances raise questions concerning, for example, work performance, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, or potential threat to the safety of coworkers or others. Employee investigations may, where appropriate, include credit reports and investigations of criminal records, including appropriate inquiries about any arrest for which the employee is out on bail.

Employees subject to an investigation are required to cooperate with the IDA’s lawful efforts to obtain relevant information, and may be disciplined up to and including termination for failure to do so.

## **11. PROPERTY AND PREMISES**

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### **11.1 Office Supplies**

Otsego Now purchases a variety of office supplies for use with clients and for internal use. These are for employment in the business and are not considered available for personal use. This does exclude the occasional photocopy or minor materials use, but if an employee wishes to make extensive use of Agency materials, this must clear this with their manager and arrange for the expense.

### **11.2 Employee Property**

Employees should not bring valuables to work. If this is done, all valuables should be kept in a secure location. Otsego Now assumes no responsibility for the loss, theft, or damage of employees' personal property.

### **11.3 Housekeeping**

All employees are expected to maintain their desks and/or work areas in an orderly fashion. Also, please pick up after use of the kitchen, conference room, or restroom.

### **11.4 Building Security**

Otsego Now is committed to providing a secure workplace. The IDA will make every effort to provide a safe working environment. The Agency encourages employees to coordinate departure from the building or work-site with other employees, especially before and after general work hours. Each employee should also be aware of the safety of off-site workplaces and should use the appropriate level of caution when entering or leaving. Employees are expected to follow the safety and security rules of each work site location. Common sense and good judgment should be exercised.

Employees receive a key that allows access to the elevator and door to the main office from the stairs. The last person leaving for the day must use the key to lock the elevator and stairs door. Employees are responsible to safeguard the key and report any lost or damaged keys to the COO.

### **11.5 Visitors**

Employees may have an occasional, brief visit from a friend or relative provided it does not interfere with Agency operations. Any visit must be arranged to minimize disruption of work. Pets and children may be allowed with proper supervision. Unattended children and pets are not allowed in workplace premises at any time.

### **11.6 Theft**

Otsego Now takes internal theft very seriously. Although taking small items of Agency property may seem inconsequential, the cumulative effect can be very large. Property theft of any type will not be tolerated.

Please report the theft of Agency property to the COO. Employees should take precautions to prevent theft by following all security procedures and securing Agency property.

### **11.7 Solicitation & Distribution**

Soliciting by one employee of another or collecting from one employee by another on employee work time is prohibited without prior management approval. Distributing literature and circulating petitions during work time or in work areas is not permitted. In addition, any solicitation of clients for personal gain is not permitted at any time.

### **11.8 Use of Agency Property**

All of the IDA's property, equipment, supplies, or facilities are not available to anyone for their personal use, unless specifically authorized by the COO. If it is determined that a violation of this policy constitutes a violation of criminal laws, the violator will be subject to a civil action and/or criminal prosecution.

### **11.9 Removal of Agency Property**

The unauthorized removal or possession of Agency property will be considered theft and considered behavior warranting immediate dismissal. Agency property also includes forms and business supplies. Agency property may not be removed from the premises without Management's express permission.

### **11.10 Care of Equipment**

Employees are expected to use proper care when using the Agency's property and equipment. No property may be removed from the premises without the proper authorization of Management. Any property issued to an employee, including but not limited to hard copy or electronic files and other Agency equipment, must be returned to the IDA at the time of termination, or upon request of Management.

### **11.11 Damage or Malfunction of Agency Property**

Any damage or malfunction of any property belonging to the Agency must be immediately reported to the COO. This ensures the safety of all employees and efficient performance of jobs. Employees may receive disciplinary action if their carelessness causes damage to any IDA property.

### **11.12 Searches**

Otsego Now may conduct random, routine, or reasonable suspicion searches of its premises for alcohol, drugs, missing property or for other legitimate business reasons. In order to ensure the safety and security of employees and to protect the IDA's legitimate business interests, the Agency reserves the right to question and inspect or search any employee or other individual entering onto or leaving any of the IDA premises.

The inspection or search may include any packages or items that the individual may be carrying, including briefcases, handbags, knapsacks, and shopping bags. These items are subject to inspection and search at any time, with or without prior notice. The Agency also may require employees while on the job to agree to reasonable inspection of their personal property and/or persons. The individual may be requested to self-inspect his or her personal property or person by displaying the contents of any packages, turning out his or her pockets, or other similar procedures, in the presence of a representative of the IDA, typically a management employee of the same gender. Otsego Now will not tolerate any employee's refusal to cooperate in these procedures or to complete a search required by the Agency.



Searches may include searching any Agency computers, buildings, offices, desks, lockers, file cabinets, stairwells, kitchen area, closets or other areas, which are owned, leased, or controlled by the Agency. An employee's bag, backpack, briefcase, purse, lunchbox or similar item is subject to being searched randomly, routinely or for reasonable suspicion if brought onto Agency premises. A police officer acting at the request of the Agency may also conduct a personal search of an employee.

## **12. COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY**

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### **12.1 Employee Postings**

All employee notifications and information of interest will be presented and distributed at a staff meeting, emailed and/or posted in the kitchen area. Only management is authorized to add or remove material that is posted.

### **12.2 Suggestions**

Otsego Now encourages employees to suggest methods to improve quality and efficiency at the Agency. Submit suggestions in writing to the COO/CEO. Suggestions should be detailed so that the system or procedure can be adequately evaluated.

### **12.3 Complaint Handling Procedure**

Under normal conditions, if an employee has a job-related problem, question, or complaint, it should be discussed with their direct manager.

### **12.4 Receipt of Adverse Communication**

All media inquiries regarding Otsego Now and its operations must be referred to the COO/CEO, or designee. Only the COO/CEO or designee is authorized to make or approve public statements pertaining to the IDA, its members, or its operations. No employees, unless specifically designated by the COO/CEO, is authorized to make those statements. Any employee wishing to write and/or publish an article, paper, or other publication on behalf of the IDA must first obtain approval from the COO/CEO, or designee before publication.

### **12.5 Communications**

Successful working conditions and relationships depend upon successful communication. Not only do employees need to stay aware of changes in procedures, policies, and general information, they also need to communicate ideas, suggestions, personal goals, or problems as they affect their work. In addition to the exchanges of information and expressions of ideas and attitudes which occur daily, employees need to make certain they are aware of and utilize all the Agency's methods of communication, including this Employee Handbook, notices, and discussions with the COO/CEO.

The COO/CEO must be notified of the receipt of any negative information addressed to any Agency employee immediately upon its receipt. The COO/CEO will determine necessary action.

### **12.6 Telephone/Mobile Devices**

Personal telephone calls/text messages made or received, on Agency or personal telephones, and mobile devices, while at work, should be limited to those which are absolutely necessary. Excessive personal calls may not occur during working hours.

Employees are asked to be considerate of business needs and schedule their personal calls/text messages for non-working times, such as before and after work or during the meal break period.

Everyone must observe business courtesy when answering calls. The ways in which calls are answered reflects the professional image of the IDA. An employee is expected to answer a ringing telephone regardless of their specific job responsibility. No call should go unanswered. If the call is for someone else, take a message and relay it promptly and accurately, or put it through to voicemail.

It is the IDA's policy to prohibit the use of the camera feature on all mobile devices for personal use, while being paid by the Agency. All pictures taken on mobile devices and cameras must be shared with full authorization from the individuals involved or Agency management.

Employer-provided mobile devices - Agency-provided mobile devices are intended for business use. Employees who are supplied with an Agency mobile device must reasonably safeguard the equipment from loss, damage, or theft. Upon separation from employment, employees must return the equipment in good working condition, or assume replacement cost.

## **12.7 Texting**

Texting that contains any information about partners, business activities, Management and Agency employees, transmitted by, received from, or stored in that system may be retrieved by the Agency at any time. Excessive personal text messages may not occur during working hours. Texting while driving during work time is strictly prohibited.

The IDA's policy prohibiting harassment, in its entirety, applies to texting. No one may text in a manner that may be construed by others as harassment or offensive based on race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital or familial status, domestic violence victim status, sexual orientation, genetic predisposition or carrier status, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established by Federal and State law.

Employees should have no expectation of privacy in connection with the digital transmission, receipt, or storage of Agency information.

## **12.8 Social Networking Policy**

Otsego Now encourages employees to share information with co-workers and with those outside the Agency for the purposes of gathering information, generating new ideas, and learning from the work of others. Social media provides inexpensive, informal, and timely ways to participate in an exchange of ideas and information.

However, information posted on a website is available to the public and, therefore, the Agency has established the following guidelines for employee participation in social media.

*Note:* As used in this policy, "social media" refers to blogs, forums, and social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, among many others.

Off-duty Use of Social Media - Employees may maintain personal websites or web logs on their own time using their own facilities. Employees must ensure that social media activity does not interfere with their work. In general, the Agency considers social media activities to be personal endeavors, and employees may use them to express their thoughts or promote their ideas as long as they do not conflict with Agency's policies or its business.

On-duty Use of Social Media - Employees may engage in social media activity during work time provided it is directly related to their work, approved by their manager, and does not identify or reference the Agency or the partners, policymakers, residents or others that are served without express permission. Otsego Now

monitors employee use of Agency computers and the Internet, including employee blogging and social networking activity.

Respect - Demonstrate respect for the dignity of the IDA, its management, partners and employees. A social media site is a public place, and employees should avoid inappropriate comments. For example, do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, or obscenity, or use language that may be considered inflammatory. Even if a message is posted anonymously, it may be possible to trace it back to the sender.

Social Media Persona – Employees should be conscious of the “persona” in which they are speaking, especially when commenting on topics related to economic development, Otsego County, Otsego Now partners, etc. Employees are acting in a professional persona when identifying themselves as an Otsego Now employee and/or commenting on a topic directly related to an employee’s role at the Agency. Employees have a responsibility to approach subjects related to Otsego Now in a thoughtful and professional manner.

Post Disclaimers - If an employee identifies himself or herself as an Agency employee or discusses matters related to the IDA on a social media site, the site must include a disclaimer on the front page stating that it does not express the views of the IDA and that the employee is expressing only his or her personal views.

For example: “The views expressed on this website/Web log are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.” Place the disclaimer in a prominent position and repeat it for each posting expressing an opinion related to Otsego Now or the IDA’s business. Employees must keep in mind that if they post information on a social media site that is in violation of Agency policy and/or federal, state, or local law, the disclaimer will not shield them from disciplinary action.

Competition - Employees should not use a social media to criticize the IDA’s competition and should not use it to compete with the IDA.

Confidentiality - Do not identify or reference Agency business, other staff, partners or others without express permission. Employees may write about their jobs in general but may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information. For examples of confidential information, please refer to the Confidentiality Policy. When in doubt, ask before publishing.

New Ideas - Please remember that new ideas related to work or IDA business belongs to the Agency. Do not post them on a social media site without Otsego Now’s permission.

Trademarks and Copyrights - Do not use Otsego Now’s or others’ trademarks on a social media site, or reproduce the IDA’s or others’ material without first obtaining permission.

Legal - Employees are expected to comply with all applicable copyright and trademark infringement laws, discrimination/harassment laws, and any other applicable laws while posting on Social Media.

Otsego Now Restrictions – The Agency may require that employees temporarily confine social media commentary to topics unrelated to the IDA or those employees temporarily suspend such activity in violation of regulations or other laws.

The Agency may also require employees to delete references to it on a website or Web log, and under certain circumstances, to stop identifying themselves as an employee of the IDA.

Avoid Statements About Otsego Now’s Future - Writing about projected growth, funding and profits, future services, marketing plans, or fees violate policy or other applicable laws.

Discipline - Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

**Note:** Nothing in this policy is meant to, nor should it be interpreted to, in any way limit employee rights under any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including employee rights under the National Labor Relations Act to engage in protected concerted activities with other employees to improve terms and conditions of employment, such as wages and benefits.

## 12.9 Communication Systems

The purpose of the IDA's communications systems and equipment is to promote efficient program operations. For the purpose of this employee handbook, the IDA's communications systems and equipment include, but are not limited to: telephones, voice mail system, mobile devices, fax machines, incoming/outgoing mail, email and all computer systems (e.g., hardware, software, and computer files).

All Agency communications systems and equipment are the sole property of Otsego Now. This includes the messages created, transmitted, and stored on such systems and equipment.

Computer Systems - All computer hardware and software must be licensed and registered to Otsego Now. All computer disks, file attachments, and downloaded files must be scanned by anti-virus software prior to being used on the Agency's computers.

Passwords - Any employee who is required to have a password to utilize any of the Agency's communication systems must submit that password to the employee's manager.

Prohibited Uses - The following uses of the IDA's communications systems and equipment are prohibited. This list is meant to be illustrative, and not exhaustive:

- display or transmission of sexually-explicit images, messages, graphic images, ethnic slurs, racial epithets or anything that could be construed as harassment or disparaging to others;
- Any illegal activity or violation of copyright laws, including the copying or distribution of copyrighted materials without the permission of the author;
- Transmissions containing confidential or proprietary information or trade secrets;
- Transmissions that are discriminatory, offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or insulting;
- Accessing, or attempting to access, the electronic communications of a co-worker without appropriate authorization from the co-worker;
- Using or aiding in the unauthorized use of another person's password;
- Harming or destroying software, data, files, or messages (other than editing or deleting information in the normal course of one's job duties);
- Installation or use of Agency-owned hardware or software for any use that is not Agency-related business;
- Installation or use of any unauthorized, unlicensed, or non-business hardware or software on an Agency computer;
- Reproducing any software for use on more than one of the Agency's computers unless authorized by the software developer;
- Reproducing, transferring, downloading, modifying, deleting, or sharing licensed or non-licensed software with any business or for the employee's personal use;
- Installation of any software containing viruses; and
- Any deliberate attempt to penetrate the security system.

Otsego Now's Right to Monitor Communications Systems and Equipment - There should be no expectation of privacy when using Agency-owned communications systems and equipment. Management reserves the right to enter, search, intercept, and monitor employee communications equipment and files, with or without advance notice, in the normal course of business.

Otsego Now may choose to utilize a third party to record and/or monitor certain incoming and outgoing communications, for the purpose of internal investigations. Monitoring may also be utilized for tracking calls from prospective partners, and training employees on good customer service phone skills.

Disposal - Employees need to return all damaged and malfunctioning electronic equipment to the COO for proper disposal. Employees are not allowed to discard or dispose the IDA's electronic equipment themselves.

Any employee who is aware of a violation of this policy must notify their manager.

## **12.10 Acceptable Use of Electronic Communications**

The Agency recognizes the need to be able to communicate efficiently with fellow employees and the partners of the Agency. Therefore, there has been installed an internal electronic mail (e-mail) system or latest communication technology to facilitate the transmittal of program-related information within the IDA and with Agency partners.

Otsego Now provides various systems, services, facilities, equipment, materials, and other electronic assets to assist employees with achieving program objectives. Without exception, each asset is:

The property of Otsego Now - Any and all communications and technology assets discovered, developed, delivered or collected during business operations are the exclusive property of the Agency.

Not private - Employees should not assume that communications that they send and receive by the IDA's e-mail system are personal or private. Employees should be aware that even deleted email and voice mail are recoverable.

Limited - The e-mail system is intended for business use. The use of the Agency e-mail system to solicit fellow employees or distribute non job-related information to fellow employees should be limited to program activities. The use of an email group that covers the entire organization should be made on a limited basis. Employees should seek their manager for guidance prior to using this email group email.

Provided for business purposes - Although incidental and occasional personal use of Agency communication systems that does not interfere or conflict with productivity or the Agency's programs or violate policy is permitted, personal activities may be accessed, intercepted, recorded, monitored, and disclosed by the Agency at any time, without notice.

Compliance - Each electronic communication should be handled in accordance to any Regulatory guidelines.

The Communication and Technology policies apply to all Otsego Now systems, services, facilities, equipment, materials and other assets, including but not limited to:

- E-Mail
- Internet
- Hardware, Equipment and Devices
- Software
- Network and Cloud Services
- Facilities

Employees do not have the right to read, recover transmissions or communicate through email or other electronic communication after employment separation. Employees should remember that email can be forwarded without the knowledge or permission of the sender. Important documents must be treated securely. Email can become corrupted in transmission and should not be relied upon as the only means of transmission.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### **12.11 Internet Use**

As a growing Agency, Otsego Now recognizes the need to stay on the cutting edge of technology. The Internet can be an important research tool. The Internet is intended for business use. Use of the Internet for any non-business purpose, including but not limited to, personal communication or solicitation, purchasing personal goods or services, gambling and downloading files for personal use, should be kept to a minimum.

Employees may not use the Agency's internet connection for accessing streaming-data type applications such as non-business related video, audio sites or other media (i.e. entertainment downloads), including continuous music. These applications use a high amount of Internet bandwidth, and therefore, will slow access time of legitimate Internet business activity.

Consistent with applicable federal and state law, the time spent on the Internet may be tracked through activity logs for business purposes. All abnormal usage will be investigated thoroughly. Employees learning of any misuse of the Internet shall notify Management. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

### **12.12 Removal of Information**

Employees are prohibited from deleting or removing electronic files, documents, or other information of any kind, in any form, from Agency premises unless permission has been obtained from the COO/CEO.

Information resulting from the development or loss of programs and services or partners, should remain confidential and cannot be removed in any format. Employees cannot copy or remove any computer programs or other Agency owned or licensed media from Agency computers.

## 13. SAFETY POLICIES

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### 13.1 Health and Safety Policy

Otsego Now strives to provide safe working conditions for all employees. The Agency observes the safety laws of all the sites within whose jurisdictions where the IDA works. No one will knowingly be required to work in any unsafe manner. Safety is every employee's responsibility, and all employees are expected to do everything reasonable and necessary to keep Otsego Now a safe place to work.

### 13.2 Fire/Police/Emergency Information

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, DIAL 911 – Otsego Now has an emergency procedure to follow in the event of fire or disaster.

#### Fire Evacuation -

- Go to the nearest exit.
- Do not use the elevators/ use the stairs.
- Be familiar with the location of fire extinguishers.

Medical Emergency Situations - Notify the front desk that an ambulance will be arriving (if applicable). Notify the injured person's emergency contact.

First Aid Kits and fire extinguishers are located in designated areas. Report all medical and fire emergencies to Management, or directly to the Ambulance or Fire Department. All employees must evacuate the building at the sound of the alarm and stay outside until given authorization to return to work.

### 13.3 Reporting Work Related Injuries

It is extremely important that all accidents and/or injuries while working be reported. Employees must immediately report any work-related injury, no matter how minor, to their manager. The employee must complete and sign an Accident Report Form as soon as possible after receiving any necessary medical care. No exceptions.

### 13.4 Employee Guidelines

Employees must follow all safety policies when working in the premises/sites. Reasonable precautions and consistent safe work habits prevent accidents. There are established procedures and standards for all employees to follow. Basic safety guidelines include, but are not limited to:

An injured or ill employee should report immediately to Management. Any incident or hazard must be reported to Management immediately as well. Failure to report an accident or illness may result in disciplinary action.

- The Manager or the COO calls or directs another employee to call an ambulance when a serious medical emergency has occurred.



- Before using any equipment, employees should make sure they have read the instructions and received proper training.
- Employees should detect hazardous conditions, or behaviors and report concerns to the COO.
- Employees should bring recommendations for safety procedures to Management.

### **13.5 Safety Rules**

Safety is everybody's business. Safety is to be given primary importance in every aspect of planning and performing all Agency activities.

Please report all injuries (no matter how slight) immediately, as well as anything that needs repair or is a safety hazard. Below are some general safety rules. Management may post other safety procedures in work areas:

- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many appliances or machines.
- All personal heaters and electrical devices need to be approved by Management.
- Use flammable items, such as cleaning fluids, with caution.
- Ask for assistance when lifting heavy objects or moving heavy furniture.
- Keep cabinet doors and file and desk drawers closed when not in use.
- Sit squarely in chairs that roll or tilt.

Start work on any machine only after safety procedures and requirements have been explained and understood.

- Keep work areas clean and orderly, and the aisles clear.
- Stack materials only to safe heights.
- Watch out for the safety of fellow employees.
- Use the right tool for the job, and use it correctly.

Please note that it is the employee's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to safety rules at partner sites. Also, remember, failure to adhere to these rules will be considered serious infractions of safety rules and will result in disciplinary actions.

### **13.6 OSHA Guidelines**

The goal of Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) is to provide a safe work environment through education and elimination of unsafe working conditions. Every employee must follow appropriate OSHA guidelines as communicated by Otsego Now.

## 14. SEPARATION FROM EMPLOYMENT

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### 14.1 Types of Terminations

Resignations – To separate in good standing with Otsego Now, non-exempt employees are asked to give two weeks' notice and exempt employees are asked to give four weeks' notice. This process includes returning any Agency property (computer, mobile devices, other technology items, keys, etc.), completing required forms, returning any employee handbooks and manuals, and having an exit interview. Any final compensation will be released on the next scheduled pay date. Otsego Now reserves the right to waive the notice period or any part thereof.

All unused PTO will be included in the final paycheck for all eligible employees who have completed the 60 day introduction period and have given the requested notice. Otherwise all unused PTO will be forfeited.

Retirement – Employees planning to retire are asked to provide four weeks' notice.

Termination of Employment – There may be times where termination of employment is initiated by Otsego Now. All Agency property will be collected. Final compensation will be released on the next scheduled pay date. Any unused PTO will be forfeited.

Any employee separating employment should inform Otsego Now of any change of address for year-end W-2 purposes.

### 14.2 Releasing Job References

Only the COO/CEO may elect to prepare a "letter of reference" to former employees. All requests for information about a current or terminated employee must be transferred to the COO, who may disclose to prospective employers only the former employee's dates of employment, final title or position. With the former employee's permission, Otsego Now may give an employment and salary history.

This policy refers recommendations and referral requests made on social media sites. Information requested by a law enforcement agency or by subpoena will be provided by the Agency when in receipt of an official notice.

## 15. EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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I hereby acknowledge I have received a copy of the Otsego Now Employee Handbook outlining the policies, procedures, and benefits of the Agency. I further acknowledge I will read the contents of the Handbook. I will contact my manager or COO with any questions and will abide by all policies.

I consent to viewing the Employee Handbook on an Agency computer via a secure internet connection or to receive a copy via email from the COO. I understand I can access this information at any time from a computer with an internet connection. I can withdraw this consent at any time by notifying the COO in writing or via email. I have a right to request and obtain a paper version of the Employee Handbook from the COO at any time.

I understand Otsego Now reserves the right to change or terminate any of the policies, procedures, and benefits outlined in this Handbook and may do so without prior notice.

I understand the employee policies, procedures, and benefits in this Employee Handbook will remain in effect until I am notified of changes.

I understand that I may not reproduce or distribute the Otsego Now Employee Handbook in any manner or format.

Otsego Now follows a policy of "at will" employment. Accordingly, this Employee Handbook is not intended to be a contract of employment or a warranty of benefits.

I understand Otsego Now reserves the right to make a final interpretation of the terms and conditions of the policies set forth in this Handbook.

I understand if I fail to follow any policy I may be terminated from employment. I understand that I may be suspended without pay during any investigation with which I am involved.

I understand any questions I have should be directed to my manager or the COO.

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Print Employee Name

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Employee Signature

## **16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OTSEGO NOW COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY POLICIES**

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I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Otsego Now Communications and Technology Policies. The use of Agency technology is my consent to the provisions of use below. I agree to read it thoroughly, and agree that if there is any policy or provision in the policy I do not understand, I will seek clarification from the COO.

In particular, I understand that

(1) The E-mail, Texting, Internet and Computer system and all information transmitted by, received from, or stored in that system are the property of Otsego Now. By using Otsego Now's technology systems, I understand that the Agency reserves the right to access, intercept, and monitor all information accessed, sent, or transmitted through Agency's systems,

(2) Email, Texting, Internet, and other latest technology systems are to be used only for business purposes and not for personal purposes,

(3) The Confidentiality and Code of Ethics Policies apply to usage of Email, Texting, the Internet, and Computer systems.

(4) I understand that I may not use the Systems in any way that may be seen as insulting, disruptive, obscene, offensive, or harmful to morale. Otsego Now's policy prohibiting harassment, in its entirety, applies to the use of our electronic communications systems. I may not use electronic communications in a manner that may be construed by others as harassment or offensive based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, marital or familial status, domestic violence victim status, sexual orientation, genetic predisposition or carrier status, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established by Federal and State law.

(5) I have no expectation of privacy in connection with the use of the E-mail, Texting, Internet or with the transmission, receipt, or storage of information in those systems. Employee acknowledges their consent that electronic communications may be monitored, intercepted, or accessed by Otsego Now.

I understand any questions I have should be directed to the COO.

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Print Employee Name

Date

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Employee Signature