

**Seay**HR



# 2026 HR Checklist

SEAY HR

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Your handbook is your most important employment document because it describes how you will handle work issues that arise with your employees. It is important to review your employee handbook annually.

- **AI Acceptable Use Policy** - Handbooks should outline approved AI tools and their permissible uses, such as data analysis or drafting content, while prohibiting activities that could compromise confidentiality or violate compliance standards. Include guidance on human oversight for AI-generated work.
- **Personal Relationships at Work** - Policies should address workplace romances and friendships to prevent conflicts of interest. Clearly prohibit supervisors from dating subordinates and outline disclosure and communication procedures for personal relationships.
- **Weapons Policy** - Employers should state that weapons of any kind are prohibited inside company buildings and on company property, except as required by law. In Florida, employers cannot prohibit employees from keeping a legally owned firearm locked inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in the company parking lot, provided the firearm is kept for lawful purposes and out of sight. Employers also may not ask employees about firearms in their vehicles or search vehicles for firearms. Clarify any exceptions for licensed security personnel and note that weapons must never be exhibited on company property except for lawful defensive purposes.
- **Drug & Alcohol Usage** - Maintain a drug-free workplace policy that reserves the right to test for reasonable suspicion. Employees may not report to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Include guidance for medical marijuana users; consumption at work and impairment remain prohibited.
- **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act** - Covered employers (15+ employees) must provide reasonable accommodations for pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions unless doing so causes the business an undue hardship. Examples of reasonable accommodation include modified duties or flexible scheduling.
- **Lactation Accommodation** - Employers must provide a private, non-bathroom space and reasonable break time for nursing employees to express milk. Include details on how employees can request any accommodation needed.

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK - CONTINUED

- **Separation of Employment – Notice Periods and PTO Payouts** - Clarify expectations for notice periods upon resignation and outline how unused PTO may be paid out according to state law and company policy.
- **Separation of Employment – Equipment and Property Return** - Include procedures for returning company property (laptops, phones, ID badges) and specify timelines and consequences for non-compliance.
- **Workplace Monitoring and Informed Consent** - If monitoring tools (email, internet, cameras) are used, disclose this in the handbook. Explain what is monitored, the purpose for monitoring, and obtain employees' acknowledgment to ensure informed consent.
- **Attendance – Absenteeism & Tardiness** - Define attendance expectations and reporting procedures for absences and tardiness. State that time should not be rounded up and emphasize accurate timekeeping for compliance.
- **Onsite, Hybrid, Remote Work Expectations** - Outline expectations for each work arrangement, including availability, communication standards, time tracking, and safety requirements for remote work environments. Specify how employees should maintain productivity and accountability, such as adhering to core business hours and using approved collaboration tools. Clarify performance evaluation criteria and any limitations on eligibility for remote or hybrid work.
- **Social Media at Work** - Handbooks should clearly prohibit employees from creating personal social media content during work hours or on company property. This includes recording videos, posting to platforms like TikTok, or engaging in non-work-related social media activity while on the clock. Emphasize that company time and resources are for business purposes only, and violations may result in corrective action.
- **Emergency & Severe Weather Policies** - Handbooks should include clear procedures for handling severe weather, natural disasters, and public health emergencies. Outline expectations for employee communication, reporting, and safety during closures or disruptions. Specify how pay, remote work options, and leave will be managed when normal operations are interrupted. Include guidance for essential personnel and ensure employees know where to find emergency updates and resources.

**We recommend auditing the following HR practices within your organization**

	<p><b>Audit Employee Files</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review employee files annually for completeness of all documents.</li> <li>• Exclude private/personal documents from employee files. This includes drug test records, healthcare records, financial statements, court orders, and background checks.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audit HR People Management Processes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure hiring managers are following recruiting, interviewing and onboarding procedures and termination procedures.</li> <li>• If not currently a part of your hiring process, we recommend implementing pre-employment professional reference checks on all candidates you are considering hiring. Utilize your Seay HR client discount with <a href="#">National Employment Screening</a>.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audit Company I-9 Compliance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check to be sure you are using the most up-to-date <b>I-9 form</b> <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-9.pdf">https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-9.pdf</a></li> <li>• E-Verify is required by some states and for federal government contractors, as it's a quick and easy way to verify work authorization. We recommend it for all employers.</li> <li>• Conduct a comprehensive I-9 audit as immigration reform is increasing across the country and \$30b is being set aside to increase enforcement.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audit Job Descriptions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment regulations and HR Best Practices both require a valid job description for each job. Review each role in your organization and create and update job descriptions to accurately reflect the responsibilities of each role.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Review Paid Leave Policies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit paid leave programs to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local requirements. States continue to introduce new paid family and medical leave laws, so confirm your policies reflect current regulations. Review utilization and tracking processes to ensure accurate recordkeeping and prevent misuse. Verify that managers understand how to approve and monitor leave requests consistently.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audit and Update Employment Labor Law Posters</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that your company is up to date on all required employment posters, and they are placed in prominent locations. Federal regulations require six (6) posters; various states and municipalities require additional posters.</li> <li>• <b>Federal Link:</b> <a href="https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm">https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm</a></li> <li>• <b>State Links:</b> <a href="https://www.dol.gov/whd/contacts/state_of.htm">https://www.dol.gov/whd/contacts/state_of.htm</a></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audit Pay Equity and Transparency</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay equity and transparency continue to be important areas of focus. Employers are required to analyze, report pay gaps, and provide more information about pay to job applicants and employees.</li> <li>• Check state and local regulations for any location in which you are recruiting to see the latest pay transparency requirements on job descriptions and job postings. Fourteen states now have pay transparency requirements; even if you aren't located in that state, if you are hiring there, you may be required to show a pay range on your job descriptions and job postings.</li> </ul>



# Review

Reviewing the following components of HR can help you stay compliant in 2026.

	<b>Review Compensation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct annual compensation studies to ensure pay rates remain competitive and compliant with expanding pay transparency laws. Include analysis of internal pay equity and market benchmarks.</li></ul>
	<b>Review Exempt Classification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verify that exempt employees meet both the salary and duties tests for their respective type of exemption. Anticipate potential increases in federal and state salary thresholds and adjust classifications accordingly.</li></ul>
	<b>Review AI Use in Hiring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate how AI tools are integrated into recruiting and selection processes. Ensure algorithms comply with anti-discrimination laws and do not create bias in candidate screening. Confirm transparency by informing applicants when AI is used and provide human oversight for final decisions. Review vendor compliance certifications and maintain documentation for regulatory audits.</li></ul>
	<b>Review Non-Compete Agreements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor developments in federal and state restrictions on non-compete clauses. While the FTC has abandoned its efforts to implement a nationwide ban on non-compete agreements, several states have enacted bans or stricter requirements. Ensure agreements comply with current laws and also review non-solicitation or confidentiality agreements.</li></ul>
	<b>Review USERRA Compliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure policies and practices comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). With increased National Guard and military reserve activations, employers must understand obligations for job protection, continuation of benefits, and timely reinstatement of returning service members. Confirm that managers are trained in these requirements, and that leave and reemployment procedures are clearly documented.</li></ul>
	<b>Review Pay Transparency &amp; Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audit job postings and pay practices to comply with state and local transparency requirements. Address any pay gaps and document corrective actions as needed.</li></ul>
	<b>Review Remote/Hybrid Work Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirm that policies clearly define expectations for availability, communication, time tracking, and safety for remote work environments. Include guidance on equipment use and data security.</li></ul>



# Schedule

Now is the time to schedule these important HR activities for 2026.

<b>Schedule Minimum Wage Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor and implement changes to state and local minimum wage rates effective January 1, 2026, including CA, CT, ME, MI, NJ, NY, WA, and VA. Several states and municipalities continue to increase wage rates annually. Verify compliance for all locations where employees work.</li></ul>
<b>Schedule Employee Engagement Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct an annual employee opinion or engagement survey to identify trends and address issues proactively. Utilize results to improve employee retention, workplace culture, and employee engagement.</li></ul>
<b>Schedule Harassment &amp; Discrimination Prevention Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide annual training for all employees and managers covering harassment, discrimination, and retaliation prevention. Include updates on protected categories and remote work considerations.</li><li>• While you are at it, consider scheduling HR for managers, workplace safety, and other critical types of annual training.</li></ul>
<b>Schedule Required Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EEO-1 Reports: Employers with 100+ employees or federal contractors with 50+ employees must file electronically.</li><li>• VETS-4212 Reports: Required for most federal contractors.</li><li>• Affirmative Action Plans for veterans and individuals with disabilities remain mandatory for covered federal contractors. Employers should continue to maintain these plans, update them annually, and be ready for OFCCP audits.</li><li>• State New Hire Reports: Submit timely reports to state agencies for all new hires.</li></ul>
<b>Schedule Pay Equity Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan a mid-year audit of pay practices to ensure compliance with pay transparency and equity laws. Address gaps and document corrective actions.</li></ul>
<b>Schedule Handbook &amp; Policy Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and update policies impacted by new legislation, such as AI use, workplace monitoring, and non-compete restrictions.</li><li>• If your handbook has not been reviewed by an HR professional in the last 2 years, schedule a comprehensive handbook review and revision.</li></ul>

# HR Trends and Recommendations for 2026



## Skills-Based Hiring

Continue prioritizing skills over traditional credentials. Employers should refine assessments and training programs to identify and develop talent based on capabilities rather than degrees.



## Employee Well-Being & Mental Health

Expand well-being initiatives to include mental health resources, stress management programs, and prioritizing well-being.



## AI Integration & Workforce Readiness

AI adoption is accelerating across HR and operations. Employers should provide training on responsible AI use, data privacy, and ethical consideration.



## Upskilling and Reskilling

Rapid technological change requires ongoing investment in employee development. Focus on digital literacy, leadership skills, and adaptability to future roles.



## Workplace Inclusivity & Equity

Strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Address pay equity, accessibility, and cultural competency to attract and retain top talent.



## Generational Workforce Shifts

Prepare for a multigenerational workforce with tailored benefits and communication strategies. Gen Z and Millennials, for example, prioritize flexibility and purpose-driven work.



## Financial Wellness Programs

Expand beyond literacy to include tools for budgeting, debt management, and retirement planning. Financial security supports overall employee engagement.



## Health & Life Stage Accommodations

Include policies for pregnancy, lactation, menopause, and caregiving responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements and supportive benefits are increasingly expected.



## *An HR Compliance Audit Can Help You Navigate this Checklist with Ease!*

Having Seay HR complete an HR Audit will help you reduce or eliminate any potential liability or exposure by checking to see that you have the “HR Best Practices” you need to hire and retain good employees and providing you with the comfort and assurance that you are in compliance with employment regulations.

Contact our team today!

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