

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023



Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

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Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
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Identification of the Board

Board Member	Duty Station	Date Appointed	Term Expires
Dr. Bradley Cross Optometrist - Chairperson	Soldotna	March 1, 2019	March 1, 2023
Dr. Michael Mavencamp Optometrist	Fairbanks	March 1, 2021	March 1, 2025
Dr. Kathleen Rice Optometrist	Kenai	March 1, 2022	March 1, 2026
Dr. Pamela Steffes Optometrist	Sitka	March 1, 2016	March 1, 2024
Vacant Public Member			

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Identification of Staff

Ashley Carabajal – Licensing Examiner

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Narrative Statement

During FY 23:

- 18 new licenses were issued
- 23 licenses lapsed since the last report
- 223 active optometry licenses at the time of this report

5 meetings were held during the fiscal year 2023. All of these meetings were teleconferenced due to COVID-19 restrictions and board member discretion.

- October 21, 2022 - Teleconferenced
- November 17, 2022 - Teleconferenced
- January 12, 2023 - Teleconferenced
- January 20, 2023 - Teleconferenced
- April 14, 2023 - Teleconferenced

These meetings were held to review and approve ongoing regulation projects, license application reviews and approvals, license audits, and correspondence with Department of Commerce personnel.

The trust of the public and the protection of Alaskans is the primary mission of the board, and that mission was represented as the focus of our meetings and ongoing regulatory projects. License applications were carefully reviewed throughout the year using OnBoard Board Secure Board Portal Software. This platform, with online voting, allowed for expedient decisions when appropriate. Some applications required full board discussions which took place during our teleconferenced meetings.

Continuing education audits were reviewed and finalized, as well as investigative reports that required review and board actions were completed during our meetings. All correspondence requiring board attention, input, and decisions have been reviewed and action taken.

Dr. Michael Mavencamp was appointed to the board in April of 2022, filling an empty seat. Dr Cross was reappointed in May of 2023 to another 4-year term. The public member seat remained unfilled for the duration of the fiscal year. Recruitment efforts are underway to find a suitable public board member.

The COVID-19 Emergency Order was still in effect during the majority of this annual reporting period. Continuing Education venues are back to in person live meetings and the restrictions on obtaining CE's live have been eliminated. A discussion during the October 2022 meeting was held in regard to the possibility of changing our CE requirements for renewals, but it was decided to not make any changes at the time due to the expected expiration of the emergency order.

Three investigations were opened during the fiscal year. Two of them were related to continuing education requirements and were resolved and closed. The third investigation is ongoing and related to professional misconduct.

During FY 2023, one regulatory project was finalized and another 4 were initiated. The finalized project was an update to 12 AAC 48.035 relating to Temporary Military courtesy licenses. This clarified the regulatory language to eliminate any confusion about a temporary license not having a different therapeutic ability than a regularly obtained license.

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Narrative Statement (continued)

The other projects that have been started relate to the following:

- 12 AAC 48.011(a) (7), 48.020(c) (5), 48.026(c) (7), 48.900(c) (6) Verification of Federal Employment. This will reduce barriers to licensure for applicants who have been employed by Federal Agencies.
- 12 AAC 48.020(c) License by Credentials. This change clarifies that the referenced course must be taken post Optometry School graduation.
- 12 AAC 48.200 License renewals and continuing education. This regulation change allows the board to exercise flexibility in granting license renewal to applicants who may have encountered acute illness or other hardship during the license renewal period.
- 12 AAC 48.370 Telehealth. The new regulation will add to the scope and standards for Optometric services provided by telehealth in Alaska.

The Legislative Sunset Audit was completed and has extended the Optometry Board until June of 2026.

The status of the board balance sheet continues to operate with a surplus. With that a license fee increase is not anticipated in the near future.

Travel expenses continued to be minimal as all meetings were held by teleconference. No travel to outside meetings occurred in the last fiscal year.

An annual report has been compiled and delivered to ARBO. Much of the data in this report was used to construct the ARBO annual report.

Staffing changes in Juneau have led to the temporary suspension of the biweekly Joint Board Chair meetings. The PDMP meetings have also been discontinued for now.

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Budget Recommendations for FY 2024

Budget Recommendations section anticipates the board’s fiscal priorities for the upcoming year. Please complete all parts of this section with details about anticipated meetings, conferences, memberships, supplies, equipment, to other board requests. Meeting expenses that are being funded through third-party reimbursement or direct booking must be identified separately from expenses paid through license fees (receipt- supported services or RSS). Be sure to explain any items listed as “other” so they may be tracked appropriately.

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
October 6, 2023	Teleconference	4	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify): Staff compensation.			\$ 1,000.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 1,000.00

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
April 2024	Teleconference	4	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify): Staff compensation.			\$ 1,000.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 1,000.00

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
TBD	Teleconference	4	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify): Staff compensation.			\$ 300.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 300.00

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Budget Recommendations for FY 2024 (continued)

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
TBD	Teleconference	4	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify): Staff compensation.			\$ 300.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 300.00

Travel Required to Perform Examinations

Not Applicable

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

- Airfare:
- Hotel:
- Ground:
- Conference:
- Other (Please Specify):

Total Estimated Cost:

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Budget Recommendations for FY 2024 (continued)

Out-of-State Meetings and Additional In-State Travel (Rank in order of importance)

#1 Rank in Importance or Not Applicable

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
June 16-18, 2024	Nashville, TN		

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

Annual conference for the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO) where member boards congregate to discuss emerging topics related to the profession.

Expenditure	License Fees (RSS)	Third-Party Reimbursement	Third-Party Direct Booked	Total
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airfare:	\$ 800.00			\$ 800.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel:	\$ 1,000.00			\$ 1,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground:	\$ 100.00			\$ 100.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conference:	\$ 500.00			\$ 500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	\$ 0.00			\$ 0.00
Describe "Other" (break out all sections):				
Net Total:	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 2,400.00

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Budget Recommendations for FY 2024 (continued)

Non-Travel Budget Requests

- Not Applicable Resources Examinations
 Membership Training Other

Product or Service	Provider	Cost Per Event
Membership	ARBO	\$ 850.00

Description of item and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

The mission of ARBO is to represent and assist member licensing boards in regulating the practice of optometry for public welfare. ARBO's purpose is to exchange information and engage in programs and joint activities relating to the professional education, licensure and continuing education of optometrists, to improve reciprocal relations and help in solving the mutual problems of the member boards.

Other Items with a Fiscal Impact

- Not Applicable

Cost Per Event:

Number of Events:

Product or Service	Provider	Cost Per Event

Description of item and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

Summary of FY 2024 Fiscal Requests:

Board Meetings and Teleconferences:	\$ 2,600.00
Travel for Exams:	\$ 0.00
Out-of-State and Additional In-State Travel:	\$ 2,400.00
Dues, Memberships, Resources, Training:	\$ 850.00
Total Potential Third-Party Offsets:	\$ 0.00
Other:	\$ 0.00
Total Requested:	\$ 5,850.00

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Legislative Recommendations - Proposed Legislation for FY 2024

No Recommendations

The Board has no recommendations for proposed legislation at this time.

Recommendations

The Board has the following recommendations for proposed legislation:

Pending the outcome of our regulation project related to Telehealth, the board may have a legislative recommendation to remove Optometry from the Centralized statute that included Optometry without our approval or input.

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Regulation Recommendations - Proposed Regulations for FY 2024

No Recommendations

The Board has no recommendations for proposed regulations at this time.

Recommendations

The Board has the following recommendations for proposed regulations:

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Goals and Objectives

Part I

FY 2023's goals and objectives and how they were met:

1. Initiate a Telehealth regulatory project for Optometry.
Achieved by initiating a project that is currently being reviewed by the Law Department.
2. Monitor our fiscal health through the fiscal year.
Achieved and successfully grew our surplus in the board balance sheet.
3. Provide board updates to AKOA and ARBO.
Achieved both by delivering reports to both organizations.
4. Remain adaptive to changes related to COVID-19.
Achieved through the eventual expiration of emergency orders.
5. Implement recommendations of the Legislative Sunset Audit.
Achieved through following recommendations.

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Goals and Objectives (continued)

Part II

FY 2024's goals and objectives, and proposed methods to achieve them.

Describe any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and required resources:

In addition to the ongoing goals and objectives in place such as regular meetings and reporting, the following goals will be in our sights for FY 2024:

1. Continue to work with the Department of Commerce to complete the 4-part regulation project that has been initiated.
2. Monitor our fiscal health as the next FY progresses. Our goal is to prevent future license fee increases by wise stewardship of our current surplus.
3. Provide board updates to the Alaska Optometric Association and the ARBO at their annual meetings.
4. Remain vigilant and adaptive to the changing needs of licensees and the Alaskan public in the face of a changing workplace and the potential for future health emergencies. Ensuring the safety of both groups remains our priority.

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Sunset Audit Recommendations

Date of Last Legislative Audit: 6/1/2022

Board Sunset Date: 6/1/2026

Audit Recommendation:

Process renewals and audits with more efficiency.

Action Taken:

The use of Onboard has resulted in efficient processing of information related to renewals and audits.

Next Steps:

Continue to use efficient methods to achieve the goals of processing applications and audits with no delays.

Complete : No

Yes

If yes, date completed: 06/01/2023