WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: PERFORMANCE METRICS AND PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES IMPROVEMENT

FINAL REPORT
TASK ORDER NUMBER 2160-21-06

Submitted to:
Office of Research and Implementation
Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Submitted by:
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OKLAHOMA
Transportation

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APPROXIMATE CONVERSIONS TO SI UNITS

SYMBOL	WHEN YOU KNOW	MULTIPLY BY	TO FIND	SYMBOL
LENGTH				
in	inches	25.4	millimeters	mm
ft	feet	0.305	meters	m
yd	yards	0.914	meters	m
mi	miles	1.61	kilometers	km
AREA				
in^2	square inches	645.2	square millimeters	mm^2
ft^2	square feet	0.093	square meters	m^2
yd^2	square yard	0.836	square meters	m^2
ac	acres	0.405	hectares	ha
mi^2	square miles	2.59	square kilometers	km^2
VOLUME				
fl oz	fluid ounces	29.57	milliliters	mL
gal	gallons	3.785	liters	L
ft^3	cubic feet	0.028	cubic meters	m^3
yd^3	cubic yards	0.765	cubic meters	m^3
NOTE: volumes greater than 1000 L shall be shown in m^3				
MASS				
oz	ounces	28.35	grams	g
lb	pounds	0.454	kilograms	kg
T	short tons (2000 lb)	0.907	megagrams (or "metric ton")	Mg (or "t")
TEMPERATURE (exact degrees)				
°F	Fahrenheit	5 (F-32)/9 or (F-32)/1.8	Celsius	°C
ILLUMINATION				
fc	foot-candles	10.76	lux	lx
fl	foot-Lamberts	3.426	candela/m^2	cd/m^2
FORCE and PRESSURE or STRESS				
lbf	poundforce	4.45	newtons	N
lbf/in^2	poundforce per square inch	6.89	kilopascals	kPa

APPROXIMATE CONVERSIONS FROM SI UNITS

SYMBOL	WHEN YOU KNOW	MULTIPLY BY	TO FIND	SYMBOL
LENGTH				
mm	millimeters	0.039	inches	in
m	meters	3.28	feet	ft
m	meters	1.09	yards	yd
km	kilometers	0.621	miles	mi
AREA				
mm^2	square millimeters	0.0016	square inches	in^2
m^2	square meters	10.764	square feet	ft^2
m^2	square meters	1.195	square yards	yd^2
ha	hectares	2.47	acres	ac
km^2	square kilometers	0.386	square miles	mi^2
VOLUME				
mL	milliliters	0.034	fluid ounces	fl oz
L	liters	0.264	gallons	gal
m^3	cubic meters	35.314	cubic feet	ft^3
m^3	cubic meters	1.307	cubic yards	yd^3
MASS				
g	grams	0.035	ounces	oz
kg	kilograms	2.202	pounds	lb
Mg (or "t")	megagrams (or "metric ton")	1.103	short tons (2000 lb)	T
TEMPERATURE (exact degrees)				
°C	Celsius	1.8C+32	Fahrenheit	°F
ILLUMINATION				
lx	lux	0.0929	foot-candles	fc
cd/m^2	candela/m^2	0.2919	foot-Lamberts	fl
FORCE and PRESSURE or STRESS				
N	newtons	0.225	poundforce	lbf
kPa	kilopascals	0.145	poundforce per square inch	lbf/in^2

*SI is the symbol for the International System of Units. Appropriate rounding should be made to comply with Section 4 of ASTM E380. (Revised March 2003)

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1.0 Introduction

For many state DOTs, workforce development has long been a cornerstone in increasing workplace efficiency and worker happiness and retention. State DOTs across the country face similar issues in these areas, with those failing to adapt routinely losing valuable employees to the private sector and struggling to maintain operational efficiency whenever unforeseen challenges arise. Some states have been more successful than others in mitigating these issues, be it through instituting more trainings for the workforce, clearly documenting job duties and career roadmaps, and improving employee satisfaction to help reduce turnover. Oklahoma Transportation (OT), in consultation with The University of Oklahoma (OU), decided to develop a strategy that would help place the agency in a better position to confront these challenges and move further towards its goal of being one of the top ten DOTs in the country.

This project developed out of previous task orders focused on knowledge management. During those task orders, team members from OU and OT identified specific items, such as improved processes and procedures, that would be beneficial to the agency. These goals lay outside the current scope of the knowledge management task orders and so the group developed a new task order to address these issues. These issues, if addressed, would ideally streamline and enhance employee engagement, efficiency, and retention. Other needs identified included improving existing performance metrics and evaluations, incorporating knowledge management best practices, and identifying and documenting up-to-date processes and procedures for critical operational functions.

2.0 Project Management

The initial objectives for the task order included the following:

1. Deliver a literature review on similar initiatives in other states, including transportation agencies.

2. The librarian and consultant will form a team with OT representatives, (e.g., Human Resources, Office of Research), and develop/implement a strategy to complete task order objectives.

3. The task order team will review current job descriptions and performance evaluations and prepare recommendations for timely and needed updates to employee performance metrics for OT employees.

4. The team will implement knowledge management best practices and work towards drafting a documentation system guidebook and strategic plan for recording up-to-date processes and procedures.

5. The task order team will recommend a digital repository for documenting up-to-date processes and procedures, performance metrics, and performance evaluations.

The workforce development team, made up of Michael Molina (OU), Musharraf Zaman (OU), Ron Curb (OT), Elizabeth Blais (OT), April Meadows (OT) and Scott Lange (OT) met several times in the lead-up to the project to refine deliverables and select a consulting firm to assist with the objectives. The team selected CTC & Associates to provide consulting services, conduct surveys and interviews, and prepare deliverables including a scoping document, literature review, national survey, and recommendations. The workforce development task order faced a reduced time frame, lasting only six months (April-September 2021) rather than the standard twelve months

(October 2020-September 2021). Given the reduced length, CTC & Associates advised the team that there would not be enough time to complete creation of a guidebook on updated processes and procedures, or other tangible products. Rather, they recommended this task order be used to conduct scoping activities, gather research, and prepare recommendations that would set the foundation for development of a guidebook in a future task order. The team approved this shift in focus, with the idea that additional task orders will build off the initial scoping and research conducted during this project. Two additional task orders have been approved that will build off this work, including one that will address processes and procedures and compare recommended procedures with actual processes. Michael met regularly with CTC & Associates throughout the project, providing assistance and guidance on direction and focus, and reviewed and disseminated materials to the rest of the team.

CTC developed a set of deliverables based on requests from the workforce development team. One deliverable involved examining current practices at OT (Appendix A). This document included a series of discussions with stakeholders and project team members within OT's HR department. The document then reviewed OT's employee performance metrics, candidate interviews, exit interviews, employee training and development, and career roadmapping, making observations and statements on current OT practices. The next deliverable was a literature search which informed the development of a national survey conducted by CTC regarding the aforementioned target areas (literature search and survey results are included in the final report from CTC in Appendix B). CTC then provided the national survey findings as well as a final report synthesizing this information (see Appendix B). Results and recommendations

from this report are provided below, with more in-depth analysis and recommendations provided in the CTC report in Appendix B.

3.0 Results and Recommendations

Taken from CTC & Associates report attached in Appendix B, the following action items are suggested:

Employee Evaluation and Performance Metrics

Action Item 1: Document the evaluation process. Develop and publish guidance that clearly outlines the evaluation process, metrics that will be used, and expectations for managers and staff alike.

Action Item 2: Expand, define and quantify metrics. Expand ODOT's current metrics to include behavioral *s*kills such as communication, initiative and problem solving, which are valuable for a successful team and should be recognized in tandem with job-specific knowledge. Also, providing a rating scale gives managers both flexibility and structure in their assessments and encourages discussion. Assigning numeric values to the scales would also provide ODOT with an objective framework for identifying and rewarding superior and addressing less-stellar performances.

Action Item 3: Identify performance incentives. An attainable rewards system helps employees feel valued and can include monetary bonuses (if possible) or other benefits such as public recognition or additional time off work.

Employee Training and Development

Action Item 4: Promote a growth mindset. Raise awareness of the opportunities that are available to employees and then recognize staff who have completed trainings that require significant investment and/or result in career change.

Action Item 5: Advertise the perks. Remind employees of benefits such as tuition assistance and reimbursement for continuing education programs and conference attendance. Not only could this effort help ODOT staff become better in their jobs and feel more fulfilled, but it could help attract new staff as well.

Career Roadmapping

Action Item 6: Highlight career paths. Help existing staff visualize career pathways by sharing general information such as what education or training is needed to do the job, the salary and other benefits of the work and a listing of ODOT jobs that are similar or related. Post these to ODOT's website or share through email and news sources to increase awareness within the agency.

Action Item 7: Celebrate achievements. Besides recognizing devoted staff members and exhibiting an encouraging and appreciative workplace culture, highlighting the transitions and promotions that others earn could serve to inspire the entire staff.

Candidate and Exit Interviews

Action Item 8: Participate in panels. Provide consistency, expertise and assistance to hiring managers by participating in panel interviews.

Action Item 9: Become a go-to resource. Support managers by publishing and providing written guidance they can reference. Even if this information is available elsewhere, it should be compiled and made available by ODOT HR.

Action Item 10: Develop an offboarding checklist. Create and share a list of tasks that must be accomplished before an employee leaves. Include property that must be returned as well as who is responsible for making sure each action is completed.

Action Item 11: Emphasize exit interviews. Explore strategies that would encourage exiting staff to provide more information about their reasons for leaving, such as shortening the form and making it available for digital submission. Then, use simple tools to track the information and identify areas of concern and opportunities to increase employee retention.

For employee performance metrics, CTC suggests developing current metrics to include ranges (such as exceeds expectations, meets expectations, etc) which would increase effectiveness. To facilitate this, OT will need to incorporate a system to track results and monitor changes in employees' performance over time. This will allow measurements of the metrics and help managers identify gaps in training or performance issues that they could then address. CTC also notes that employee performance evaluations have no bearing on their salary, meaning there is little incentive or accountability in an employee's daily work.

For improved employee training and development, instituting a formalized mentorship program would be a substantial benefit. In a separate task order titled "Development of a Transportation Workforce Development Program for Oklahoma," preliminary survey results of over 200 OT employees suggested that improved training offerings and a stronger mentorship program were much desired. For career

roadmapping, OT will need to make it easier for staff to visualize different careers within the organization. This can be done through creation of flyers or setting up a page on ODOT's website that shows similar or related jobs, the training needed to do the job, and wages and benefits of that position. Several examples from other state DOTs are provided under 6.3 in the CTC report below.

CTC also recommends that for exit interviews, OT will need to emphasize them as a tool for making meaningful improvements to the organization. CTC recommends shorting the form and making it available for a digital submission. Using external tools such as SurveyMonkey can also better capture responses and help the agency track patterns.

Recommendation for a Digital Repository

In recommending a digital repository for documenting performance metrics and procedures, and for storing a documentation guidebook, this report shows that most DOTs host documentation on their intranet using internal applications. To maximize cost-effectiveness and reduce the learning curve for many employees, Microsoft Teams can be used for creating specific pages and wikis and storing files and documentation relating to those pages' topics. For example, an MS Teams channel can be created to store processes and procedures based on individual departments, using professional organizational standards. While the searching functionality is limited, files can be organized within folders and categories to mimic the layout of a guidebook. In the image below, a sample Teams page has been created to store and organize processes and procedures in a hypothetical division of an agency called District 2 Construction. Members of this team will have access to content and files related to policies,

procedures, processes, and a glossary of terms. Other sections can be added as needed. Clicking on each section reveals files related to that topic. In the image shown below, clicking on Procedures reveals related documents and files. While searchability is limited in Teams, this can be a way to organize resources in a cost-effective and accessible way.
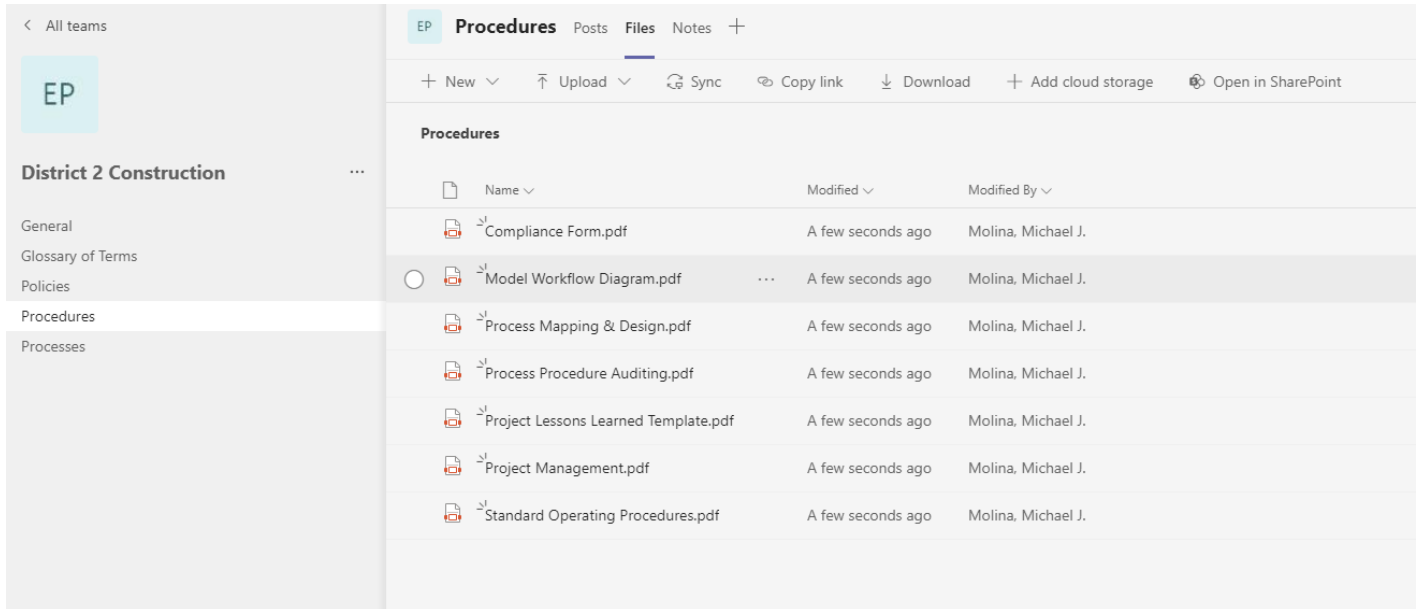
Image of a sample Teams channel for storing processes and procedures.

Another free option would be constructing a page via SharePoint. This would allow greater customization and standardization to streamline with the rest of OT's intranet design. In the example page below, there are separate sections for manager resources, technology help, a searchable library, a section for forms, contacts, handbooks, HR resources, and PowerPoint presentations related to that particular division of the agency. This can be customized to include whatever categories the division may require. Creating a searchable library page would allow for greater findability of resources, incorporating library standards including tagging items with metadata, categorizing by topics, and other helpful tools.

SharePoint can not only be used for storing processes and procedures but for tracking performance measures and evaluations. Special permissions can be set up for managers of the site, allowing them access to specific pages, such as an individual employee's performance evaluation. That individual employee would be restricted from seeing this content but could access the other helpful documents and resources on the page related to their division. In this way, SharePoint can be used as an all-in-one site for a particular division of an agency. General employees can view processes and procedures, presentations, and other resources, while managers can view employee performance and other upper-level content. The possibilities of customization with SharePoint are impressive and would be suitable for integrating into OT's intranet. If either MS Teams or SharePoint are utilized, it would strongly be recommended to consult with either knowledge management or information services professionals for incorporating best practices relating to information storage/access and cataloging.
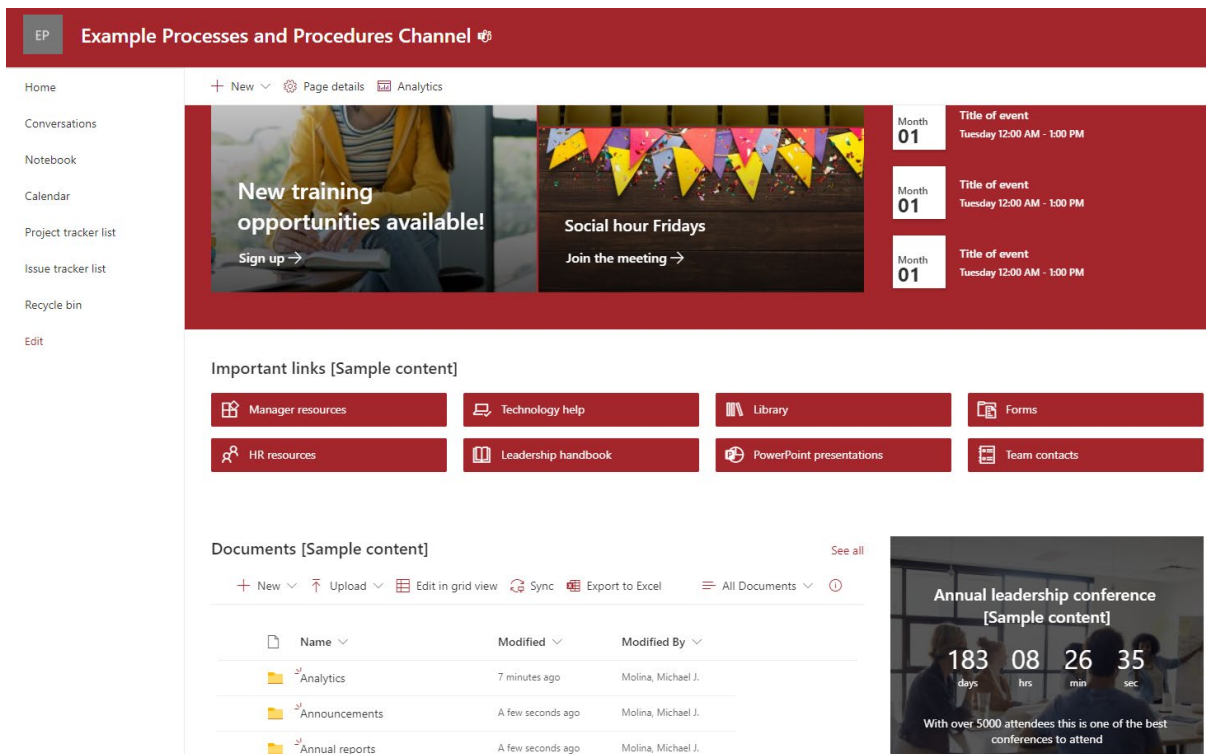
Image of a sample SharePoint page for storing information for an agency division.

Lastly, there are several paid options that are available. One of the more popular examples is Bloomfire, used by private companies such as Southwest Airlines, Whole Foods, Capitol One, and others. The platform has advanced searching features using AI-powered searching that indexes every word in every file and even transcribes words spoken in videos and audio files. Knowledge can be conveyed in a variety of ways including text, charts, images, audio, and video. Pages can be customized to meet specific group's needs. The platform tends to be more visual-centric, with a competitive cost for enterprise-size organizations. Costs for the basic and plus tiers begin at $9 and $17 per user per month respectively.
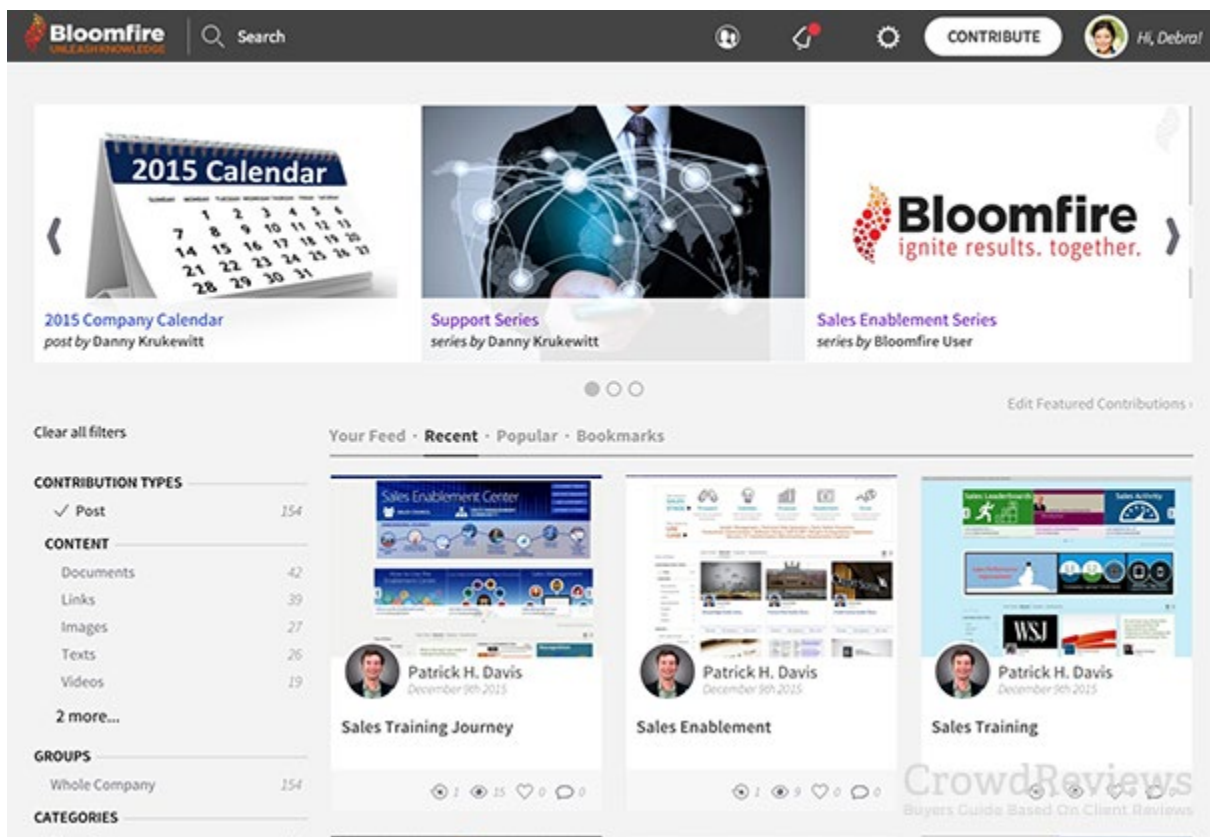
Image of a sample Bloomfire page.

Guru is another knowledge management application that has been highly rated by its users and adopted by a variety of companies including Spotify, Shopify, Slack, and others. Besides being a repository for information, Guru also offers knowledge alerts to keep teams current on latest updates in processes and procedures, verification workflow and browser extensions to ensure employees always have access to the information they need to complete a task, integration with Microsoft Teams, and automated onboarding providing new employees a single place to find all the organization knowledge they need to get started. Costs for Guru at the Builder and Expert levels are $10 and $20 per user per month.
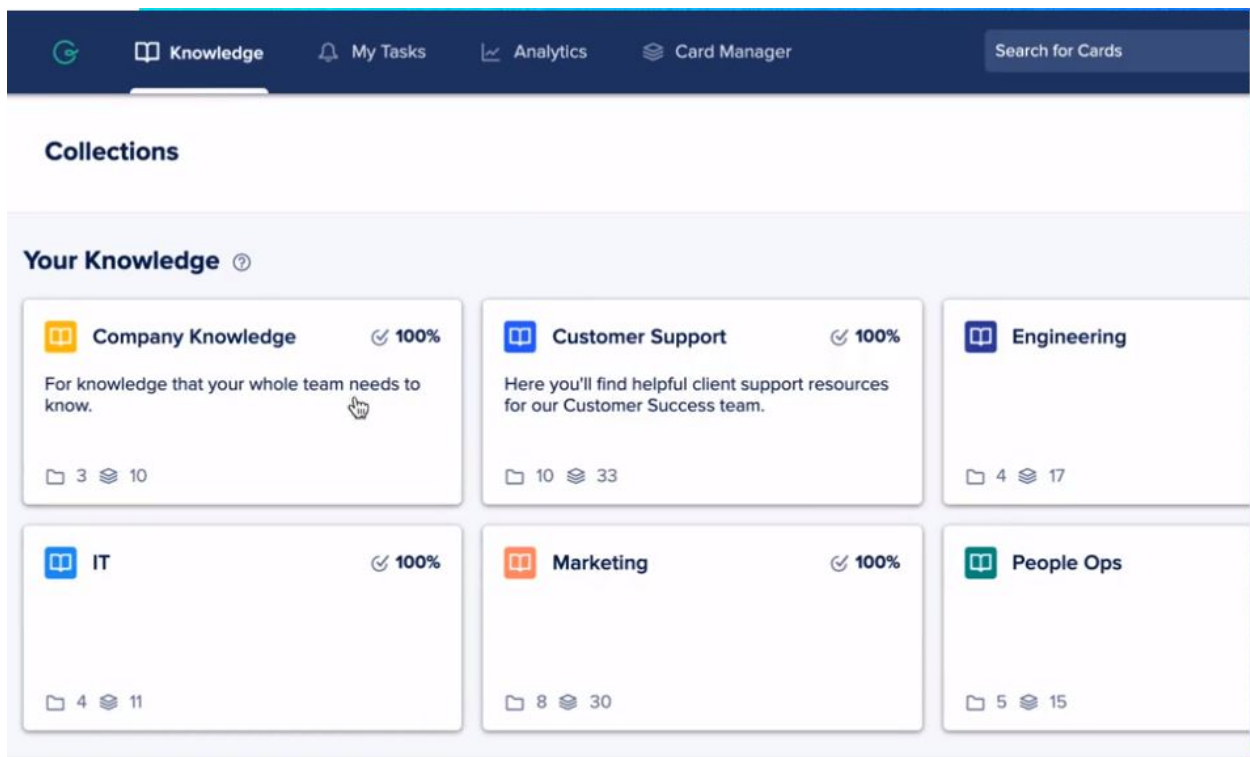
Image of a sample Guru page.

In recommending a digital repository for documenting up-to-date processes and procedures, performance metrics, and performance evaluations, using a platform that is already familiar to OT employees is recommended. Many employees are already familiar with MS Teams and incorporating MS Teams pages into SharePoint Online would be a natural extension and at a much lower cost compared to Bloomfire or Guru. The customizable nature of SharePoint lends itself to be an ideal resource for hosting a guidebook on processes and procedures as well as repository for storing resources and information that each department needs. Ideally, each division within the agency will have their own SharePoint, with access to resources unique to them, all sharable across the agency with viewing restrictions where necessary. As mentioned earlier, knowledge management and information services professionals should be consulted when constructing these sites. If the agency desires more comprehensive assistance that an offering from a private company might provide, then Bloomfire or Guru would be viable options. Both provide customer support and advanced features and are customizable to fit agency needs. As a final recommendation, if the agency is concerned about price, then going with SharePoint would be the ideal solution

Appendix A: CTC & Associates Scoping Document

Scoping a Workforce Development Study
Summary of Current Practices

Deliverable for Task 2: Examine Current Practices

Prepared by CTC & Associates LLC
June 8, 2021

To understand Oklahoma DOT's (ODOT's) current practices in order to inform future tasks, CTC conducted a series of discussions with stakeholders and project panel members within ODOT's Human Resources (HR) Division. Contacts included:

- Elizabeth Blais, Training and Professional Development Program Manager
- Keith Stout, Human Resources Programs Manager
- April Meadows, Talent/Recruitment Manager
- Scott Lange, Human Resources Division Manager

These informative discussions provided valuable insight on the various aspects of ODOT's current workforce development practices. Summarized below are findings in these categories:

- Employee performance metrics
- Candidate interviews
- Exit interviews
- Employee training and development
- Career roadmapping
- Additional considerations

Employee Performance Metrics

Supporting Document: State of Oklahoma Performance Management Process (PMP), a standard form each division uses to evaluate an employee's performance.

Each ODOT division conducts its own employee evaluations each year according to its own timeline, and submits the completed documents to the ODOT HR division. ODOT HR has recommended a calendar-year timeline to make it easier to track divisions that have not completed these reviews. Conversely, changing to a calendar-year process would shift the workload for HR's staff significantly, condensing a process that is currently spread over the entire year to just a few key months.

Using performance metrics as part of the evaluation process is a fairly new concept for ODOT, and each position's metrics have been developed based on an estimation of the information that can be gathered and measured to demonstrate success. Developing these further to incorporate ranges (such as exceeds expectations, meets expectations, etc.) would increase their effectiveness, but until there is a system in place to track the results and monitor changes in an employee's performance over time these metrics are not optimal for gauging performance. For instance, a manager could recommend training but whether the employee completes the training is not currently monitored.

An employee's performance evaluation currently has no bearing on their salary, so there is little accountability or incentive for the employee in their day-to-day work.

Candidate Interviews

For most open positions at ODOT, the division with the unfilled role provides HR with information about the job, such as location and duties. HR then posts the opening and creates a list of qualified respondents, removing applicants who do not meet the posted eligibility requirements, and sends that list back to the division to continue the interview and hiring process. There are exceptions to this process, such as unclassified positions and those that have been designated as direct-hire roles, which can be filled more easily and quickly.

Candidate interviews are conducted by a panel of experts assembled by the division, and HR is rarely part of this interview process or hiring new employees. Questions are supposed to be the same for each candidate, and divisions have their own processes for evaluating candidates' performance—some have weighted scoring systems, others offer bonus points based on the interview.

Human Capital Management (HCM), housed within the Office of Management & Enterprise Services (OMES), offers training programs for supervisors on a variety of topics, including interviewing best practices. Divisions have indicated to HR that they'd like more structure and guidance in this area from ODOT HR, which has considered developing its own training and best practices documentation.

A three-person team, representing ODOT's HR, Civil Rights and General Counsel divisions, has recently begun reviewing each of ODOT's 28 divisions to ensure consistency in the interview and hiring practices and gender and racial equality.

Exit Interviews

Supporting Document: ODOT Exit Review Survey, a standard form that exiting employees are expected to receive and return to ODOT HR.

There is no process in place when an ODOT employee announces their intent to leave. ODOT's Exit Review Survey is supplied to each division but passed on to the exiting employee at the division's discretion. These forms are rarely completed and returned; HR received only one completed form in 2020.

There is no incentive in place for an employee to submit the form. In addition, this form is focused on whether discrimination played a role in the employee's decision to leave—if discrimination was noted, HR takes action but if this is not noted there is no action taken. In effect, if an employee leaves for a better-paying job, for example, the form is saved but the information is not tracked or considered.

Exit interviews are an issue currently being considered by AASHTO's Committee on Knowledge Management, on which ODOT is an active member.

Employee Training and Development

Supporting Documents:
- ODOT New Employee Orientation Guide (Revised 2020), which is provided to all incoming employees.
- 2019 ODOT Salary Compensation Study, a review of each job code title to ensure ODOT remains competitive.

Onboarding
Before COVID-19, each division location would host one day-long orientation session per month to discuss and review standard processes such as payroll, ODOT culture, mission, Open Records Act issues, and more. Since COVID-19, this orientation has been conducted virtually in a much shorter format.

Mentorship
ODOT does not currently have a formalized mentorship program.

Career Advancement
When employees are identified for leadership positions within ODOT, they may be invited to a leadership academy.

OMES also offers a statewide leadership program. ODOT has the discretion to pay for this and may choose to send several employees to attend per year.

Job Training and Development
If ODOT employees ask to learn a skill, such as Excel, ODOT suggests they explore the options offered by LinkedIn Learning as a first step.

If several employees request training on the same topic, ODOT considers an in-person session and contracts with a trainer. In-person training is currently on hold during COVID-19.

ODOT offers tuition assistance to its employees, so long as classes relate to the employee's current position.

ODOT is willing to pay for continuing education and conference attendance, but these funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. HR would like to change this to a more equitable system, requiring divisions to identify funding needs and submit requests in advance.

Salary
ODOT conducts salary compensation studies when senior staff requests them. The most recent study was conducted in 2019 but has not been implemented.

Career Roadmapping

ODOT noted the challenge of finding candidates for some hard-to-fill positions. If ODOT could identify internal staff who were close to being qualified, they could target their recruitment efforts better. Making this possible would require creating and tracking pathways—such as additional education—that an employee could see to identify opportunities within ODOT.

Additional Considerations

OMES will be launching a new HR system provided by [Workday](#) in May 2022. This system will provide a range of improvements and capabilities for ODOT HR. It will automate and allow employees to control many of the administrative and transactional functions that HR provides currently, like those related to payroll and benefits, and free the HR staff to focus on other tasks like career coaching and consulting. In addition, [a new law](#) was passed in late April 2021 that will significantly impact Oklahoma's civil service employees. The new statute will take effect Jan. 2, 2022, and the extent of the impact is not yet well understood.

Appendix B: CTC & Associates Final Report

Scoping a Workforce Development Study for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Final Report

Prepared for
**Oklahoma Department of Transportation and
Michael Molina, Oklahoma Transportation Library**

Prepared by
CTC & Associates LLC

September 23, 2021

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Executive Summary

This study investigated and compared the workforce development practices and programs of state departments of transportation (DOTs) across the country in order to inform the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) of opportunities for possible improvements to its current practices. Specifically, ODOT hoped to learn more about:

- The qualitative and quantitative employee performance metrics that have been developed and applied, and how they are maintained.
- The written guidebooks, policies and strategic plans that guide the development and application of performance metrics.
- The digital tools and practices that can be used to document workforce development-related practices.
- The career roadmaps that have been developed for different levels and classes of employees.
- The policies and practices in place related to conducting candidate and exit interviews.

The information gathered in this effort is expected to assist with planning for and scoping a future workforce development study that will be undertaken by ODOT.

Working closely with ODOT's Human Resources (HR) Division, the research team of CTC & Associates completed a series of five interrelated tasks to gather the information: 1) Meeting with the ODOT project panel to manage the project's priorities and tasks, 2) Examining ODOT's current practices to develop a preliminary baseline of data from which to work, 3) Conducting a literature search, 4) Conducting a national survey of state DOTs and 5) Developing a final report that includes recommendations for future workforce development study efforts.

Strategic Solutions and Tactical Plans

Through these efforts, the research team identified a variety of tools and practices that have worked successfully for other agencies. Some of the solutions can likely be implemented by ODOT quickly with minimal effort and investment, but others may require more long-term strategic planning to put into place. Taken together, these highlight a diverse range of opportunities to help ODOT capitalize on the strengths of its existing workforce development program.

It is important to note the technology, legislation and parallel research efforts that were considered as part of this study and may affect the findings. In May 2022 ODOT will launch a new human resource management system that will provide advanced data tracking capabilities and increase programmatic efficiencies significantly. A new law passed by the Oklahoma Legislature will take effect January 2, 2022, impacting the civil service employees in the state. Finally, Oklahoma's Transportation Modernization initiative and a larger study into ODOT's workforce development practices are both ongoing investigations. The full extent of these efforts and how they will jointly and independently affect this study is not yet fully understood.

Long-Range Strategies

To maximize the potential of its workforce development processes, ODOT will need to identify goals and priorities for the future. The following list outlines the overarching trends in agency practices that ODOT could consider adopting and working toward over time:

- *Promoting a growth mindset* by offering professional and career development opportunities to all employees that will enhance their knowledge and skills in their current job or prepare them for another role within the agency.
- *Fostering a culture of leadership and learning* by creating leadership development programs as a practice to recruit new employees and retain current staff, investing in diversified sources to attain trained and experienced engineering managers.
- *Advocating for workforce development planning* by encouraging agency leadership to develop a workforce plan that aligns with the agency's strategic goals and includes key contributors.
- *Encouraging the use of career and professional development plans* for all employees that include SMART goals and other behavioral- and competency-based goals.
- *Using behavior- and workplace-related metrics* to assess employee performance and competency.
- *Providing training to staff conducting candidate interviews* that addresses relevant legislation, interview questions, compliance and equal opportunity issues, and other aspects of the interview process.
- *Conducting exit interviews*, which can be valuable sources of information about the employee experience, issues with management or leadership, and general improvements to the agency.
- *Expanding online opportunities* in all areas of workforce development and performance management, including career and professional development training, performance evaluations and interviewing processes.

Action Items

To help ODOT get started, the actions below can be put into place relatively quickly with minimal financial investment and may become easier to implement once ODOT's new human resources management system increases automation and alleviates staff resources. Highlights of the 11 action items are below, and greater detail and examples are provided in Section 6 of this report.

Employee Evaluation and Performance Metrics

Action Item 1: Document the evaluation process. Develop and publish guidance that clearly outlines the evaluation process, metrics that will be used, and expectations for managers and staff alike.

Action Item 2: Expand, define and quantify metrics. Expand ODOT's current metrics to include behavioral *s*kills such as communication, initiative and problem solving, which are valuable for a successful team and should be recognized in tandem with job-specific knowledge. Also, providing a rating scale gives managers both flexibility and structure in their assessments and encourages discussion. Assigning numeric values to the scales would also provide ODOT with an objective framework for identifying and rewarding superior and addressing less-stellar performances.

Action Item 3: Identify performance incentives. An attainable rewards system helps employees feel valued and can include monetary bonuses (if possible) or other benefits such as public recognition or additional time off work.

Employee Training and Development

Action Item 4: Promote a growth mindset. Raise awareness of the opportunities that are available to employees and then recognize staff who have completed trainings that require significant investment and/or result in career change.

Action Item 5: Advertise the perks. Remind employees of benefits such as tuition assistance and reimbursement for continuing education programs and conference attendance. Not only could this effort help ODOT staff become better in their jobs and feel more fulfilled, but it could help attract new staff as well.

Career Roadmapping

Action Item 6: Highlight career paths. Help existing staff visualize career pathways by sharing general information such as what education or training is needed to do the job, the salary and other benefits of the work and a listing of ODOT jobs that are similar or related. Post these to ODOT's website or share through email and news sources to increase awareness within the agency.

Action Item 7: Celebrate achievements. Besides recognizing devoted staff members and exhibiting an encouraging and appreciative workplace culture, highlighting the transitions and promotions that others earn could serve to inspire the entire staff.

Candidate and Exit Interviews

Action Item 8: Participate in panels. Provide consistency, expertise and assistance to hiring managers by participating in panel interviews.

Action Item 9: Become a go-to resource. Support managers by publishing and providing written guidance they can reference. Even if this information is available elsewhere, it should be compiled and made available by ODOT HR.

Action Item 10: Develop an offboarding checklist. Create and share a list of tasks that must be accomplished before an employee leaves. Include property that must be returned as well as who is responsible for making sure each action is completed.

Action Item 11: Emphasize exit interviews. Explore strategies that would encourage exiting staff to provide more information about their reasons for leaving, such as shortening the form and making it available for digital submission. Then, use simple tools to track the information and identify areas of concern and opportunities to increase employee retention.

Conclusions and Further Study

ODOT's HR Division plays an important role in the success of the entire agency. By working with employees to identify strategies and opportunities to improve the workplace experience and staff satisfaction, HR can help ODOT become more efficient, cost-effective and productive, and help the agency achieve its goals for the people of Oklahoma.

To that end, the long-range strategies identified in Section 5 and the action items in Section 6 have been developed to take advantage of ODOT's workforce development strengths and consider the agency's short- and long-term needs, evolving technological capabilities and ongoing research efforts.

While institutional change can take significant time and dedication to accomplish, incremental modifications can enhance ODOT's workplace culture, make processes more manageable for everyone involved, and help ODOT attract and retain an engaged workforce.

Going forward, additional research should include investigating the software programs and other technologies that can be used in coordination with ODOT's Workday system once it's in place.

1 Introduction

The Human Resources (HR) Division within the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) provides an array of critical tasks to optimize the agency's productivity and functionality, including staff support and welfare, legal and professional guidance and more.

To identify possible improvements to its workforce development program practices, ODOT sought to learn more about the successful practices of other state DOTs, such as:

- The qualitative and quantitative employee performance metrics that have been developed and applied, and how they are maintained.
- The written guidebooks, policies and strategic plans that guide the development and application of performance metrics.
- The digital tools and practices that can be used to document workforce development-related practices.
- The career roadmaps that have been developed for different levels and classes of employees.
- The policies and practices in place related to conducting candidate and exit interviews.

1.1 Project Approach

Researchers began by interviewing four staff members from ODOT's HR Division to learn more about the agency's current workforce development activities. These informative discussions provided valuable insight on the various aspects of ODOT's current practices, including the metrics used to evaluate employees' performance and the processes involved with conducting candidate and exit interviews.

Next, an extensive literature search identified and reviewed relevant domestic publications and resources related to workforce development practices, with a particular focus on the practices and processes used by public agencies.

Finally, an online survey was developed and distributed to the members of the [AASHTO Committee on Human Resources](#), which includes DOT representatives from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Twenty-two agencies responded, and follow-up interviews were conducted to supplement the survey results as needed. Full details of both the literature search and survey results are presented in individual task memorandums.

1.2 Reviewing This Report

A summary of ODOT's current practices is provided in Section 2. Summaries of the results of CTC's review of relevant national and state publications are provided in Section 3 and highlights of the findings of a nationwide survey of the workforce development practices of other state DOTs can be found in Section 4. Additional details for each of these sections can be found in the task memorandum developed for each task.

A list of the overarching trends in agency practices that ODOT could consider adopting and working toward over time appears in Section 5. Finally, a series of action items is provided in Section 6. These action items offer modest enhancements that could be made to ODOT's practices to improve the experience of working at ODOT for all employees.

2 Review of Current Practices

2.1 Background

Researchers conducted a series of discussions with stakeholders and project panel members within ODOT's HR Division to learn more about the agency's current practices and needs and to provide a preliminary baseline of data from which to work. These discussions were conducted individually with:

- Elizabeth Blais, Training and Professional Development Program Manager
- Keith Stout, Human Resources Programs Manager
- April Meadows, Talent/Recruitment Manager
- Scott Lange, Human Resources Division Manager

These informative conversations provided valuable insight on the various aspects of ODOT's current workforce development practices in the following areas: Performance metrics, candidate interviews, exit interviews, employee training and development and career roadmapping.

2.2 Employee Performance Metrics

Each ODOT division conducts its own employee evaluations each year according to its own timeline, and submits the completed documents to the ODOT HR Division. ODOT HR has recommended a calendar-year timeline to make it easier to track divisions that have not completed these reviews. Conversely, changing to a calendar-year process would shift the workload for HR's staff significantly, condensing a process that is currently spread over the entire year to just a few key months.

Using performance metrics as part of the evaluation process is a fairly new concept for ODOT, and each position's metrics have been developed based on an estimation of the information that can be gathered and measured to demonstrate success. Developing these further to incorporate ranges (such as exceeds expectations, meets expectations, etc.) would increase their effectiveness, but until there is a system in place to track the results and monitor changes in an employee's performance over time these metrics are not optimal for gauging performance. For instance, a manager could recommend training but whether the employee completes the training is not currently monitored.

An employee's performance evaluation currently has no bearing on their salary, so there is little accountability or incentive for the employee in their day-to-day work.

2.3 Candidate Interviews

For most open positions at ODOT, the division with the unfilled role provides HR with information about the job, such as location and duties. HR then posts the opening and creates a list of qualified respondents, removing applicants who do not meet the posted eligibility requirements, and sends that list back to the division to continue the interview and hiring process. There are exceptions to this process, such as unclassified positions and those that have been designated as direct-hire roles, which can be filled more easily and quickly.

Candidate interviews are conducted by a panel of experts assembled by the division, and HR is rarely part of this interview process or hiring new employees. Questions are supposed to be the same for each

candidate, and divisions have their own processes for evaluating candidates' performance—some have weighted scoring systems, others offer bonus points based on the interview.

Human Capital Management (HCM), housed within the Office of Management & Enterprise Services (OMES), offers training programs for supervisors on a variety of topics, including interviewing best practices. Divisions have indicated to HR that they'd like more structure and guidance in this area from ODOT HR, which has considered developing its own training and best practices documentation.

A three-person team, representing ODOT's HR, Civil Rights and General Counsel divisions, has recently begun reviewing each of ODOT's 28 divisions to ensure consistency in the interview and hiring practices and gender and racial equality.

2.4   Exit Interviews

There is no process that is triggered when an ODOT employee announces their intent to leave. ODOT's Exit Review Survey is supplied to each division but passed on to the exiting employee at the division's discretion. These forms are rarely completed and returned; HR received only one completed form in 2020.

There is no incentive in place for an employee to submit the form. In addition, this form is focused on whether discrimination played a role in the employee's decision to leave—if discrimination was noted, HR takes action but if this is not noted there is no action taken. In effect, if an employee leaves for a better-paying job, for example, the form is saved but the information is not tracked or considered.

Exit interviews are an issue currently being considered by AASHTO's Committee on Knowledge Management, on which ODOT is an active member.

2.5   Employee Training and Development

Onboarding
Before COVID-19, each division location would host one day-long orientation session per month to discuss and review standard processes such as payroll, ODOT culture, mission, Open Records Act issues and more. Since COVID-19, this orientation has been conducted virtually in a much shorter format.

Mentorship
ODOT does not currently have a formalized mentorship program.

Career Advancement
When employees are identified for leadership positions within ODOT, they may be invited to a leadership academy.

OMES also offers a statewide leadership program. ODOT has the discretion to pay for this and may choose to send several employees to attend per year.

Job Training and Development
If ODOT employees ask to learn a skill, such as Excel, ODOT suggests they explore the options offered by LinkedIn Learning as a first step.

If several employees request training on the same topic, ODOT considers an in-person session and contracts with a trainer. In-person training is currently on hold during COVID-19.

ODOT offers tuition assistance to its employees, so long as classes relate to the employee's current position.

ODOT is willing to pay for continuing education and conference attendance, but these funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. HR would like to change this to a more equitable system, requiring divisions to identify funding needs and submit requests in advance.

2.6 Career Roadmapping

ODOT noted the challenge of finding candidates for some hard-to-fill positions. If ODOT could identify internal staff who were close to being qualified, they could target their recruitment efforts more effectively. Making this possible would require creating and tracking pathways—such as additional education—that an employee could use to identify opportunities within ODOT.

2.7 Additional Considerations

OMES will be launching a new HR system provided by Workday in May 2022. This system will provide a range of improvements and capabilities for ODOT HR. It will automate and allow employees to control many of the administrative and transactional functions that HR provides currently, like those related to payroll and benefits, and free the HR staff to focus on other tasks like career coaching and consulting.

In addition, a new law was passed in late April 2021 that will significantly impact Oklahoma's civil service employees. The new statute will take effect January 2, 2022, and the extent of the impact is not yet well understood.

3 Literature Search

Researchers conducted an extensive review of the domestic publications and resources related to workforce development practices. This effort revealed approximately 100 relevant resources with a particular focus on the practices and processes used by public agencies, organized into the following topic areas:

- Performance evaluations
  - Strategies
  - Metrics
  - Incentives and development plans
  - Sample evaluation forms
  - Process guidebooks
- Digital tools and practices
- Professional development
  - Programs and processes
  - Career roadmaps
  - Training opportunities
- Candidate and exit interviews

Highlights and notable examples of these findings are included in the following sections. Full details are presented in a July 2021 task memorandum.

3.1 Performance Evaluations

Strategies

State Resources

Minnesota

Human Resource Management, University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2016.
https://open.lib.umn.edu/humanresourcemanagement/
Chapter 11, which begins on page 310 of the guide (page 318 of the digital PDF), addresses employee assessments, including guidelines for designing or revising an appraisal system.

Nebraska

Performance Management and Evaluation, Business and Finance: Human Resources, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, undated.
https://hr.unl.edu/er/performance-management/
This webpage identifies the optimal times for conducting performance evaluations:

- At the end of the original six-month probationary period
- Annually, either on the anniversary of the employee's hire date or at another time designated by the department
- At the end of six months after transfer or promotion to a new position
- At any time the supervisor wishes to record noteworthy performance, either favorable or unfavorable

Nevada

Adapting a Culture for Performance Management at the Nevada Department of Transportation, Gregory M. Duncan, Luis M. Sibaja Vargas, Kundayi Mugabe and Kathryn A. Zimmerman, Nevada Department of Transportation, March 2018.
https://www.dot.nv.gov/home/showdocument?id=14251
Recommendations to improve accountability for employee performance measures begin on page 65 of the report (page 75 of the PDF) and include:

- **Implement performance-based employee reviews.** Using each business plan's measures, work with the Human Resources Division to develop job performance plans that align with agency performance metrics. Make supervisors and managers accountable for their business units, requiring budgets, resources and schedules to be managed to achieve results. This makes achieving performance targets a matter of personal responsibility. Train supervisors on the new process and communicate to staff the implications of a performance-based evaluation in terms of professional development, promotion, and pay.

- **Develop business plans for each division.** Document the critical roles played by each division in the business plan, as well as performance indicators. Establish division goals that can be used to evaluate success in achieving agency performance targets.

- **Encourage employees to establish goals for their area and sub-measures.** Encourage divisions, offices, and units within the agency to utilize sub-measures to manage daily business operations if a strategic goal is not relevant.

- **Foster coordination between divisions for performance measures with executive ownership.** Broad measures with multiple divisions involved in meeting the performance target promote a sense that the measure is not owned by anyone. Teams should be formed with an executive team lead that can bring the required focus to the divisions that contribute work products leading to the target being achieved. Sub-measures should be used to gauge each division's contribution toward the target, and included in its division business plan.

- **Demonstrate that decisions are made based on performance measures**. Share examples of NDOT [Nevada DOT] collaborating in facility maintenance and project development to achieve performance results. Use these and other examples to demonstrate that NDOT does business to achieve results in alignment with agency performance goals.

Metrics

State Resources

Table 1 provides links to state agency publications that identify performance metrics and strategies for measurement.

Table 1. State Public Agency Performance Metrics

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
North Carolina	NCVIP Values Library for Cycle 31 (2017)	North Carolina Office of State Human Resources	Identifies and defines performance values and evaluation metrics.

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Pennsylvania	[Employee Performance Review](#) (2020)	Pennsylvania Office of Administration – Human Resources	Identifies the metrics used for employee evaluations as well as a scale for measuring success. (See Table 3 on page 12 for a related resource.)
Washington	[Using Measures in Performance Plans](#) (2010)	State of Washington Office of Financial Management	Offers strategies for implementing measurable targets in performance plans.

Incentives and Development Plans

National Resources

Additional Analysis and Sharing of Promising Practices Could Improve Employee Engagement and Performance, GAO-15-585, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), July 2015.
https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-585.pdf
From the GAO Highlights: Research on both private- and public-sector organizations has found that increased levels of engagement—generally defined as the sense of purpose and commitment employees feel toward their employer and its mission—can lead to better organizational performance.

GAO was asked to review recent trends in federal employee engagement and steps OPM [Office of Personnel Management] and agencies are taking to improve it. Among other things, this report: (1) describes trends in employee engagement from 2006 through 2014, (2) identifies practices in improving employee engagement, and (3) evaluates OPM's tools and resources to support employee engagement.

To meet these objectives, GAO analyzed responses to FEVS [Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey] questions from 2006 through 2014, conducted a regression analysis, and reviewed OPM documents and interviewed OPM and other agency officials.

What GAO Recommends
GAO recommends that the Director of OPM take the following three actions: (1) report annually on drivers of the EEI [Employee Engagement Index], (2) provide information on statistically significant changes in EEI scores, and (3) share examples and lessons learned to improve engagement and link engagement to performance in time to inform results of the next survey cycle. OPM concurred with the first recommendation and partially concurred with the second and third recommendations. GAO continues to believe that additional action on these recommendations is needed as discussed in the report.

Related Resources

"6 Ways to Engineer Public-Employee Engagement," Patrick Ibarra, *Governing*, November 23, 2016.
https://www.governing.com/archive/col-6-ways-engineer-public-employee-engagement.html
From the article:

Employee engagement should be a top priority for public-sector executives who, by failing to build trust and develop their employees, are contributing to the problem. Having a high-performing workforce is fundamental to performance and organizational viability. An engaged workforce can

increase innovation, productivity and overall performance. A disengaged workforce can be counted on to undermine those goals.

The author recommends six actions an organization's leader can take to improve employee engagement:

- Hire the right people and place them in the right jobs/roles.
- Provide a strategic framework for people's work.
- Utilize an effective performance management/appraisal system.
- Ensure that executives, managers and supervisors are credible.
- Create and cultivate a culture of personal responsibility.
- Support continued personal development.

"Why Government Workers are Harder to Motivate," Robert Lavigna, *Harvard Business Review*, November 28, 2014.
https://hbr.org/2014/11/why-government-workers-are-harder-to-motivate
From the article: Research has shown that public servants find meaning in their work by making a positive difference in the lives of the citizens they serve. This is an advantage in building engagement. Many employees enter public service because they are already committed to the mission of government. Agencies need to find, aggressively recruit, and then hire job candidates who are motivated by public service. Managers must then leverage public-service motivation by involving employees in decisions and helping them see and appreciate their individual contributions.

Sample Evaluation Forms

Table 2 provides examples of state public agency employee evaluation forms.

Table 2. State Public Agency Employee Evaluation Forms

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Illinois	Merit Compensation and Performance System (undated)	State of Illinois Department of Human Services	Used for rating employee performance.
South Carolina	Equal Opportunity Manual (undated)	South Carolina DOT	Includes an employee skills audit (page 53 of the PDF) and performance evaluation (page 55 of the PDF).

Process Guidebooks

Table 3 provides examples of state public agency guidebooks describing employee evaluation processes.

Table 3. State Public Agency Guidebooks Describing Employee Evaluation Processes

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Illinois	UIS Performance Evaluation Handbook (2012)	University of Illinois–Springfield	Documents the employee performance evaluation process.

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Indiana	State of Indiana Employee Handbook (2018)	Indiana State Personnel Department	Defines the purpose of employee evaluations (page 33 of the publication).
Iowa	Managers and Supervisors Manual (2020)	Iowa Department of Administrative Services, Human Resources Enterprise	Outlines the laws and procedures governing employment in Iowa's government.
Kentucky	Guide to Performance Management (2021)	Kentucky Personnel Cabinet	Identifies the core competencies by which employees are measured, and provides the goals, rating system and step-by-step list of the tasks involved in performance reviews.
Missouri	Personnel Policy Manual (2020)	Missouri DOT	Defines the performance evaluation process.
North Carolina	Valuing Individual Performance: Performance Management for Employees (undated) Valuing Individual Performance: Performance Management for Managers (undated)	North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality	Two-page companion documents discuss the performance management process from the perspective of the employee and manager.
Pennsylvania	Performance Management Factor Links: A Guide for Employee Performance Reviews (2020)	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	Provides definitions for the metrics identified in the employee performance review in a guidebook written for the supervisor. (See Table 1 on page 9 for a related resource.)

3.2 Digital Tools and Practices

NCHRP Synthesis 503: Leveraging Technology for Transportation Agency Workforce Development and Training, Nancy Laffey, 2017.
Publication available at http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/175650.aspx
From the abstract: This report documents how state and local transportation agencies are using information and communication technologies (ICT) to train their workforce and the planning and resources required to implement and maintain a training and development program. The information was obtained using three sources. First, a literature review was conducted to provide background information about the state of ICT-supported training practice at transportation agencies and other industries. Second, a survey was distributed to each member of the National Transportation Training Directors and the National Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)/Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) programs. Finally, follow-up interviews with representatives were conducted to expand on specific aspects of their program. … The impact of ICT-supported training on employee performance is unknown for most agencies. In general, agencies not using ICT plan to acquire it in the next 3 to 5 years. Among agencies with ICT-supported training, most plan to expand or maintain their offerings over the next 3 to 5 years, reflecting a level of satisfaction with ICT-supported methods.

3.3 Professional Development

Programs and Processes

Research in Progress

Measuring and Improving the Effectiveness of ADOT's Employee Learning and Development Programs, Arizona Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, start date: June 2020; expected completion date: unknown.
Project description at https://rip.trb.org/view/1718380
From the project description: Among its many responsibilities, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Employee and Business Development Office (EBDO) develops and provides required and elective training to ADOT staff and to external stakeholders. For its training programs, EBDO's objectives are to: (1) Improve employee competence and performance to enhance the performance of the agency; (2) Improve employee competence and performance to enable employee advancement within the agency; and (3) Positively influence employee retention. EBDO is in the process of updating its training programs to more effectively meet these objectives. In 2018, it completed a comprehensive three-year [e]mployee [l]earning and [d]evelopment [p]lan based largely on data gathered through interviews with ADOT leadership and a survey of all ADOT employees. The [p]lan highlighted EBDO's biggest challenge as the need to define and measure its programs' effectiveness in achieving its objectives, including the ability to determine the department's return on investment (ROI) in staff training and development. The research will provide EBDO with metrics that it can use to measure the effectiveness of its training programs in meeting its objectives, and with recommendation on how it can use the data derived through these metrics to improve the programs' effectiveness.

State Resources

Idaho

Growing a Constructive Culture at the Idaho Transportation Department, Jay Otto and Kelly Green, Idaho Transportation Department, June 2016.
https://apps.itd.idaho.gov/apps/research/Completed/RP233.pdf
From the abstract:

> In 2012, a representative sample of employees identified a constructive culture as the ideal culture that would enable the [Idaho Transportation Department] to achieve its mission. Since then, [various] efforts have been undertaken to address causal factors to improve the culture including specialized training (some involving the director with staff), revising performance evaluations, developing a system for individual improvement planning, developing a horizontal career path for front-line employees, changing hiring practices, and extensive leadership development. Quantitative and qualitative assessments indicate significant changes to these causal factors and show slight changes to the overall culture. Recommendations to continue the effort are provided.

Leadership development efforts are addressed (page 16 of the report, page 30 of the PDF), including assessments, coaching, training, a program to encourage emerging leaders and annual leadership summits.

Missouri

ENGAGE 2.0, State of Missouri, undated.
https://engage2.mo.gov/
From the website:

> ENGAGE 2.0 is the State of Missouri's approach to professional development. ENGAGE brings supervisors and team members together monthly to have meaningful professional development conversations. These conversations provide an opportunity to help team members improve in their current role and position themselves for future success.

ENGAGE 2.0 offers:
- *Evaluation Tool*: Six simple questions about team member performance completed by the supervisor(s) closest to the team member's daily work.
- *Upward Feedback*: Eight questions that allow supervisors to understand how effectively they coach, develop and recognize the team members they lead or mentor.
- *Growth Model*: A resource that helps team members and supervisors align on an individual's current strengths and development areas, and what team members can do to achieve their unique professional development goals.

Resources supporting these elements are available at the website.

Texas

"Evaluation of a Development Program for Transportation Engineers," Kelly Selman, Nabeel Khwaja, Randy B. Machemehl, Moggan Motamed and Clair LaVaye, *Transportation Research Record 2552*, pages 32-42, January 2016.
Citation at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3141/2552-05
From the abstract: This study examines the steps that DOTs are taking nationally to train unlicensed engineers and focuses on a training program at the Dallas District of the Texas DOT. The research team performed a literature review and collected data about DOT training programs. Two surveys were conducted to compare programs at various DOTs and to assess the effectiveness of the training program from the Texas DOT Dallas District in improving staff performance (e.g., increase staff attainment of professional engineer licenses, rapid promotion within the agency, leadership, improved retention rates). Survey feedback, including recommendations for improving existing training programs, was analyzed. Training programs appear to improve both retention and expertise and are positive investments.

Career Roadmaps

Table 4 provides state public agency forms, guidebooks and other resources that describe pathways for employee advancement.

Table 4. State Public Agency Career Roadmaps

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Alabama	2021 Merit System Employment Guide (2021)	Alabama State Personnel Department	Contains a listing and brief description of most kinds of jobs in the state classified service. Intended to help applicants identify jobs for which they are qualified.

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Arkansas	[Arkansas Department of Transportation Performance Review: Recommendations Report](#) (2020)	Arkansas DOT	Discusses "people capabilities" (beginning on page 56 of the report, page 57 of the PDF), including these findings: • Recruitment and retention • Dissatisfaction with compensation • Competition for talent • Flexible work strategies • Career paths not defined • Performance evaluations not understood or trusted Also describes career development strategies used by other state DOTs.
Florida	[Career Paths](#) (undated)	University of Florida, Human Resources	Provides a listing of job families, with access to staff positions within each family.
Illinois	[Upward Mobility Program Promotional Employment Application](#) (2020)	State of Illinois	Completed by employees to be considered for a promotion.
Tennessee	[Career Pathways at TDOT](#) (undated)	Tennessee DOT	Categorizes jobs based on hobbies, interests, and required education and certification.

Training Opportunities

Table 5 provides examples of state public agency training programs and resources.

Table 5. State Public Agency Training Programs and Resources

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Colorado	[CDOT's Corporate University Wins Best-in-Class Award](#) (2016)	Colorado DOT	Describes the CDOT University (CDOTU) employee-learning program, a "comprehensive, internal corporate university that includes four 'colleges' committed to delivering best-in-class training to employees."
Iowa	[Performance & Development Solutions: Training and Development](#) (undated)	Iowa Department of Administrative Services	Serves as a gateway for state employees to find professional development courses, certifications and related information.
Kentucky	[Training Curricula for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Department of Highways](#) (2019)	Kentucky Transportation Cabinet	Describes researcher-developed training curricula for five categories: construction, maintenance, roadway design, project management and section engineers. Within each category, curricula identify training opportunities for personnel classified as entry, midlevel and advanced.

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Louisiana	[Structured Training Programs](#) (undated)	Louisiana Transportation Research Center	Describes "a department-sanctioned progressive training curriculum that requires specific work-related training be completed at each level of an employee's career path. … Structured training represents a systematic approach to training to prepare an employee for career advancement."
Nebraska	[Learning and Development](#) (2021)	University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Business and Finance: Human Resources	Provides a link to the university's learning portal where users can track their learning history and register for courses. Managers receive reports on courses staff members complete.
Texas	[TxDOT Instructor-Led Training Catalog](#) (August 2020)	Texas DOT	Provides detailed course descriptions that include objectives, prerequisites and course duration.

3.4 Candidate and Exit Interviews

The national resources cited below offer information on assessing and interviewing candidates.

Designing an Assessment Strategy, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, undated.
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/assessment-strategy/designing-an-assessment-strategy.pdf
This presentation offers information for assessing and interviewing job candidates.

Hiring Managers: 3 Steps to a Successful Interview, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, undated.
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/structured-interviews/interviewing_tips_selecting_official.pdf
This two-page document lists tips to prepare for and conduct successful interviews.

How to Conduct a Successful Interview, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, undated.
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/examples/how-to-conduct-a-successful-interview.pdf
Guidance for the interviewing process is provided in this presentation, including preparations and actions to avoid.

Table 6 provides links to forms, surveys and other resources produced or used by state public agencies to conduct exit interviews and surveys.

Table 6. State Public Agency Resources Related to Employee Termination, Exit Interviews and Exit Surveys

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
California	[Employee Exit Interview Report](#) (2019)	State of California Department of Water Resources	Sample questions and a rating scale using a two-page PDF format.
Florida	[Exit Survey](#) (2014)	Florida State University Human Resources	Three-page questionnaire with sample questions.

State	Publication or Resource (Date)	Source	Description
Iowa	[Employee Terminating or Transferring Checklist](#) (2021)	Iowa University Human Resources	Two-page checklist of tasks for supervisors and staff to address prior to an employee's departure.
Kentucky	[Voluntary Separation — Exit Interview Standard Questionnaire](#) (undated)	Commonwealth of Kentucky	Online exit survey and sample questions.
Michigan	[Employee Exit Interview](#) (undated)	Michigan Civil Service Commission	Online exit survey and sample questions.
Minnesota	[Exit Interview Policy](#) (2021)	City of Minneapolis	Links to multiple forms and resources.
Texas	[State of Texas Employee Exit Survey](#) (2013)	Texas State Auditor's Office	PDF representation of an online employee exit survey.
Washington	[Statewide Employee Exit Survey](#) (2020)	State of Washington Office of Financial Management	Analysis of exit survey responses from state fiscal year 2020 that includes the following recommendations: • Encourage employees to complete the statewide exit survey. • Focus on the supervisor relationship. • Promote internally.
Wisconsin	[Offboarding](#) (undated)	University of Wisconsin System Administration	A list of tasks for the employee and the employee's manager, as well as an offboarding checklist.

4 National Survey

4.1 Overview

CTC & Associates surveyed state DOTs using the member list of the [AASHTO Committee on Human Resources](#) to gather information about the following:

- Development, application and maintenance of qualitative and quantitative employee performance metrics
- Strategic plans for establishing and maintaining employee performance metrics
- Guidebooks describing development and application of employee performance metrics
- Digital tools and practices for documenting workforce development-related processes
- Development of career roadmaps for different levels and classes of ODOT employees
- Policies and practices for conducting candidate and exit interviews

Twenty-two state DOTs responded to the survey:

- Alaska
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Georgia
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas

- Maine
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Jersey

- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Wyoming

Highlights of the survey responses are presented below. Full details of survey findings are presented in an accompanying task memorandum, which includes the complete list of survey questions and contact information for all respondents. The full text of survey responses is available as a supplement to the task memorandum.

4.2 Employee Evaluation

Evaluation Frequency

Two-thirds of the responding states—Arkansas, California, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas—evaluate employees on an annual basis. Other respondents engage with employees more frequently:

Quarterly

- *Missouri* completes quarterly evaluations in March, June, September and December.
- *Montana* asks managers to hold quarterly check-ins with employees. These evaluations are noted in the agency's learning management system (LMS).

Semiannually

- *Colorado* and *New Jersey* evaluate employees every six months.

Multiple intervals

- *Alaska's* collective bargaining agreements require evaluations at interim probation (three or six months), end of probation (six or 12 months) and annually.
- *Iowa* evaluates new employees and considers employee promotions every six months. Annual evaluations are conducted thereafter.
- *Nevada* evaluates employees at three months, seven months and 11 months during the employee's probation period. Annual evaluations are conducted thereafter.
- *North Dakota* formally documents annual evaluations but encourages continual conversations—at least quarterly but preferably more frequently.
- *Wyoming's* annual employee evaluation process includes three mandatory steps: a planning phase, a midyear phase and a final evaluation phase.

Performance Metrics

Job knowledge and skills, quality of work, customer service and communication are the leading metrics that responding agencies use to measure employee performance. These agencies are least likely to measure performance based on ethics and integrity, innovation and creativity, and diversity and inclusion. Only four respondents—Alaska, Montana, South Carolina and Texas DOTs—reported that they do not use such metrics. Table 7 summarizes survey responses.

Table 7. Performance Metrics

State	Communication	Conduct	Customer Service	Diversity and Inclusion	Ethics and Integrity
Arkansas	X	X			
California	X	X	X		
Colorado	X		X		
Georgia	X		X	X	
Indiana	X		X		
Iowa		X	X		
Kansas	X	X	X		X
Maine	X		X		
Maryland	X	X			
Minnesota	X	X	X	X	X
Missouri			X[1]		
Nebraska			X		
Nevada		X			X
New Jersey	X		X		
North Carolina	X	X	X	X	X
North Dakota					
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	X
Wyoming	X	X	X		X
Total	**13**	**10**	**14**	**4**	**6**

1 Customer Service represents the agency's rating of going above and beyond normal responsibilities.

Table 7. Performance Metrics, Continued

State	Innovation and Creativity	Job Knowledge and Skills	Leadership	Quality of Work
Arkansas	X	X		X
California		X		X
Colorado		X		
Georgia		X	X	X
Indiana	X	X	X	X
Iowa		X		X
Kansas	X	X	X	X
Maine		X		X
Maryland		X	X	X
Minnesota	X	X	X	X
Missouri		X[1]		X[2]
Nebraska				
Nevada		X	X	X
New Jersey		X	X	X
North Carolina	X	X	X	X
North Dakota		X		
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X
Wyoming		X	X	X
Total	6	17	10	15

1   Job Knowledge and Skills represents the agency's rating of commitment to grow and learn.

2   Quality of Work represents the agency's rating of providing excellent results.

Performance Incentives

Most respondents provide incentives or have developed strategies to encourage employees to improve their performance. For most agencies, financial resources are limited and incentives are provided in other, creative ways. Table 8 provides a snapshot of how state DOTs opt to incentivize their employees.

Table 8. Performance Incentives

State	Bonuses	Education Opportunities	Recognition of Work	Salary and Benefits	Training	Work Schedule and Leave Flexibility
Alaska			X			
Arkansas				X		
California			X			X
Colorado		X	X		X	X
Georgia		X	X	X	X	X
Indiana	X	X	X		X	X

State	Bonuses	Education Opportunities	Recognition of Work	Salary and Benefits	Training	Work Schedule and Leave Flexibility
Iowa					X	
Kansas		X	X		X	X[1]
Maine[2]				X		
Maryland			X			
Minnesota[3]	X	X	X	X	X	X
Missouri[4]		X	X		X	
Montana			X			
Nebraska		X	X		X	X
Nevada		X	X		X	X
New Jersey		X	X		X	
North Carolina		X	X		X	X[5]
North Dakota	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pennsylvania	X		X			X
South Carolina[2]	X		X	X		
Texas		X	X		X	X
Wyoming[6]			X			
Total	**5**	**12**	**19**	**6**	**13**	**12**

1   Work schedule and leave flexibility available in only certain work areas; does not apply to field staff.

2   Maine and South Carolina DOTs also provide merit increases. In Maine, these annual increases may be denied when performance is below expectations.

3   Bonuses are offered in the form of an achievement award. Salary step increases are approved if performance is satisfactory and can be withheld if performance is unsatisfactory. If performance is not at a satisfactory level a performance accountability plan is created.

4   The existing ENGAGE 2.0 system has an incentive tool tied to top performers, but budget constraints have not allowed for the tool to be used.

5   Certain department of motor vehicle areas have less flexibility because they are public-facing jobs. Some employees work four 10-hour days; others work extra hours so they can leave early on Fridays.

6   In Wyoming, depending on budget availability, dollars may be tied to performance; however, that has not occurred in a few years and the process is required by statute.

4.3   Career Development

Advancing Employee Skill Development

Agencies offer a wealth of practices to help their employees with skills development. All agencies except Maine DOT provide leadership programs. Additional opportunities include professional development programs (19 agencies); continuing education programs (17 agencies); cross-training (16 agencies); mentoring and coaching (16 agencies); and support to complete a degree (16 agencies).

The leadership programs of Minnesota, North Carolina and North Dakota DOTs, designed to assist employees with developing their skills, are highlighted below.

Minnesota DOT: Leadership Development Program

At Minnesota DOT, employees are encouraged to complete an Individual Development Plan and participate in the agency's Leadership Development Program (LDP), a statewide program open to all employees.

More than 1,700 employees have participated since LDP launched in 2012. Participants can acquire valuable leadership skills, network with other agency employees, engage with different Minnesota DOT offices and learn from industry professionals. Currently an 11-month program, LDP "enabl[es] employees to create their own development goals and set their own development schedule to fit their busy work schedule. It encourages employees to think differently about leadership development. Instead of a 'career ladder,' think about creating your own career pathway."

The Minnesota DOT Library has created a webpage on the agency intranet that includes a range of resources to support leadership program participants.

North Carolina DOT: Transportation Engineering Associates Program

The Transportation Engineering Associates Program at North Carolina DOT broadens recent engineering graduates' awareness of opportunities within North Carolina DOT while supplying the agency with innovative transportation solutions.

For more than 50 years, this program has allowed the agency to develop competitive leaders by introducing recent engineering graduates to various functions within North Carolina DOT. An individual career development plan and training program ensures each associate is exposed to a broad background and practical application of highway engineering, resulting in a talent pipeline of trained and experienced engineering managers.

During the 18-month program, associates rotate through assignments located across the state in diverse areas of interest such as planning, design, construction and asset management. Coaching and mentoring opportunities help associates become familiar with the organization and understand the expectations and challenges of the job. Civil engineering associates are eligible to complete the Fundamental Engineering (F.E.) and Professional Engineering (P.E.) review courses at no cost through the Institute for Transportation Research and Education.

North Dakota DOT: Leadership Development Journey Program

Nikki Sackman, North Dakota DOT's Human Resource Division director, noted that 20% of employees are currently involved in the agency's Leadership Development Journey program. Sackman, who responded to the survey, described the program as "a community of leaders—not positional leadership, but those looking to lead from where they are at, currently leading or looking to lead at a broader scale in the future. We offer exclusive opportunities to those invested in this personal growth and assist them (and each other) by finding and creating learning opportunities and ways to practice the skills they are learning through the journey."

The leadership program offers "watch parties" on training followed by discussions on takeaways and application of what was learned, stretch assignments, tours, educational panels and knowledge cafes, as well as access to state and national leadership training with the agency's partner agencies

and other DOTs. A Teams webpage provides virtual activities and an open forum for participants to connect and recognize one another.

Sackman's June 2019 [presentation](#) provides more information about North Dakota DOT's "culture of leadership and learning" and the leadership program specifically. Ensuring awareness of the leadership program beyond those currently employed, North Dakota DOT job postings prominently feature Leadership Development Journey as part of the agency's benefits package, describing it as an opportunity for "personal and professional growth."

Tracking Employees' Professional Development

Nearly all responding agencies attempt to track employees' professional development efforts. Approximately two-thirds of these agencies track this information through in-house or commercial learning management systems. Other agencies use commercial and custom tools to track performance development, including human resource management systems and an in-house training program.

Filling Hard-to-Fill Positions

Only five respondents have implemented or are planning to implement a method or practice for identifying internal employees who would be a good fit for hard-to-fill positions:

- *Georgia DOT's* current approach is "fairly informal." The agency is developing software to help identify people who may be a good fit for these positions based on several factors, including their title, tenure and location. The agency's main focus is developing as many employees as possible and then allowing them to compete for positions.
- *Kansas DOT's* recruitment team is currently addressing this issue.
- As part of its strategic planning and workforce development planning, *Nebraska DOT* educates its leaders on the importance of having a workforce plan to support their strategic goals and roadmap. Human resources staff helps agency leadership create a development plan for key contributor roles.
- *Nevada DOT's* SuccessFactors software can search for positions based on internal information that employees enter into their employee profiles and applications.
- *North Carolina DOT* has enhanced recruitment services in its HR group to identify potential staff and invite them to consider hard-to-fill opportunities.

4.4 Candidate Interviews

Role of Human Resources

In all except three responding states, HR departments are involved in some capacity with interviewing candidates for open jobs. In 11 states, HR plays a limited role in the process, assisting with justifications for hiring a new staff member, performing initial candidate screening, determining interview questions, participating in the interview, providing input to the hiring manager and approving the selected candidate. In seven states, HR participation is more comprehensive, often participating in or overseeing the entire interview process. One agency's applicant tracking system manages all interview and recruitment activities; HR provides a list of screened eligible applicants to hiring managers, and interviews are then managed at the local level and coordinated by HR staff.

<u>**Training for Conducting Candidate Interviews**</u>

The responding agencies in all states except California, Indiana, Maryland and Missouri conduct some type of training for staff who conducts candidate interviews. Most respondents described training for supervisors and managers. Other respondents described training for staff in general and for members of an interview panel. Survey responses are summarized below in the following categories:

- Training for supervisors and managers
- Training for other staff

Training for Supervisors and Managers

- ***Hiring the Best training**. Colorado* and *Kansas DOTs* use this training system for supervisors, which addresses relevant laws, interview questions, setting up an interview, checking references and submitting paperwork. In addition, EEO training in Kansas DOT guides representatives through the same process and also provides the tools to hold supervisors accountable.
- ***Mandatory training**. The following agency training is required:
  - *Alaska*. Hiring manager training includes compliance-related training for interviewing.
  - *Georgia*. Before managers can interview, they must be trained in the interview and selection process.
  - *Nevada*. Interviewing and hiring procedures and EEO training are required for all supervisory and management roles.
  - *South Carolina*. An HR fundamentals class for all supervisors addresses interview practices.
  - *Texas*. A supervisor course trains hiring managers about the hiring process.
- ***LMS training and agency workshops**:
  - *Montana*. The agency offers a recruitment guide for all managers and an interviewing training module on its LMS.
  - *Nebraska*. Training time is allocated during the agency's Supervisor Bootcamp.
- ***Additional training opportunities**:
  - *Arkansas*. Although training is not mandated, HR specialists are encouraged to walk hiring managers through the interview process. The agency used to offer a Hired to Retired supervisor onboarding course that included a discussion about interviewing and selecting candidates. That course has not been delivered in almost two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - *Maine*. A recurring four-hour course is offered to managers.
  - *Wyoming*. Training prepares supervisors to host an interview and also addresses behavioral-based interviewing questions; use of an interview team; rating sheets; and hiring on knowledge, skills and abilities.

Training for Other Staff

- ***Interview panelists**. Both Iowa* and *New Jersey DOTs* provide training for members of an interview panel. Iowa DOT is currently finalizing video training that will be required for anyone who serves on a selection team.
- ***All staff**:
  - *Georgia*. Training for employees focuses on best practices in interviewing.

- o *Minnesota*. Among the responding agencies, Minnesota DOT provides the most comprehensive training opportunities for employees, including classes, HR lunch and learn sessions, one-on-one coaching upon request and one-page fact sheets on interviewing tips. Specific classes and lunch and learn sessions include:
  - Unconscious Bias in Hiring and Selection
  - Competency-Based Selection
  - Competency-Based Interviews
  - How to Move Within MnDOT [Minnesota DOT]
  - Building Your Resume
  - Optimizing Your MnDOT Job Search Process
  - Mock Interviews
- o *North Carolina*. Online training instructs staff on training practices, questions not to ask in an interview and methods for evaluating candidates fairly.
- o *North Dakota*. The agency's recruiting manager provides periodic training on recruiting, selection and interview techniques.
- o *Pennsylvania*. Training includes interviewing basics.

4.5 Exit Interviews

Incentives to Participate

None of the agencies offer a specific incentive to encourage employees to participate in an exit interview. (*Note*: In many cases, these interviews are optional.) Kansas DOT urges employee participation, telling departing staff that it wants to hear "the good and the bad—so we can make improvements through the agency." The North Carolina DOT respondent added that exit interviews are an "opportunity [for employees] to share their insights and experiences with [the agency]." Similarly, none of the respondents reported that employees will face any consequences for not participating in an exit interview.

Exit Interview Practices

Two-thirds of the responding agencies—Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Wyoming—typically conduct exit interviews online, though many of these agencies also offer in-person interviews. Only one agency—South Carolina—mails the interview to employees after their departure.

In general, completion of the exit interview is relatively low among responding agencies. The most responses received were in the range of 15% to 35% (six agencies), with three agencies reporting 7% to 10% completion and two agencies reporting "very low" or "very few." Completion exceeded 50% in three agencies: Kansas (approximately 65%), North Carolina (80%) and Montana (90%).

Typically the exit interview is conducted upon receipt of the employee's resignation or retirement notice (12 agencies). HR staff is primarily responsible for conducting the interview, either by sending the online survey to the employee or through an in-person interview. In Missouri, the state Office of Administration manages the survey process for all state agencies. Missouri DOT's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Division administers the survey for the transportation agency; if follow-up is needed, the agency's HR staff contacts the employee.

Table 9 provides details of respondents' exit interview practices.

Table 9. Exit Interview Practices

State	Method	Timing	Interviewer	Percent Complete
Alaska	Online	At separation.	Not provided.	Not available
California	In person	Varies, depending on the employee's manager.	Depends on the situation, but could be middle management.	15 to 20
Colorado	Online	No response.	Performance management manager	Not available
Georgia[1]	Online	As soon as possible.	Online portal	Very low
Indiana	Online	Upon receipt of resignation.	HR sends the survey.	10
Iowa	Online	Monthly, after employee's departure.	HR sends the survey.	Less than 30
Kansas	Online	Upon receipt of resignation or retirement notice.	Agency's LMS sends the survey. (A paper form is also available; this option is provided and managed by personnel clerks.)	About 65
Maine	Online	Not provided.	Not provided	Very few
Minnesota	Online[2]	Immediately.	HR sends the survey and will conduct the in-person interview, if applicable.	7[3]
Missouri[4]	Online	Upon receipt of resignation; may be sent to personal email after separation.	Agency's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Division.	22
Montana	In person[5]	Upon receipt of resignation or retirement.	HR generalist.	90
Nebraska	Online	Upon receipt of resignation or retirement.	SurveyMonkey.	10
Nevada	Online	Upon receipt of resignation notice. Completed surveys are returned to the HR manager.	No response.	Unknown
New Jersey	Paper form survey	Upon receipt of resignation.	Not applicable.	25 to 30
North Carolina	In person	No set schedule.	HR.	80
North Dakota	Online (preferred); in person upon request	Manually, within 30 days of departure.[6]	HR officer.[7]	40
Pennsylvania	Online	When separation action is processed, an automatic email is generated.	HR sends the survey.	Unknown
South Carolina	By mail	After departure, mailed with self-addressed, stamped envelope.	Employee Relations sends the survey.	25
Texas	In person	As soon as possible.	HR sends the survey.	Not tracked

State	Method	Timing	Interviewer	Percent Complete
Wyoming	Online	Upon receipt of resignation.	SurveyMonkey. (HR also offers an in-person interview to employees.)	Has not exceeded 35

1 Georgia DOT is hiring an onboarding and engagement coordinator to manage the program, beginning with stay interviews throughout an employee's career and ending with an exit interview.

2 Minnesota DOT's exit interview is offered online but also offered in-person if desired.

3 Minnesota DOT is working to increase the completion rate of exit interviews.

4 The state of Missouri's Office of Administration manages the survey process for all Missouri state agencies. If follow-up is needed, Human Resources is asked to make contact with the employee.

5 If unable to meet with the employee in person, Montana DOT's HR staff sends a survey to the employee's email address.

6 North Dakota DOT is preparing to automate exit interviewing through its Gallup survey platform, which is managed at the state level.

7 North Dakota DOT may shift responsibility for interviewing to the division, which is expected to enhance the usefulness of employee feedback by using it for knowledge management.

Uses of Exit Interview Feedback

Information collected during exit interviews is primarily used to identify trends in the employee experience (New Jersey). North Dakota DOT identifies themes related to benefits, pay and external competition, while Wyoming DOT has used the information to "review for gaps, issues and positive outcomes." The Wyoming DOT respondent noted that the exit survey questions are currently under review to provide more useful data.

Some agencies examine reasons for departure, such as employees' reasons for leaving a specific office or the agency (Georgia), especially if multiple employees are departing from the same area (Montana). North Carolina DOT analyzes data at the individual, unit and organizational levels to identify any root causes that require intervention. Data collected by North Dakota DOT is reviewed to identify any issues in management or leadership style or improvements that can be made as an agency.

In a few agencies, EEO offices are provided with the comments related to discrimination, harassment and other EEO-related issues (Kansas and Pennsylvania). Missouri DOT uses the data as a performance measure in the agency's Tracker publication, published by the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Division. Texas DOT shares feedback with agency leadership, and in Kansas, data not sent to the agency's EEO team is collected and aggregated for distribution at the district and division levels.

In exit interview surveys, Minnesota DOT employees are encouraged to select up to three responses from multiple choices to describe their reason for departure. The agency's commissioner then reports departures to the state management and budget office to meet the agency's workforce compliance requirement. Colorado DOT uses feedback for recruiting and retention purposes, and South Carolina DOT updates its personnel system with the departure reason noted in the written form. Iowa DOT is only beginning to analyze this data.

5   Long-Range Strategies

To maximize the potential of its workforce development processes, ODOT will first need to identify its goals and priorities for the future. The following outlines the overarching trends in agency practices that ODOT could consider adopting and working toward over time.

5.1   Promote a Growth Mindset

Offer professional and career development opportunities to all employees to enhance their knowledge and skills in their current job or prepare them for another role within the agency.

Most of the agencies that responded to this study's survey are actively involved in their employees' professional and career development, offering a range of practices and programs that not only develop employee skills in their chosen profession but identify opportunities in other career paths.

5.2   Foster a Culture of Leadership and Learning

Create leadership development programs as a practice to recruit new employees and retain current staff, investing in diversified sources to attain trained and experienced engineering managers. OMES offers a statewide leadership academy already, and ODOT could strive to develop and promote a system to internally identify qualified employees and encourage their participation in OMES' program.

5.3   Advocate for Workforce Development Planning

Educate agency leaders about workforce plans and how they can benefit the agency as a whole, and encourage these leaders to develop plans in their own divisions that align with the agency's strategic goals and includes key contributors.

5.4   Encourage the Use of Career and Professional Development Plans

To help employees identify and attain realistic goals, several state DOTs use the SMART approach, which advises creating goals that are:

- **S**pecific, clear and understandable
- **M**easurable, verifiable and results-oriented
- **A**ttainable, yet sufficiently challenging
- **R**elevant to the mission of the department or organization
- **T**ime-bound with a schedule and specific milestones

Often managers and employees are encouraged to collaborate on developing SMART goals, keeping these goals flexible to allow for changing circumstances. Documenting these goals and reviewing them regularly enhance employees' ability to successfully achieve them.

5.5   Use Behavior- and Workplace-Related Metrics

A recent SHRM toolkit on managing employee performance notes that "[e]ffective performance management systems typically include the following three broad elements: goal setting, performance review and a performance improvement process." When setting goals, employers most commonly select from four types of goals: job description, project, stretch (used with high-potential employees)

and behavioral. Behavioral goals "are expected to be accomplished continuously. Behavioral goals are 'how' things need to be accomplished."

5.6 Provide Training to Staff Conducting Candidate Interviews

This training should address relevant legislation, interview questions, compliance and equal opportunity issues, and other aspects of the interview process.

5.7 Conduct Exit Interviews

Departing staff can provide a wealth of valuable of information about the employee experience, issues with management or leadership, and general improvements that can be made to the agency.

5.8 Expand Online Opportunities

By providing more resources and opportunities digitally, employees will have greater access to all aspects of workforce development and performance management, including career and professional development training, performance evaluations and interviewing processes. This will make participation easier, leading to increased collaboration and a more equitable workplace environment.

The action items provided in the following section have been developed to help ODOT make these long-term strategies a reality.

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6 Action Items

Based on the information gathered in this study, the 11 action items below can be implemented relatively quickly and with minimal effort and cost to help ODOT capitalize on the strengths of its current workforce development practices and capabilities. For each action item, links and visual images provide illustration, context for how other agencies have already put the action into a practice, and a potential roadmap for ODOT.

Action items are presented in four categories:

- Performance evaluations
- Employee training and development
- Career roadmapping
- Candidate and exit interviews

Note: Click on any of the figures in this section to view them in full online.

6.1 Performance Evaluations

Action Item 1: Document the Evaluation Process

Give both managers and staff a clear understanding of what's expected throughout the evaluation process by outlining as much as possible in writing and providing it well in advance. This will ensure consistent messaging and expectations across ODOT's divisions. It will also help the staff being evaluated feel better prepared and more empowered ahead of the evaluation and give supervisors a roadmap for success.

Target the information to each audience, with separate guidance documents or manuals for staff and supervisors with the specific details they'll need. For supervisors, be sure to include definitions of the terms and metrics that will be used, key dates in the process, location considerations and any other suggestions that could improve the experience.

Figure 1 provides an example of language for supervisors from the Performance Evaluation Handbook developed and used by the University of Illinois-Springfield: (Note the list provided here has been condensed from the original to conserve space.)

Figure 1. Sample Language for Supervisor Guidance *(University of Illinois-Springfield)*

1. Notify the employee at least one week in advance of the date scheduled for the interview.
2. Allow approximately 45 minutes to one hour for each interview so that time constraints will not hinder an open exchange of communication.
3. Select a location for the evaluation interview that provides for privacy and is free from interruptions.
4. Review the performance factors on the evaluation form prior to the interview.
5. Listen. Remember that the interview is a two-way communication process.
6. Keep your focus on the employee's job performance.
7. Be specific in your praise and criticism.
8. The performance evaluation interview is not primarily used for reprimand or discipline.

In documentation for staff, describe the process and purpose of the evaluation, the roles and expectations for everyone involved, what metrics the employee will be measured against and their definitions. Also describe the post-evaluation process: who will receive copies of the evaluation, what tasks will still need to be completed, and what recourse exists for employees who disagree with their assessment. Figure 2 shows an example of language geared toward staff, from North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's Valuing Individual Performance: Performance Management for Employees.

Figure 2. Sample Language for Employee Guidance(*North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality*)

> - Think about what you want to accomplish during the upcoming performance cycle.
> - Conduct a performance planning discussion with your manager/supervisor to seek clarity about how the work you currently perform and your proposed goals for the upcoming performance cycle contribute to the overall purpose and work goals of the agency.
> - Collaborate with your manager/supervisor to create your Annual Performance Plan, providing input where applicable.
> - Use SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) in your Annual Performance Plan to specify the results that are to be achieved for each goal you have.
> - Ask questions to obtain a clear understanding of the expectations your manager/supervisor has for your performance, including core values and expected behaviors (how the work will be performed).
> - Review, sign and date your Annual Performance Plan in the PM technology tool.
> - Discuss plans for ongoing dialogue/feedback and the interim review, held at the midpoint of the performance cycle.

Action Item 2: Expand, Define and Quantify Metrics

ODOT's Performance Management Process (Form HCM-111) offers lots of room for open-ended evaluation, which gives managers significant freedom to conduct employee assessments. However, without more guidance the process could be overwhelming and result in uneven evaluations depending on the manager's busy schedule and other factors. Additionally, the metrics currently used by ODOT reflect a customized approach for different job types, which may prove difficult when a job is hard to quantify. By standardizing the system and providing the same metrics and definitions for all staff, ODOT can help increase equity among employees and relieve some of the burden on managers.

In addition, a scaled evaluation system can help provide managers with both structure and flexibility in their assessments while encouraging greater discussion during the evaluation process. Assigning numeric values to the scales would provide ODOT with an additional tool for identifying and rewarding superior and addressing less-stellar performances.

Figure 3 shows the metrics, definitions and rating scale used by the Pennsylvania Office of Administration – Human Resources. Note how the definitions have been written to apply to all jobs generally, making the form more useful across divisions and giving busy managers more of a framework within which to conduct their assessments.

Figure 3. Performance Metrics, Definitions and Rating Scale
(Pennsylvania Office of Administration – Human Resources)

EMPLOYEE NAME:	PERSONNEL NUMBER:

JOB FACTORS

1. JOB KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS Measures employee's demonstrated job relevant knowledge and essential skills, such as work practices, policies, procedures, resources, laws, customer service, and technical information, as well as the relationship of work to the organization's mission. Also measured are the employee's self-improvement efforts to enhance skills and knowledge and to stay current with changes impacting the job.

OUTSTANDING ☐	COMMENDABLE ☐	SATISFACTORY ☐	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ☐	UNSATISFACTORY ☐
• Possesses superior job skills and knowledge; effectively applies them to work assignments. • Willingly mentors staff; shares knowledge. • Seeks/applies innovative and relevant techniques.	• Work reflects thorough and current knowledge/ skill of job and impact on agency activities/related resources. • Uses opportunities to expand knowledge/skills, sharing information with staff.	• Work reflects adequate knowledge/skills for job. • Has some knowledge of related work. • Stays current with major changes impacting on knowledge or skill. • Accepts change.	• Often demonstrates a lack of basic or sufficient job knowledge/skills to perform routine functions of the job. • Occasionally is resistant to changing knowledge and/or skill requirements or processes, including opportunities for knowledge/skill enhancement.	• Consistently demonstrates a lack of basic job knowledge and/or skills to perform job. • Rarely takes advantage of available skill enhancement or training opportunities. • Often is resistant to changing requirements.

Comments:

2. WORK RESULTS Measures employee's results in meeting established objectives/expectations/standards of quality, quantity, customer service, and timeliness both individually and in a team.

OUTSTANDING ☐	COMMENDABLE ☐	SATISFACTORY ☐	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ☐	UNSATISFACTORY ☐
• Work consistently exceeds expectations of quality, quantity, customer service, and timeliness.	• Work frequently exceeds expected quality, quantity, customer service, and timeliness standards.	• Work usually meets expectations of quality, quantity, customer service, and timeliness.	• Often has difficulty meeting expected quality, quantity, customer service, and/or timeliness standards.	• Consistently fails to meet expected quality, quantity, customer service, and/or timeliness standards.

Comments:

3. COMMUNICATIONS Measures employee's performance in exchanging information with others in an effective, timely, clear, concise, logical, and organized manner. Communications include listening, speaking, writing, presenting, and sharing of information. Consideration is given to client/data complexity/sensitivity.

OUTSTANDING ☐	COMMENDABLE ☐	SATISFACTORY ☐	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ☐	UNSATISFACTORY ☐
• Consistently communicates in clear, effective, timely, concise, and organized manner. • Is articulate and persuasive in presenting, soliciting complex or sensitive data.	• Frequently communicates in an effective, timely, clear, concise, and organized manner. • Proficiently organizes and presents difficult facts and ideas orally and in writing. • Seeks/provides feedback.	• Usually communicates effectively and exchanges relevant information in a timely manner. • Speaks and writes clearly. • Keeps others informed. • Listens with understanding.	• Often fails to communicate effectively or in a timely manner. • Lacks clarity of expression orally or in writing. • Is inconsistent in keeping others informed. • At times, fails to listen effectively.	• Consistently fails to communicate effectively or timely. • Often does not keep others informed. • Is an ineffective listener and/or frequently interrupts.

Comments:

4. INITIATIVE/PROBLEM SOLVING Measures the extent to which the employee is self-directed, resourceful, and creative in performing job duties individually or in a team. Also measures employee's performance in identifying and resolving problems; following through on assignments; and initiating or modifying ideas, methods, or procedures to provide improved customer service, redesign business processes, and accomplish duties.

OUTSTANDING ☐	COMMENDABLE ☐	SATISFACTORY ☐	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ☐	UNSATISFACTORY ☐
• Consistently resolves unit/team problems and promotes improvements. • Maximizes resources, innovation/technology to streamline/improve. • Analyzes full dimension of complex problems. • Requires minimal supervision.	• Prevents/resolves unit/team problems. • Suggests innovations to improve operations or streamline procedures. • Defines and analyzes complex problems. • Develops/implements solutions with moderate supervision.	• Addresses existing and significant potential problems. • Suggest or assists in developing solutions individually or in a team. • Carries through solution implementation with routine supervision or follow-up.	• Resolves routine problems. • Exhibits little initiative in identifying problems, solutions, or improvements and/or working proactively as part of a team to address issues of concern. • Requires more than routine supervision.	• Consistently fails to recognize or seek help in resolving routine problems. • Demonstrates inability to work individually or in a team. • Rarely suggests improvements. • Requires frequent reminders and supervision.

Comments:

Action Item 3: Identify Performance Incentives

An attainable rewards system helps employees feel valued and can include monetary bonuses (if possible) or other benefits such as public recognition or additional time off work. Below are a few examples of agencies that have found creative ways to reward exceptional employees.

- Minnesota DOT (MnDOT) offers a monetary award to eligible employees who demonstrate outstanding performance.
- The state of New Jersey offers "State Employee Recognition Day" to publicly honor staff contributions.
- Arizona DOT rewards employees' longevity by allowing staff to choose a gift every five years of their employment and at retirement.

6.2 Employee Training and Development

Action Item 4: Promote a Growth Mindset

Help staff identify what skills and job training ODOT offers, and then recognize those who have gone above and beyond to add value to the agency. Figure 4 shows a screenshot from Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which launched the online State Learning Center in November 2020 to help staff identify and follow opportunities that advance their careers.

From this page, employees can easily find courses related to their job's licensing and certification requirements as well as optional leadership and other trainings. By providing these options all in one place, employees can easily see what's available and begin planning for their future.

Figure 4. An Agency's Employee Development Webpage *(WSDOT)*
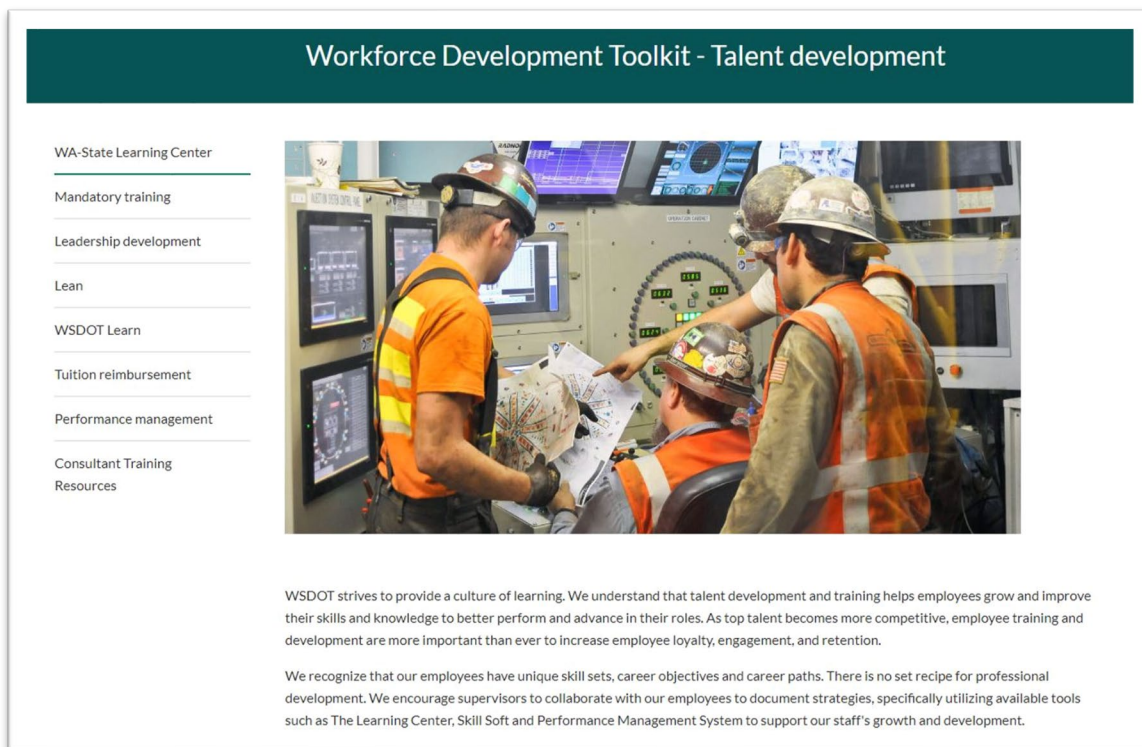
Action Item 5: Advertise the Perks

Careers in public agencies often have lower salaries but better benefits, such as retirement, health care, paid time off, tuition assistance, skills training and more, which can add up to a more valuable total compensation package than what competitors in the private sector offer. Make sure new and existing employees know about the benefits available at ODOT and how they can take advantage of these options. If possible, calculate the value of the benefits in dollars to help staff make informed evaluations of comparable careers in the public and private sectors. This could help recruit more new staff and help existing staff feel more satisfied in their career with ODOT. Other agencies that quantify their benefits include:

- WSDOT's tuition reimbursement program allows employees up to $4,000 per fiscal year for training directly related to an employee's current job or department career ladder.

- Nevada DOT provides a Total Compensation Calculator, which allows job seekers to estimate the full value of a position's salary and benefits.

- Virginia DOT notes on its benefits page that a job with an advertised salary of $40,000 per year has an actual total compensation of $71,200; see Figure 5.

Figure 5. Promoting an Agency's Total Benefits *(Virginia DOT)*

6.3 Career Roadmapping

Action Item 6: Highlight Career Paths

Make it easier for staff to visualize making a career change within ODOT by doing some of the research for them. Create flyers or a page on ODOT's website that shows what jobs are similar or related, what education or training is needed to do the job, wages and the potential benefits, such as time outdoors or flexible work hours.

Figure 6 shows a chart developed by Tennessee DOT, which uses hobbies and interests to help workers identify possible career paths.

Figure 6. Career Suggestions Based on Hobbies *(Tennessee DOT)*

Job Category	Hobbies and Interests	High School Diploma	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Professional Certificates
Civil Engineering	- Likes to build things - Enjoys figuring out how things work - Desires to help the public - Interested in math and science		- Associates Degree in Architectural Engineering Technology, Computer Drafting and Design, Civil Engineering Technology, Environmental Technology or Geography Job Title: CADD Technician 3	- Bachelors in Civil Engineering Job Title: Graduate Transportation Associate (GTA), Transportation Project Specialist, TDOT Operations District Specialist	- E.I.T. (Engineer in Training) - Professional Engineering License (PE) - RLS (Registered Land Surveyor)
Finance	- Likes number puzzles and problem solving - Interested in math - Likes to organize things related to money/finances		- Associates degree in Paralegal or Legal Assistant Studies Job Title: Legal Assistant	- Bachelors in Finance or Accounting Job Title: Accountant 1, Auditor 1, Transportation Program Monitor 1	- CFA: Certified Financial Advisor - CPA: Certified Public Accountant
Human Resources	- Reading - Writing - Likes helping others			- Bachelors in Human Resources, Business, Psychology or Liberal Arts Job Title: Human Resource Analyst 1, Training Specialist 2	- PHR: Professional in Human Resources - SPHR: Senior Professional in Human Resource
Environment	- Enjoys being outdoors and in nature - Likes math and science			- Bachelors in Biology, Physical Sciences, Geology, Environmental Social Sciences, Civil Engineering Job Title: TDOT Environmental Studies Specialist	- CPESC: Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control - CPSWQ: Certified Professional in Storm water Quality - PG: Professional Geologist
Public Planning	- Likes working in teams and on group projects - Interested in organizing an planning events - Likes volunteering and service work		- Associates Degree with qualifying coursework Job Title: Aerial Photographer 3	- Bachelors in Community Planning, Transportation Planning, Public Administration, Civil Engineering	- ICP (American Institute of Certified Planners)

The examples in Figure 7 both come from MnDOT. The image on the left shows careers that MnDOT has grouped into its Transportation Specialist Series and the specific benefits each job offers, including hourly and annual pay and the likelihood of promotion or wage increases. The image on the right depicts a flyer for MnDOT's Civil Engineer Student Worker Program. These strategies are both targeted to attract younger workers to careers in the transportation industry.

Figure 7. Examples of Job Promotions *(Minnesota DOT)*

Transportation Specialist Series career paths

All Transportation Specialist Series hourly wage increases occur every six months with good performance.

Transportation Associate (TA)
- Transportation Associates work as trainees who perform skilled roadway surface and roadside maintenance activities.
- $19.48 - $20.09/hour; $40,674 - $41,948/year
- Within one year, trainees are automatically promoted to Transportation Generalist with good performance.

Transportation Generalist (TG)
- Entry-level technical and skilled work involving transportation design, construction and maintenance activities.
- $20.85 - $26.20/hour; $43,535 - $54,706/year

Transportation Generalist Senior (TGS)
- Intermediate-level technical and skilled work, and/or lead work.
- $22.47 - $29.12/hour; $46,917 - $60,803/year

Transportation Specialist (TS)
- Senior-level technical and/or specialized work.
- $23.74 - $32.45/hour; $49,569 - $67,756/year

CIVIL ENGINEERING STUDENT WORKER

2021 - 2022

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Civil Engineering Student Worker Program

The Civil Engineering Student Worker Program, offered in partnership by Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), is designed to provide an opportunity for undergraduate students majoring in Civil Engineering or Construction Engineering who are interested in transportation-related careers to gain real-world skills to complement their academic pursuits.

Salary Range

$15.17/hourly - $17.76/hourly (Student Worker Para-Professional)

$16.48/hourly - $20.09/hourly (Student Worker Para-Professional Senior)

Program at a Glance
- Students are placed in offices, based on the office rankings they identified during the application process.
- Students spend the summer in paid positions gaining hands-on professional experience.
- Students work full-time (40 hours a week) for the duration of their students worker appointment.
- Students work on transportation-focused projects and are provided with mentoring, training, and development opportunities.
- Upon completion of the program, students may be eligible to extend their student worker appointments and, if eligible, transfer into the Seeds student worker program.*

The Seeds program is a career track for college students who are minorities, economically disadvantaged, disabled or recently returned veterans.

Placement Opportunities

Bridge Hydraulics
Bridge Maintenance
Construction
Design
Environmental Stewardship
Land Management Geodetics
Project Management & Technical Support
Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC)
Materials
Surveys
Traffic
Water Resources

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Action Item 7: Celebrate Achievements

Create a positive workplace culture by celebrating employees' important milestones. By highlighting these accomplishments, staff feel appreciated and learn more about each other. As an added benefit, communicating retirements, transitions and other staffing changes can help get the word out about new job openings.

TN Magazine, an internally focused publication of Texas DOT, dedicated a large portion of its September/October 2021 issue to recognizing staff achievements. Figure 8 shows pages 27 and 29, which are just two of several pages in the issue focused on DOT staff across the state.

Figure 8. Example of an Agency Publication Celebrating Staff Accomplishments *(Texas DOT)*

While a publication of this magnitude may exceed ODOT's needs, other avenues, such as e-newsletters, staffwide emails and social media, provide free and low-cost options that ODOT can use to show how much it cares and about the accomplishments of its staff. As illustrated in Figure 9, Michigan DOT opted to celebrate a staff member's award through a press release (left) and Twitter post (right), which are both free options for the agency.

Figure 9. Examples of No-Cost Promotions *(Michigan DOT)*
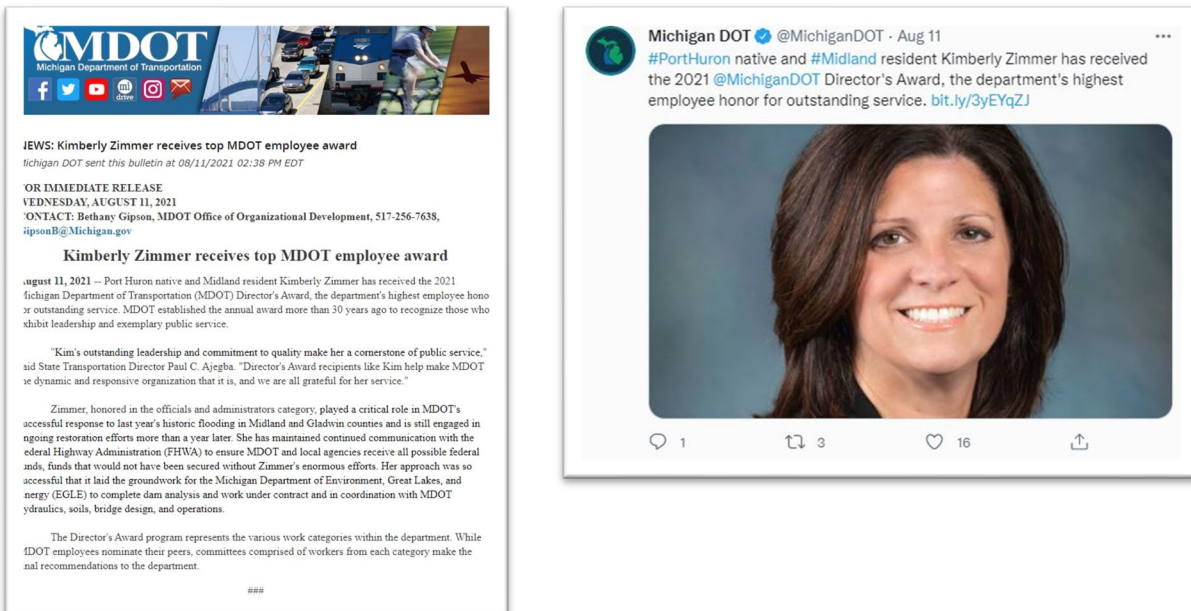
6.4 Candidate and Exit Interviews

Action Item 8: Participate in Panels

This study's survey found that all responding states except Alaska, California and Nevada are involved with interviewing candidates for open jobs. Currently, ODOT HR does not typically participate in candidate interviews. However, HR staff from other state DOTs, such as Georgia, Missouri and Wyoming, report that placing an HR representative on interview panels can have a variety of benefits, such as ensuring interviews are conducted fairly and consistently. HR staff also tend to be more attuned to a person's soft skills and can help hiring managers recognize these attributes in a candidate.

Action Item 9: Become a Go-To Resource

Many of the resources ODOT managers seek regarding hiring, benefits and other workforce-related information come from Oklahoma's OMES or other experts outside of ODOT. Directing staff to these other groups' websites may have the unintended effect of leading staff to consider consulting another authority first, regardless of the topic. Instead, create a webpage on ODOT's site that repackages and provides frequently sought information and links, and consistently direct staff there. This will provide a service to hiring managers and other ODOT staff while teaching them that ODOT should be their first contact when they have questions or seek guidance in the future.
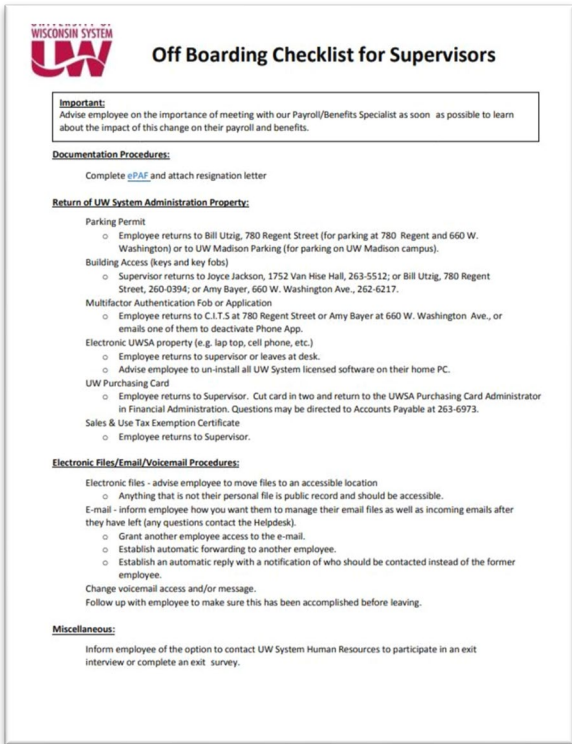
Texas DOT's benefits page is an example of this approach. The page provides a helpful overview on a variety of topics and programs to help staff get started, but then directs users to other authorities for additional information.

Action Item 10: Develop an Offboarding Checklist

Regardless of the employee's reasons for leaving, there are a variety of actions and procedures that must be accomplished for a smooth offboarding process. From returning physical property to taking security precautions to completing any other final tasks, a checklist can help ensure that everyone who is affected by the employee's exit understands and is aware of everything that needs to be addressed and who is responsible for seeing it through.

Several agencies use these types of checklists; Figure 10 shows two examples, from the University of Wisconsin System and University of Florida.

Figure 10. Examples of University Offboarding Checklists

Action Item 11: Emphasize Exit Interviews

Exit interviews can provide a wealth of insight regarding employees' true feelings and allow ODOT the opportunity to make meaningful improvements. By shortening the form and making it available for digital submission, ODOT may be more likely to receive more honest and thoughtful feedback than if exit interviews are conducted in-person or provided by an employee's supervisor. Simple tools such as SurveyMonkey can capture the employee's responses and help ODOT track patterns and potential areas for growth. Such tools offer a variety of design features to help agencies achieve the look they want and can be set to send automatic reminders to the employee and provide an accurate calculation of the time the employee can expect to spend on it. These attributes can help to increase participation while requiring little to no extra effort for HR.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky and Michigan Civil Service Commission both provide their surveys online. Figure 11 depicts examples of these agencies' surveys, which were both designed using SurveyMonkey.

Figure 11. Examples of Online Employee Exit Interviews

Additionally, the State of Washington Office of Financial Management offers an example of how the information gleaned from exit interviews can be put to use. Its 2020 Statewide Employee Exit Survey Report notes that 61% of employees leaving executive branch agencies participate in exit surveys, providing an important opportunity for agency introspection and appropriate adjustment. (Only voluntarily departing employees are eligible to take the exit survey; retirees and those employees who are laid off or dismissed are not included.)

7 Conclusions and Further Study

ODOT's HR Division plays an important role in the success of the entire agency. By working with employees to identify strategies and opportunities to improve the workplace experience and staff satisfaction, HR can help ODOT become more efficient, cost-effective and productive, and help the agency achieve its goals for the people of Oklahoma.

To that end, the long-range strategies identified in Section 5 and the action items in Section 6 have been developed to take advantage of ODOT's workforce development strengths and consider the agency's short- and long-term needs, evolving technological capabilities and ongoing research efforts.

While institutional change can take significant time and dedication to accomplish, incremental modifications can enhance ODOT's workplace culture, make processes more manageable for everyone involved, and help ODOT attract and retain an engaged workforce.

Going forward, additional research should include investigating the software programs and other technologies that can be used in coordination with ODOT's Workday system once it's in place.