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Best Practice Resource Guide:
Capacity Building Options for DOT Transit Staff

Final Guidebook

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Table of Contents

[Introduction and Background 1](#_Toc132982176)

[Summary of Findings 1](#_Toc132982177)

[Greatest State DOT Transit Office Capacity Needs and Critical Issues 1](#_Toc132982178)

[Small Applicant Pool and Challenges Attracting Employees 2](#_Toc132982179)

[Retaining Skilled Workers 2](#_Toc132982180)

[Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills 3](#_Toc132982181)

[Knowledge Management 3](#_Toc132982182)

[Relatively Low Pay 3](#_Toc132982183)

[Capacity Building Best Practice Strategies 4](#_Toc132982184)

[Best Practice Strategies in Workforce Capacity Building 5](#_Toc132982185)

[Strategy 1: Develop an Internship Program to Engage New Talent 5](#_Toc132982186)

[Strategy 2: Create Marketing Materials Deigned to Attract New Employees 9](#_Toc132982187)

[Strategy 3: Create Career Paths that Incorporate Skills to Demonstrate Career Advancement Opportunities 13](#_Toc132982188)

[Strategy 4: Provide Telework and Other Flexible Work Arrangements to Support Employees 18](#_Toc132982189)

[Strategy 5: Conduct Engagement Pulse Surveys to Understand and Improve Workplace Culture 23](#_Toc132982190)

[Strategy 6: Provide Robust Leader Development Training and Opportunities to Improve Leadership Skills 27](#_Toc132982191)

[Strategy 7: Implement Cross-Functional Team Building to Promote Knowledge Sharing across the DOT 31](#_Toc132982192)

[Strategy 8: Conduct Knowledge Interviews to Gather Critical Knowledge from Employees 34](#_Toc132982193)

[Strategy 9: Use Salary Studies and Incorporate Total Compensation to Understand the Current Job Market 38](#_Toc132982194)

# Introduction and Background

State Department of Transportation (DOT) transit offices face emerging, critical program management challenges: managing adequate staffing, increasing regulatory burdens, and inconsistent internal and external business practices. DOTs also encounter difficulties in attracting and retaining talented employees, such as the role of new and emerging technology, differing generational expectations, and the time required for DOTs to adapt to change. Over the past three years, many state DOTs and their transit offices have also experienced new and evolving staffing and workforce challenges as work has changed even more.

This project focused on capacity building, or the process of planning for and managing workforce transformation, to develop a broader understanding of capacity building needs and options for state DOT transit offices. This report focuses on the most effective strategies to help state DOT transit offices plan for and respond to increasing demands and workforce capacity needs. Based on findings from a literature review, a survey, and interviews and focus groups with DOT transit office staff and other stakeholders, capacity building needs, challenges, and effective solutions to address these areas were identified. The identified solutions are provided in this Best Practice Resource Guide, with strategies and tools that state DOT transit offices can use either in their own office or across the DOT to address workforce capacity challenges.

# Summary of Findings

Data were collected for this project through multiple methods. First, a literature review academic and professional articles was used to identify current trends in workforce capacity building in state DOTs, work methodologies and tools that affect capacity building, and current and future workforce needs. Feedback was gathered from state DOT transit office leaders, new employees, industry leaders, and other stakeholders through a survey and focus groups. These participants detailed the greatest challenges, successes, and focus areas for building capacity in state DOT transit offices. This input was used to identify capacity building strategies both transit offices and the larger state DOTs can implement in areas where state DOT transit offices see the greatest needs. The following sections summarize the key findings of this project.

## Greatest State DOT Transit Office Capacity Needs and Critical Issues

Throughout data collection activities, participants shared their thoughts and experiences about capacity building needs in state DOT transit offices. Across all the data collection activities, similar themes arose regarding the critical issues related to workforce capacity building in today’s state DOT transit offices. These critical issues include the following, and are described in the remainder of this section:

* Small Applicant Pool and Challenges Attracting Employees
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management
* Relatively Low Pay

### Small Applicant Pool and Challenges Attracting Employees

Whether due to turnover or not enough allocated positions, state DOT transit offices need more people to do the work of their offices. State DOT transit office employees can experience challenges because many of the positions in the office only have one person in them. When a position is empty, someone else in the office must do work outside of their typical job to ensure that all necessary work is completed. This means that transit offices need their open positions to be filled. However, the applicant pool for transit office positions is often not very large and potential applicants may not be aware of opportunities to work in the transit office or the DOT.

Additionally, many state DOT transit offices lack an appropriate pipeline of future staff, with no knowledge about where to find employees with the right skills. Because transit offices are small and specialized, state DOT Humans Resources (HR) staff may not understand how to recruit and bring in the right employees. With these various challenges, outreach about the important work of the transit office, jobs available, and benefits of working in the office or the DOT can help to bring awareness to transit offices and interest from potential employees.

Recognizing what brings new employees into state DOT transit offices is helpful for understanding how to hire high quality, qualified staff. These perceived benefits can be highlighted when attracting applicants. Once hired, state DOT transit offices can ensure that employees will actually experience the benefits that new staff are looking for as they join a transit office. One of the key elements that attracts new employees is the high-quality benefits (e.g., health care, pension plans, other retirement savings) that staff receive.

Relatedly, flexibility and work-life balance are perceived to be benefits of working in transit offices that help to attract employees. Many new staff also perceive that working in state DOT transit offices provides job stability. Beyond tangible benefits, some new staff are attracted to transit offices because they feel they will make meaningful contributions and positively impact the community through transit. Other new staff have worked in transit previously and like the work.

### Retaining Skilled Workers

For retaining current employees, a frequent challenge for state DOT transit offices is a lack of career paths and promotion opportunities. Employees do not see how they can develop and grow in their careers within the transit office or the DOT. Employees may not know what growth opportunities are available or what is required to get promoted. While many employees are drawn to state DOT transit offices because of the ability to have a positive work-life balance, an inability to retain qualified employees can lead to the office being understaffed. This negatively impacts employee work-life balance and can cause even more staff to leave for other jobs.

State DOT transit offices can improve retention by improving the organizational culture and engaging employees. Employee engagement is especially important as many transit offices have employees working from home for at least part of their workweek. When employees are not in the office together, transit offices may face challenges making new employees feel welcome and showing they value seasoned employees. Focusing on inclusiveness and improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in the workplace can also help to improve future employee retention.

Further highlighting the importance of employee retention is the idea that all jobs in the transit office are mission critical and, when unfilled, can have a significant negative impact on operations. Because transit offices are often quite small, there is no overlap in positions (i.e., two people completing the same job or tasks) in many states. When a job is vacant, there may not be another employee who has the needed knowledge and skills to complete work for the open position. Identifying ways to improve employee retention is critical for today’s state DOT transit offices.

### Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills

State DOT transit office employees may need to develop skills in specific topics, such as training about zero emissions, project management skills, and managing federal programs at a state level. While there may be relevant courses available, current transit office staff do not feel that they have a clear knowledge of available webinars or training sessions.

Currently, many of the training and development opportunities for state DOT transit office employees are virtual. These include webinars as well as synchronous training sessions or programs. These virtual sessions made training more accessible (e.g., staff do not need to travel, there may be more seats available in a virtual class). However, many participants indicated that they felt that virtual training did a disservice to employees, especially new employees, because virtual trainings did not provide the opportunity to connect with others in the same way one would have during an in-person session. Transit office employees may need more opportunities to develop needed skills and guidance on finding these opportunities.

### Knowledge Management

Knowledge management involves creating, sharing, storing, and managing knowledge within an organization. State DOT transit offices have varying needs and issues related to knowledge management. Many transit office leaders and employees described challenges with keeping and sharing important organizational and historical knowledge. With many transit office leaders and staff nearing retirement, gathering their valuable knowledge, organizing it, and cataloging it in a way that others will be able to learn and benefit from it will be especially important.

Beyond keeping organizational knowledge within transit offices, a challenge is that transit offices are siloed or separated from the rest of their DOT. There are times when transit offices would benefit from working with or learning from employees in other parts of the DOT. Breaking down the silos that currently exist could benefit transit offices by increasing available resources (e.g., could collaborate with people in other offices doing similar work) and creating connections across the DOT. The state DOT as a whole could also benefit if knowledge is shared across the organization via people learning and growing within the DOT; this benefit will be seen through increased knowledge across the organization and knowledge sharing that breaks down organizational barriers.

### Relatively Low Pay

Overall, state DOT staff and leaders indicate that the greatest challenge contributing to recruitment and retention challenges that they experience is low pay compared to other organizations in their area. Relatively low pay can be an especially difficult challenge to address in state government, where there may be existing pay structures and strict guidance on salary levels for specified positions. However, state DOTs may be able to address this challenge in a way that enables effective employee recruitment and retention by looking into pay, comparisons with other jobs or industries, and potentially identifying other sources of indirect pay that are valuable to employees (e.g., benefits, time off).

## Capacity Building Best Practice Strategies

Based on these identified critical issues, this Best Practice Resource Guide includes strategies aligned with transit office workforce capacity that can be implemented across differing transit offices and state DOTs. The following table provides a list of the critical issues identified related to workforce capacity in state DOT transit offices, as well as the strategies included in this guide that can be used to address each challenge.

| State DOT Transit Office Challenges and Associated Strategy Solutions |
| --- |
| Critical Issue Addressed | Workforce Capacity Building Best Practices |
| Small Applicant Pool and Challenges Attracting Employees | * Develop an Internship Program to Engage New Talent
* Create Marketing Materials Designed to Attract New Employees
 |
| Retaining Skilled Workers | * Create Career Paths that Incorporate Skills to Demonstrate Career Advancement Opportunities
* Provide Telework and Other Flexible Work Arrangements to Support Employees
* Conduct Engagement Pulse Surveys to Understand and Improve Workplace Culture
 |
| Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills | * Provide Robust Leader Training and Development Opportunities to Improve Leadership Skills
 |
| Knowledge Management  | * Implement Cross-Functional Team Building to Promote Knowledge Sharing across the DOT
* Conduct Knowledge Interviews to Gather Critical Knowledge from Employees
 |
| Relatively Low Pay | * Use Salary Studies and Incorporate Total Compensation to Understand the Current Job Market
 |

The remainder of this Guide provides details for each of these best practice strategies.

# Best Practice Strategies in Workforce Capacity Building

## Strategy 1: Develop an Internship Program to Engage New Talent

| **Develop an Internship Program to Engage New Talent** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** Some of the greatest workforce challenges identified by state DOT transit office staff include difficulty finding skilled employees and having a small applicant pool. To help address these challenges, one of the solutions that state DOT transit office leaders see as effective is using internship programs to recruit new employees and introduce them to the DOT and the transit office. Internship programs benefit transit offices and the wider DOT by attracting students and early career employees interested in gaining industry experience. These applicants may not know about all the opportunities available in transit offices or the wider DOT. Internship programs can provide a pipeline for attracting talented students with a passion for transportation or public service work and can stimulate interest in promising DOT careers by offering exciting opportunities for students. Internships bring in students with the required education and technical or technological skills needed for a position, and the interns are given real world opportunities to develop and practice these skills. The DOT benefits from the interns’ contributions at a relatively low cost and risk, while developing a potential future workforce with relevant experience and a stronger awareness of DOT career opportunities. Internships provide participants with the experience and skills necessary to do well in the position and prepare them to become future employees and leaders. Additionally, internships create a partnership between students, their educational institutions, and state DOTs, and create a succession line of potentially interested employees to fill future job openings.To be effective, an internship should be a carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what they are learning. During the internship, interns should exercise real-world skills relevant to DOT work in preparation for jobs that they might pursue in the industry. Internships can be paid or unpaid, or students can receive course credit in exchange for summer or short-term employment. Internships can be developed to reach talent at different levels (e.g., high school students, undergraduate students, graduate students) depending on the identified needs or positions. Internships could be developed for transit office jobs specifically, or they could allow students to work in multiple offices within the DOT (e.g., rotations, multiple assignments) to increase their exposure and awareness of state DOT job opportunities. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Determine appropriate areas or positions:** To identify occupational areas or positions that interns can support; the first step is to assess key areas of need for entry level talent in the years ahead. This could involve discussions with senior leaders or a survey of leaders across the office or DOT. Current staff may also have input into the types of roles that interns could effectively fill or projects that might be appropriate for an intern.
2. **Design the internship program structure:** In collaboration with incumbents in the target area or position, HR personnel should identify the structure of the program. This will include elements, such as:
* Selection criteria for interns
* Number of program participants
* Types of assignments or planned work for interns (e.g., rotations, developmental assignments)
* Support and resources available to interns (e.g., supervisors, mentors, buddies)
* Performance evaluation and feedback plans
* Compensation or credit offered to interns
* Onboarding activities for new interns and end of internship activities (e.g., summary presentations, handing off work when internship is complete).
1. **Identify sources for attracting internship talent:** Explore the DOT’s existing sources of early career talent (e.g., local universities, technical schools) to identify those that could act as a source for interns across the selected occupational areas. If current relationships do not exist, conducting outreach may be necessary to identify appropriate sources of interns.
2. **Engage the current workforce to promote the program:** Especially if a new internship program is being developed, current students may not know about the opportunity or the value the internship could provide them. Building connections with college or high school career counselors can provide greater visibility for the program and steer students in the right direction. Employees who have existing relationships with these institutions (e.g., alumni) could help with initial contact and outreach to their networks to promote the internship program and expand the reach for recruiting potential participants.
3. **Recruit and select participants:** Based on the criteria identified for participation, publicize the internship opportunity through local sources and transportation communications (e.g., website, social media), review applicant qualifications, and select those with who meet the criteria and show the most interest and aptitude. Selection of interns should be based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to effectively perform the intern job.
4. **Provide high quality learning experiences for interns:** The most successful internships provide participants with the opportunity to participate in meaningful assignments that help them learn about the DOT and available careers. These experiences should be built into the internship. Additionally, interns will be more likely to want to return to the DOT full time if they are given the opportunity to network with current employees and build strong connections.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Having a successful internship program requires identifying workforce needs and sources of talent to fulfill those needs. Internship programs will be most successful when they are intentionally developed, and clear sources for recruiting talent are identified.
* Set goals and a manageable workload for interns from the start of the internship. Interns will better understand what they are expected to accomplish and what they will learn. Ensuring that they are not overworked helps to establish a positive perception of the DOT and its work environment.
* Ensure that interns know where they can go for support or if they have questions; establishing these connections will help set interns up for success in their position.
* Offer paid internships. Paid internships allow interns to focus on the work they are doing for your organization (e.g., rather than having a part time job in addition to the internship). Additional benefits of paid internships are they increase morale and commitment of the interns and are more accessible to diverse applicants.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Smaller transit offices may lack sufficient staff or funding to support an internship program. In these instances, transit offices may work with other areas within the DOT to determine if an internship program could be created spanning multiple DOT offices. This would help bring in new employees through internships and provide interns with a wider perspective of the work available in the DOT.
* Interns should not be seen as a replacement for current DOT transit office staff or vacant positions. Ensuring that interns are provided with a developmental opportunity that promotes their growth and learning about the DOT and its work is important.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Hartnell University provides a [Quick Guide](https://www.hartnell.edu/academics-affairs/academics/cte/internship_guide_mini.pdf)[[1]](#footnote-2) that employers can use to start a new internship program. This guide includes steps to design an internship program, recruit and select interns, manage interns, and successfully culminate the internship experience.
* Richmond Community College provides an [Employer Guide to Organizing an Internship Program](https://richmondcc.edu/sites/default/files/employer_guide_to_internship_program.pdf)[[2]](#footnote-3) that describes benefits and goals of internship programs, how to write a job posting for an internship, and other valuable information to guide the development of a new internship program.
 |
| **Tool: Defining Your Internship Program** | To create an effective internship program, being intentional when designing the program is necessary. The following questions provide guidance for considerations when defining a new internship program or role.**Questions to Consider When Defining Internship Program Goals**1. What will be the primary purpose of the internship program? For example:
	1. Will the internship program be used as a recruitment tool to find your next full-time employees?
	2. Will the program simply be a way to find talent for immediate needs?
	3. Will the program serve as a community engagement approach to build a good rapport with the community by supporting youth/workforce development?
2. How will the internship program be mutually beneficial to students and your organization? How might the DOT create stronger ties with local colleges and universities?
3. What level of responsibility will interns be given during their term?
4. How will the internship be kept interesting and valuable to interns as a learning experience?
5. How will the internship program impact the workload of regular employees during peak workloads or provide the resources for special projects to be completed?
6. How will internship experience translate into future employment opportunities? Expectations should be made clear to interns at the start.
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## Strategy 2: Create Marketing Materials Deigned to Attract New Employees

| **Create Marketing Materials Designed to Attract New Employees** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** According to state DOT transit office leaders, their greatest challenge in recruiting for transit office jobs is the small applicant pool for their positions, which increases the difficulty to find skilled employees to fill the open positions. Two possible reasons for the small talent pool could be that potential employees are not aware of the jobs available in state DOTs, or they do not understand what transit office jobs entail and why employees value working in the state DOT. Given this lack of awareness, identifying *why* employees want to work in the DOT and the types of information that would attract them to open positions is valuable. When asked why they were attracted to state DOT transit office jobs, new employees indicated that they valued the work-life balance, flexibility, job stability, and ability to make meaningful contributions and have a positive impact in the state or across their communities. These key elements make state DOT transit office jobs attractive and could be used to create marketing or recruitment messages to gain interest from potential new employees. For transit offices specifically, new employees also indicated they were excited to bring their transit knowledge and experience to a statewide level in their job. By creating marketing materials that highlight these elements of transit office jobs and DOT employment, DOTs can improve their applicant pools. With targeted marketing materials, DOTs may better attract candidates excited to contribute to the DOT and the transit office.State DOT transit office staff also indicated that high quality benefits (e.g., health care or insurance, pension plans, other retirement savings) are a key factor that can be used to attract new employees to state DOT jobs. The value of these benefits can be incorporated into the marketing materials to address the challenge of perceived lower salary compared to other organizations. Potential employees then better understand that there is value in the overall compensation package at the state DOT, beyond the stated salary.In addition to creating marketing materials and messages that will attract new employees, these messages should be shared in ways that they will reach the target audience. For example, using social media to share the benefits of working in the state DOT transit office can be a great way to reach college-age audiences, who may prefer to get their information through different sources than past generations of workers. These social media messages can be tailored to highlight the important work that state DOT transit offices perform as well as the various benefits and appealing elements of the jobs. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Gather input from new employees or potential applicants:** The goal of this step is twofold. First, it is valuable to understand what drew new employees into the transit office for their job and the types of jobs and work environments that potential applicants are seeking. Additionally, knowing how these groups currently view the state DOT and transit office is valuable, so that the developed marketing materials can dispel any inaccurate perceptions or misunderstandings about state DOT work. Input can be gathered from these individuals through a survey or qualitative data collections (e.g., interviews, focus group).
2. **Conduct interviews or focus groups with current employees:** Ask current transit office employees questions regarding what they like about working at the DOT and in the transit office so that this information can be highlighted in marketing materials. In these discussions, you can share feedback from potential applicants about what they desire in a job so that current employees can provide responses about how those elements are incorporated into jobs in the transit office.
3. **Identify consistencies between applicant desires and state DOT transit office work:** Determine where there is alignment between potential applicants’ workplace preferences and current employees’ perceptions about working within the DOT. Determine what DOT features the marketing materials should highlight to show applicants the DOT is somewhere they might enjoy working.
4. **Develop content tailored to the transit office and potential applicants:** Create marketing materials with content relevant to the state DOT, the transit office, and other information that is applicable and will be interesting to potential applicants. This content can include information about what the state DOT is doing and how the transit office works, as well as highlights what the potential applicants value in a job, what they are interested in learning about, and the parts of state DOT transit office jobs that may be most appealing to them. If low salaries have been identified as a potential concern for your transit office, make sure that your marketing materials highlight any benefits available to employees and the value of these benefits.
* Be creative and consider ways to make the message more meaningful. For example, the marketing materials could include quotes or testimonials from employees that highlight a specific aspect of their work or the work environment within the transit office. You could also designate employees to serve as ambassadors and lead outreach efforts. Finding ways to add a personal element to the marketing materials will make them more meaningful to potential employees.
* If focusing on the value of benefits, consider the many elements that can be included as part of a total compensation package, such as medical benefits, life insurance, paid leave, or retirement benefits. The information shared will be specific to the items offered in your state DOT transit office.
1. **Develop a plan to share the marketing materials:** Communicating the marketing materials will be most effective if there is a plan in place that details the intended audience and ways to share the materials with potential applicants. Some sharing of the materials may occur through educational institutions or organizations in your area. For example, fliers or informational documents about state DOT transit office jobs can be shared with local universities. However, outreach can also be directed to potential applicants. One means by which materials may be directly shared with potential applicants is through social media. Identify your intended audience and their social media communication preferences to determine which types of sites you may want to use to reach potential applicants.
2. **Share marketing materials with potential applicants:** Use the plan developed to share marketing materials. It is also valuable to have mechanisms in place to track if the marketing materials are being seen by the target audience.
3. **Regularly review marketing materials:** As state DOT transit office work changes or perceptions from potential applicants evolve, updating the marketing materials may be necessary. Regularly take time to review marketing materials to make sure they are having the intended impact and are positively viewed by applicants.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Create a consistent message that can be shared across various platforms. By hearing consistent information about great jobs in transit offices through social media, employees, and other sources, potential applicants will continue to see that the state DOT transit office could be a great place for them to work.
* Adjust your marketing message to your target audience. The message could focus on how state DOT transit office jobs are a valued next step in a career progression for people who have worked with transit agencies. While there should always be consistent messaging about the office and work environment (e.g., culture, benefits, work-life balance), the specific information shared should align with the target applicants for your office.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * The state DOT may not have staff knowledgeable in social media or developing marketing materials. Determining how the materials and communications can be developed and shared using current or new staff is necessary.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Forbes provides tips to effectively use [employment marketing](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/04/15/why-employment-marketing-is-beneficial-to-your-hiring-process-and-how-to-get-started/?sh=e1c8e6a38f06)[[3]](#footnote-4) to share materials with potential applicants and bring in new employees.
* Sharing marketing materials to recruit new applicants through social media can be difficult. [This article](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-use-social-media-for-recruitment)[[4]](#footnote-5) by Indeed shares tips that can be used to share marketing materials through social media and recruit new applicants.
 |
| **Tool: Discussion Guide to Inform Marketing Material Development** | When developing your marketing materials to attract new employees, engaging current employees to share input that can be used in the materials is helpful. The sample questions below are provided to structure these conversations to gather information that can be incorporated into the marketing materials. **Positive Aspects of Working in the State DOT Transit Office**1. What initially attracted you to apply for a position at the state DOT transit office?
2. What are some things that you enjoy about working here? What aspects of this organization are you most proud of?
3. What experiences do people get working here that they would be unable to get elsewhere?
4. What aspects of working here do you look forward to each day?

**Employee Values and Work Environment**1. What do you think are your office’s most meaningful traditions or shared experiences?
2. What qualities do people need to be successful here?
3. What are your favorite aspects of the work environment?
4. How do people at the state DOT work collaboratively or show support for each other?
5. What common goals or values do people across the organization share?
6. How does your experience working at the state DOT reflect your personal values?
7. To what extent does the state DOT’s impact on the community motivate you or factor into your decision to work here?

**Compensation**1. Among the employee benefits offered by the state DOT, which do you find to be the most valuable to you?
2. Besides pay, how are you rewarded or recognized for doing a good job?
3. How has the state DOT invested in you (e.g., training, professional development, workshop attendance)?
 |

## Strategy 3: Create Career Paths that Incorporate Skills to Demonstrate Career Advancement Opportunities

| **Create Career Paths that Incorporate Skills to Demonstrate Career Advancement Opportunities** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** One challenge that state DOT transit offices currently experience in terms of retaining high quality employees is that there are often not promotion opportunities or career paths available to employees who want to progress and grow their careers. Employees often do not know if opportunities for promotion are available, what they would need to do to get promoted, or how to develop within their careers. These two issues can be addressed by developing or updating career paths to lay out advancement opportunities and show employees how they can grow their skills in a direction that will support future advancement.Career paths demonstrate the possible ways that a career can progress, as well as the different jobs that an employee may consider as their career develops. Career paths do not have to include only vertical promotions, but can also incorporate lateral moves, opportunities in different offices within the state DOT, and other opportunities to develop specific skills. Some state DOT leaders indicated that the career paths they typically see have siloed tracks that stay within a single functional area. These career paths also do not properly explain how to grow in a field or make lateral movements to other functional areas. This information would help employees to see more developmental opportunities for themselves with the DOT.Career paths typically include diagrams that show the relationships and connections between different jobs. This could include both vertical movement within a specific office or area and lateral movements across different functional areas or offices. Career paths also provide job descriptions for the various jobs in the career path, including key duties and responsibilities and needed knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). To support employee development, career paths can also include relevant training and development opportunities, such as job rotations or job shadowing opportunities that align well with the designed developmental path.One barrier to employee retention that is frequently described by state DOT transit office staff is the lack of opportunities for promotion based on the organizational structure that is in place. To overcome this challenge, career paths can be created or updated to incorporate skill development opportunities. Incorporating an emphasis on the KSAs required throughout the career path will communicate the importance of those skills at various points on the career path, which can enhance recruitment and employee career planning. When KSAs are incorporated into the career paths, employees can see how their individual KSAs will align with different jobs and where development work may be needed to grow as desired within the DOT. Employees will often need to acquire new KSAs to progress upward in their career. These skill requirements can be incorporated into the career path as opportunities to demonstrate growth and earn pay raises or other rewards.  |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Build cross-department partnerships and clarify job roles:** To help determine how transit office staff may move horizontally across the state DOT and into different functional roles, build partnerships with different areas of the DOT to determine the types of jobs that may have similar requirements. Once these partnerships are in place, working together to create career paths that provide valuable developmental opportunities across a career for state DOT employees will be easier.
2. **Identify the job duties and KSAs for each job:** Information on job duties and KSAs for each job is needed for employees to understand what different jobs in the career path entail and the various requirements for employees. This information can be gathered through a job analysis. Based on the information gathered, a job description should be created for each job if one does not yet exist. This job description will clearly document the job requirements and qualifications for each job.
3. **Determine the level of proficiency required:** For each KSA, identify the level of proficiency (e.g., Basic, Intermediate, Advanced) that an employee needs to possess to complete each job. Proficiency levels can be determined through a data collection effort (e.g., surveys) with subject matter experts (SMEs) as participants. For each of the KSAs, ask the SMEs to “Indicate the level of proficiency required in [insert KSA] to successfully perform the essential functions of [insert job title]?” The proficiency ratings need to be completed for each level of a job. The proficiency levels can then be included in the career path so that employees understand the level of KSAs required for each job.
4. **Identify areas for incremental skill proficiency targets or goals:** Even when there are few opportunities for formal promotion, employees can still be motivated by a career path. Within a specific job, incremental proficiency levels or metrics/goals can be identified. Employees can then recognize they are developing in the right direction for their career, even though they may not receive a promotion or title change.
5. **Identify relevant training, education, and development opportunities:** By incorporating learning and developmental opportunities that are beneficial for advancement or lateral movement, career paths become a tool that employees can use to guide their growth within the DOT. These opportunities should align with the KSAs and development needs identified for each job.
6. **Create career path diagrams and guides:** Career path diagrams depict the connections between jobs. A career path guide is a document that combines job descriptions, relevant training and education, and the career path diagrams so that employees and managers can easily reference this information. These guides can be used to facilitate career discussions or as part of individual development plans for employees.
7. **Align** **HR processes to the career paths:** Aligning HR processes (e.g., performance reviews) to the information included in the career path will increase transparency about how promotion decisions are made and when employees need additional development.
8. **Summarize career path information**: Once career paths are created, employees should have access to these resources.Career path information can be summarized and incorporated into marketing flyers for current employees and potential applicants. Career paths are often displayed in a diagram, for ease of visualization and to increase understanding of the path forward. This will help to show both current and future employees that individual growth and development is important, and they will receive support to grow in their careers at the DOT.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Career path information can enhance recruitment and retention by providing applicants and incumbents with tangible information to show how to advance to more senior positions. The career path information should be communicated to applicants and employees to ensure wide awareness of the paths and skills required within the DOT.
* Even when a promotion is not available in the near term, career paths help to keep employees motivated because they can see the development needed and where their career could progress.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Depending on the amount and extent of the information already available (e.g., job analysis information, existing job descriptions), this effort could require a large amount of time and resources.
* Career progression can be unique across employees, and there is not always a one-size-fits-all path. To overcome this challenge, work with employees to help them understand their growth opportunities and how existing career paths might fit with their career goals.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) developed a toolkit to support [developing employee career paths and ladders](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/developingemployeecareerpathsandladders.aspx)[[5]](#footnote-6), which provides an overview of the process and guidance to better understand and develop career paths and ladders.
* The Minnesota DOT provides [career paths](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/careers/tss-career-paths.html)[[6]](#footnote-7) that describe each level of jobs within the career path, including job descriptions and required knowledge, skills, and abilities.
* The Idaho DOT implemented horizontal career paths that encourage skill growth when promotions are not available. [This article](http://wrtwc.org/news/2017/idaho-transportation-departments-horizontal-career-paths-produce-impressive-results/)[[7]](#footnote-8) provides an overview of their career path effort and success.
 |
| **Tool: Language about Employee Development without Promotions Available** | Some employees may be disappointed when they learn that strong performance does not guarantee a promotion. If your office has limited opportunities for promotion, including language about developing skills without receiving a promotion can be especially valuable. The text below provides an example of what this language could include. *Career paths lay out options for how you can progress through your career in the DOT. Career paths include specific examples of potential positions available as you grow both within and outside of your current office, and they outline key gap areas and gap closing strategies to grow in a career.* *You are encouraged to take control of your career by participating in targeted developmental activities, taking relevant training, and seeking diverse and demanding assignments that will allow you to develop your skills. Continually learning and investing in your education and training will help you better tackle obstacles in your job as well as increase the likelihood of advancing your career. Engaging in these types of activities will allow you to take on more responsibility through the management of specialty assignments, which will lead to specific expertise and related promotion potential.* *The information presented is intended for career development purposes. Displaying mastery of the recommended skills and/or completing the recommended activities does not automatically qualify you for promotion or for another position. Although mastery of the competencies is a prerequisite for promotion, promotions will only be granted when opportunities exist (e.g., based on open positions, budget availability, and supervisor recommendations).* |

| **Create Career Paths that Incorporate Skills to Demonstrate Career Advancement Opportunities** |
| --- |
| **Tool: Career Advancement Table** | When using a career path as a guide, seeing career advancement comparisons across the different job levels helps employees. The table below provides a template that can be completed for a career path, so employees understand what is required of them at each job level. |
|

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Entry-Level Job Title | Mid-Level Job Title | Senior-Level Job Title |
| Job Description | [Insert entry-level job description] | [Insert mid-level job description] | [Insert senior-level job description] |
| Education and Qualifications | • [Example: At least a high school diploma or GED] | • [Example: At least 3 years of prior experience as a (entry-level position).] | • [Example: At least 3 years of prior experience as a (mid-level position).] |
| Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities | • [Example: Mathematics – Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.]• KSA 2• KSA 3 | • [Example: Mathematics – Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.]• KSA 2• KSA 3 | • [Example: Mathematics – Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.]• KSA 2• KSA 3 |
| Recommended or Required Training | • Training and Development Area 1 | • Training and Development Area 1 | • Recommended or Required Training 1 |
| Developmental Experiences | • [Example: Gain experience supervising and/or training subordinates]• Developmental Experience 2 | • [Example: Accompany a senior-level employee to a community meeting to begin building relationships with key stakeholders] | • [Example: Contribute to the development of the DOT master plan.]• Developmental Experience 2 |

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## Strategy 4: Provide Telework and Other Flexible Work Arrangements to Support Employees

| **Provide Telework and Other Flexible Work Arrangements to Support Employees**  |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** The COVID-19 pandemic required DOTs to transition their existing work environment and offer remote work to many employees. Remote work – or telework arrangements - are flexible work arrangements that allow employees to work from somewhere other than the office. Because of the COIVD-19 pandemic, DOTs have already started to implement this strategy in their daily operations. As workplaces, including DOTs, move beyond the pandemic, the transition back into the office and pre-pandemic workplaces looks different depending on the organization. Employees may continue to work fully remotely, may be in the office for a few days a week, or may be back in the office full time. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic changed work, there were requests for telework and flexible work arrangements to support employees and accommodate their personal needs. Offering flexible work arrangements allows employees to balance work and their personal lives, which is increasingly important for new employees, employees with dependent care, and those with increased health and transportation-related challenges. Many employees value the opportunity to work from home for at least part of their workweek, so continuing this practice will likely improve retention efforts for state DOTs. Employees may seek out an employer who does allow for telework if the DOT does not. However, DOTs must ensure that they have robust policies in place for telework to continue to be a successful arrangement in which both employees and the organization thrive.Beyond telework arrangements, state DOTs can also offer other flexible work arrangements to better support their employees’ personal needs. For example, employers can offer flexibility in the hours worked (i.e., flextime arrangements), which allows employees the ability to change their starting and stopping times for work. An employee may choose to work their 8-hour day from 7am to 3pm rather than from 9am to 5pm. Flexible work arrangements have become popular among new entrants to the workforce as well as for more tenured workers. They allow employees to work the same number of hours for the same pay while also providing better work-life balance, better accommodation for other jobs, and a schedule or work location that is more aligned with an individual’s lifestyle or work preferences (e.g., early morning work vs. working during the evening, cooler vs. warmer workspace).When asked about the impact of flexible work arrangements and telework on their work, some state DOT transit office staff indicated that they are missing interactions with their team members and do not feel like they were as much of a team as they did pre-pandemic. They also discussed missing out on “water cooler” conversations as a problem and said that without these interactions it is difficult to connect with and truly know your coworkers. The rise in teleworking also meant that technology had to be updated so that staff could effectively work remotely. As such, even when there are telework or other flexible work arrangements in place, the transit office should find ways to engage employees and help them to connect with one another, personally and professionally. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Gather feedback from staff about success and challenges experienced with telework:** In most state DOT transit offices, staff worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and may still be doing so. Transit offices should gather feedback to better understand employee perceptions of this work experience, challenges employees encountered, and what tasks work best when teleworking compared to being in the office full time. This can also include gathering interest about continued use of telework or making other flexible work arrangements available.
2. **Define goals of implementing flexible work arrangements:** When state DOT transit offices started implementing telework arrangements in 2020, the impetus was health and safety for employees during the pandemic. As we move forward, DOTs may have new or differing reasons for offering flexible work arrangements. For example, they may have experienced increased productivity of employees when they work on specific tasks at home. The DOTs may also see the value of flexible work arrangements in attracting and retaining staff or reducing transportation-related concerns (e.g., money spent on gas, reduced emissions).
3. **Determine flexible work arrangement policy characteristics:** Based on experiences with telework, employee perceptions and preferences, and the goals of using flexible work arrangements, next determine what the DOT would like the flexible work policy to include. For example, the DOT could incorporate these options:
	* Telework (also known as remote work, telecommuting, or flexplace): flexibility for employees to work from home or another location. Some may work 100% remotely and others may sometimes come into the office.
	* Flextime: flexibility in when employees start and end their day
	* Job sharing: Two employees split one full-time position and the required hours. Each employee works part-time hours but maintains full benefits.
	* Compressed workweeks: employees can work 40 hours in less than five days, such as working four 10-hour workdays.
	* Phased retirement: Employees and their employers identify a schedule to gradually reduce the retiring employee’s full-time workload over months or years.

Additionally, the policy should specify the eligibility requirements for participation in the flexible work arrangements (e.g., job characteristics, employee tenure, lack of disciplinary actions).1. **Communicate policy updates:** Once a flexible work arrangement policy has been finalized, all employees need to be informed about the policy, including the newly available flexible work arrangements. These communications could include:
	* Changes to existing policies, whether those were formal policies or informal policies, in place due to COVID-19.
	* Directions on how to apply for flexible work arrangements.
	* Guidelines for employees on how to use flexible work arrangements.
	* The requirements for participation.
2. **Develop training materials for managers and supervisors:** These materials should provide guidance on the policy requirements as well as how to effectively manage employees with flexible work arrangements. Managers with and without experience managing employees with flexible work arrangements could benefit from guidance and directed training materials on how to manage these employees.
3. **Advertise flexible work arrangement availability for current and new employees:** Flexible work arrangements are seen as a benefit to many employees. As such, when flexible work arrangements are available to employees, this should be communicated in job announcements, position descriptions, marketing materials, and social media accounts. Many job seekers today are specifically looking for flexibility in their job options, so advertising this information may help recruit new employees.
4. **Encourage employees to connect with one another:** While telework and other flexible work arrangements are desired by employees, they can make collaboration or connecting with coworkers more difficult. When employees are working remotely or at different times, encouraging them to connect with one another can be helpful. For example, having one day a week where all employees come into the office can facilitate collaboration and accomplishing work together.
5. **Review policy performance and update as needed:** On a regular basis, reviewing the flexible work arrangements policy is a good idea to identify if updates are needed. Employees and managers may need additional information or tools to be effective working this way. Any challenges encountered can be addressed with updates to the flexible work arrangement policy itself or the tools and resources that are available.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * For flexible work arrangements to be successful, managers and supervisors must be trained in how to effectively manage a workforce that may be working across multiple locations and at different times.
* Telework and other flexible work policies must be clearly communicated with all staff. Employees and leaders at all levels of the organization need to have a consistent, shared understanding of the policy requirements and expectations of staff using flexible work policies.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * For most transit offices, the telework or flexible work arrangement may be dictated by the policy in place at the DOT or state government level. Leaders may need to understand how to help their employees work within this policy or advocate for changes to higher level leadership.
* Some managers may be hesitant to support flexible work arrangements because they want to oversee the work of their employees or do not believe that employees can be effective outside of the office. Sharing the success that organizations have had with implementing telework throughout the pandemic, as well as highlighting the short- and long-term benefits of these types of work arrangements, can be helpful.
* When employees are not in the office at the same time, they need to be intentional in creating connections with others. Finding ways to encourage communication and information sharing across staff is important for success of telework and other flexible work arrangements.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Flexible work arrangements can help to attract new employees. [This article](https://www.forbes.com/sites/joyburnford/2019/05/28/flexible-working-the-way-of-the-future/?sh=1b0290b48745)[[8]](#footnote-9) in Forbes describes how they can help attract a younger, new workforce to organizations.
* The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) created a [Guide to Telework and Remote Work](https://www.telework.gov/guidance-legislation/telework-guidance/telework-guide/guide-to-telework-in-the-federal-government.pdf)[[9]](#footnote-10) that provides guidance to support implementing telework opportunities while improving mission delivery.
* Harvard University has a free, self-paced online course entitled [*Remote Work Revolution for Everyone*](https://www.edx.org/course/remote-work)*[[10]](#footnote-11)* that can help employees excel in a virtual work environment.
 |
| **Tool:** **Activities for In-Person or Virtual Interactions** | Different activities will be more effective when conducted in person versus virtually. There are some activities that do not require people to congregate to be effective. Flexible work arrangements may limit the ability of people to come to the office, thus making opportunities gathering in the office more difficult. Teams may benefit from considering when coming together as a group for a meeting or activity is valuable.The key point is to consider the meeting or activity’s goal to determine the best setting for that activity. Below are examples of the types of activities that would benefit from in-person interactions. These lists are not exhaustive but rather designed to help you think about the setting that is best suited for your purposes. * **What types of activities benefit from in-person or personal, real-time interactions?**
	+ **Brainstorming:** Developing new ideas or solving problems through discussion with others
	+ **Sense of purpose:** Developing or sharing a set of values that guide the way work occurs in the organization.
	+ **Job feedback:** Performance review or feedback discussions.
	+ **Problem Solving:** Working with others to develop a solution to a challenging problem.
	+ **Project Kick-offs:** Meeting with people for the first time, especially when it is important to develop relationships.
	+ **Team building:** Activities where team members learn about one another, build trust, and learn to work effectively as a team.
	+ **Conflict mediation:** With most conflicts mediation activities, there will be very complex situations to address, which will benefit from in-person interactions.
* **What types of activities benefit from virtual or asynchronous interactions?**
	+ **Information transfer:** Sharing written details or information that do not require extensive explanation.
	+ **Approvals:** Passing along forms or materials that require signatures or approvals.
	+ **Coordination:** Scheduling meetings or coordinating efforts related to a project or task.
	+ **Status Updates:** Brief updates regarding how work or processes are occurring, as well as the status of various tasks.
	+ **Skills training:** When employees need to learn new skills, especially through a lecture format where interaction is not necessary.
 |

## Strategy 5: Conduct Engagement Pulse Surveys to Understand and Improve Workplace Culture

| **Conduct Engagement Pulse Surveys to Understand and Improve Workplace Culture** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** Employees want to work somewhere where they are engaged and experience a positive work environment. Understanding employee perceptions of the workplace and using their feedback to improve the organizational culture is an effective way that state DOT transit offices can improve employee retention. When employees are not engaged, retention is a challenge. Creating a culture where employees are engaged and happy to work is vital. While the specific workplace culture may vary based on the location and the organization, a positive work environment could include providing desired opportunities for connectedness, development, engaging new employees, or improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in the workplace. State DOT transit offices can examine engagement and how their employees view the workplace through shorter pulse surveys. Employee pulse surveys are short questionnaires that are distributed frequently to employees within an organization. These surveys can be used to assess employees’ perceptions of the workplace, satisfaction with various initiatives (e.g., flexible work arrangements), or attitudes about work (e.g., employee engagement, job satisfaction). Pulse surveys leaders to see trends in their employees’ attitudes over time, for example month-to-month or quarter-to-quarter. Short and frequent pulse surveys are a good supplement to yearly employee surveys as they allow leaders to almost immediately identify areas of concern. Survey results should inform improvements in the transit office or in the larger DOT. When conducting any employee survey, managers should act on the results or share with employees that the identified concerns have been heard. Without this feedback, employees will be less motivated to participate in future surveys or may become less satisfied and engaged. Additionally, finding ways to make survey feedback anonymous will encourage employees to respond to the survey in a truthful manner. In sum, pulse surveys provide transit office leaders with an easy and cost-effective way to track their employees’ attitudes throughout the year.  |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Establish goals for the pulse surveys:** Understanding why you want to conduct an engagement pulse survey and what you hope to learn will inform the appropriate questions to include. Considering specific challenge areas that have been experienced in the office or employee attitudes that leadership would like to better understand can be helpful.
2. **Select the survey format and questions:** Based on your identified goals for the survey, determine the types of questions you will include, length of the survey, frequency of pulse surveys, and the platform used to collect responses. Select or develop questions to measure workplace attitudes and perceptions. When determining the survey format, you can also consider if all pulse surveys will have the same items or a subset of items that are the same and some that are new. Including the same items on multiple pulse surveys allows for the analysis of changes to employee attitudes and perceptions over time.
3. **Identify who will be responsible for the survey:** Someone in your organization will need to be responsible for the engagement pulse survey data collection, analyzing the responses, summarizing the results, and sharing the findings.
4. **Create the engagement pulse survey:** Create the survey in a survey platform (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics) so that the survey can be shared with employees. The survey should be created in a way that keeps respondents anonymous. You can ask employees to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to statements, such as “*Overall, I feel satisfied at work”, “My supervisor cares about my well-being”, and “Our team works effectively when we are working remotely”.* You can also include open-ended comments on the survey where employees can provide additional context or information. However, most of a pulse survey will likely be rating questions to reduce burden on both the employees completing the survey and the person responsible for analyzing the survey data.
5. **Develop a communication plan:** For the survey, communicate to employees why the survey is being conducted and how the results will be used. Communications should encourage participation and let employees know that their responses will be anonymous. Communications can also be developed to remind employees to complete the pulse surveys prior to the survey closing.
6. **Distribute the survey to employees:** Share the link to the survey with employees so that they can complete it. Send reminders to employees as necessary and encourage completion of the survey through informal discussion, team meetings, and newsletters or other communications. Responding to the pulse surveys should be voluntary, and employees should not be forced or coerced to complete the survey.
7. **Analyze survey results to identify strengths and areas for improvement:** Once the survey has closed, an employee will need to analyze the results. Leaders should look for unexpected results, changes in employee attitudes over time, and items with the highest and lowest ratings. Leaders should also examine any open-ended responses to gather additional context or information for the survey items.
8. **Share results with employees:** Results and prioritized action items should be shared with employees to show that they are heard and leadership cares about their input.
9. **Develop and implement strategies to improve employee attitudes or workplace culture:** The survey findings will provide data to determine areas for improvement for your transit office. Select focus areas that could use improvement and identify solutions to address any negative perceptions employees shared. Conduct follow-up engagement pulse surveys at the pre-determined intervals so that changes to engagement and employee perceptions can be analyzed.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Surveys should not ask for personal identifying information or have questions that would identify a specific employee. Employees will be more likely to answer candidly when responses are anonymous.
* Allowing employees to elaborate on their responses within the survey through open-ended responses or other places to provide comments will provide more context about employee attitudes.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * If employees feel that their concerns are not addressed, they may have negative attitudes toward the current and future surveys. Leaders should review survey responses, let employees know that their input is heard, and take necessary action.
* If the survey takes a significant amount of time to complete, employees may be less inclined to respond. To increase participation, create surveys that can be completed in 5-10 minutes.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Qualtrics provides a [guide to employee pulse surveys](https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/employee/what-is-employee-pulse-survey/)[[11]](#footnote-12) that can be used to develop and deploy an engagement pulse survey.
* SurveyMonkey provides [best practices for writing survey items](https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/writing-survey-questions/)[[12]](#footnote-13), which can be referenced if a transit office needs to develop new survey items.
 |
| **Tool:****Example Engagement Pulse Survey Questions** | The specific questions in an engagement pulse survey should be determined based on the goals of the survey, the current workplace culture and situation, and be tailored to the organization. The list below provides some example questions that could be asked of employees as part of an engagement survey. These items measure both employee attitudes (e.g., engagement) and organizational drivers of employee engagement (e.g., organizational culture, resources and tools, leadership). Each of these survey items would be answered using a Likert scale (e.g., a 5-point scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree).**Employee Attitudes** 1. I look forward to coming to work every day.
2. I feel a sense of pride working for this organization.
3. I am inspired to go above and beyond what is expected to help my organization succeed.
4. I look forward to coming to work each day.
5. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.
6. I feel like I “fit” in my organization.
7. I would leave this organization if offered a position elsewhere with similar pay.
8. I feel that I have strong job security in our organization.

**Workplace Culture**1. In our team, we work collaboratively to accomplish goals.
2. I feel comfortable sharing ideas with my team or others in my office.
3. I can rely on my coworkers to contribute quality work.
4. Policies are fairly applied across employees.
5. Employees in our organization are treated with dignity and respect.
6. I am allowed to decide how to accomplish my work tasks.
7. I feel like I am valued in our organization.
8. I agree with the values of our organization.
9. Employees receive recognition for doing good work in our organization.

**Resources and Tools**1. My job makes good use of my knowledge, skills, and abilities.
2. I have the technology and equipment I need to do my job.
3. I have the information that I need to be able to effectively do my job.
4. In general, the workload I have is reasonable.

**Leadership**1. Leadership in my office fosters an engaging and positive work environment.
2. Leadership provides employees with information to keep them informed on organizational matters.
3. Our leaders take a genuine interest in employees’ well-being.
4. Leaders support me in making progress towards my professional development goals.
5. I have confidence and trust in my supervisor.
 |

## Strategy 6: Provide Robust Leader Development Training and Opportunities to Improve Leadership Skills

| **Provide Robust Leader Training and Development Opportunities to Improve Leadership Skills** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** As tenured state DOT transit office staff are retiring and new employees are moving into leadership positions, creating opportunities for leaders to grow and develop their leadership skills is important. Improving leadership skills within the state DOT transit office will move the office into the future with strong leaders, reduce gaps in the leadership pipeline, grow the skills of other employees in the office, increase employee engagement, and reduce turnover. State DOT transit offices need to determine what types of leadership training and development opportunities will provide the greatest benefit to their leadership. These opportunities could also be offered across the DOT to develop additional leaders and create a cohort of future DOT leaders who can work together across the organization.DOTs can gather feedback from senior-level employees about experiences that they believe would be useful to develop leaders in the organization. Examples of leadership development opportunities that could be provided include:* **Trainings:** Provide content- and leadership-based training to leaders so they have the tools and knowledge for senior-level jobs and to develop them as leaders.
* **Mentoring:** Assign new leaders to senior-level mentors who can help to train and develop the leaders, transfer key knowledge, and serve as role models.
* **360-Degree Feedback:** Conduct a 360-degree evaluation for leaders, where employees at all levels (i.e., subordinates, co-workers, and superiors) anonymously provide developmental feedback. Along with providing leaders with feedback from all perspectives, encourage them to create a leadership development plan based on the feedback with help from their supervisors.
* **Job Rotations:** Have new leaders temporarily rotate their assigned jobs so they gain a better perspective of the different responsibilities of DOTs and learn more job-specific skills.
* **Action Learning Projects:** Leaders participate in solving an organizational problem in real time. Teams work together to develop a solution to a problem that is strategically important to the organization.

Creating robust leader training and development can also include a focus on coaching, where leaders learn to become coaches to their employees. Creating an organizational environment in which leaders can act as coaches helps to support employees at all levels in growing their skillset and reaching professional goals. When organizations have a coaching culture, they experience greater staff engagement, increased financial performance, improved team functioning and productivity, and more rapid leader development relative to organizations that do not have this type of culture. By providing training to leaders on how to be an effective coach, state DOT transit offices can expand coaching opportunities and improve leadership skills and employee development. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Determine the key skills that leaders lack:** While leaders likely have great skills in some areas, there may be topics for which development is needed. For example, leaders may need to develop skills in recognizing and mitigating risk, strategic thinking, relationship building, technology use, or coaching others. The skills that need to be developed should be considered when selecting the leader training and development opportunities to offer.
2. **Identify the leader training and development opportunities that will benefit the transit office or DOT:** There are numerous types of training and developmental opportunities that can support leaders in developing their leadership skills. Depending on the specific needs of the transit office, the DOT, and their current leaders, these opportunities can be selected. The DOT needs to select training and development opportunities that are feasible within the budget and context of the organization. Potential training and development opportunities could include:
	* Trainings
	* Mentoring
	* 360-Degree Feedback
	* Job Rotations
	* Action Learning Projects
	* Developing Coaching Skills
3. **Develop goals and content for the leadership training and development opportunities:** Content of the selected opportunities should be designed to help leaders improve their leader skills and behaviors. The content should encourage leaders to look at their own strengths and areas for improvement, while learning and practicing new skills**.**
4. **Select metrics that will be used to evaluate success and create evaluation mechanisms:** To show the value of leader training and development, the organization should identify what success will look like. For example, how will they know that leadership development opportunities have been effective? Developing a means to measure this success (e.g., surveys) is necessary. Once the developmental opportunities have been completed, evaluate their success. Evaluation can include four different levels:
* Reaction: Did the participants find the leader training and development opportunity to be enjoyable, engaging, and relevant?
* Learning: Did the participants learn the intended knowledge, skills, and abilities?
* Behavior: Are the participants behaving differently as a result of the leader training and development opportunity?
* Results: Does the leader training and development contribute to the organization’s success (e.g., return on investment, customer satisfaction)?
1. **Encourage continued leader development:** Even after formal development opportunities are complete, a critical and common component of strong leader development is to support a community of leaders utilizing their new skills. Establishing groups of leader cohorts (e.g., those that went through the initial training together) to continually meet and discuss leadership successes, challenges, and hold each other accountable to engage in development opportunities will facilitate the continued building of a strong leadership pipeline.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Leaders need to be given consistent opportunities to practice their leadership skills, which requires support and encouragement from leaders and executives within the DOT.
* The leadership development opportunities should align with the current and future needs of the DOT. Otherwise, time, energy, and other resources may be wasted.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Leaders in state DOTs already have a great deal of work that they must accomplish, so they may not feel that they have time to focus on developing their leadership skills. To overcome this potential challenge, share the benefits of leader training and development, including benefits to the leader, their employees, the overall team, and the organization. Benefits include improved team functioning, increased employee engagement and productivity, improved employee well-being, reduced turnover, and many more.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Forbes provides a [list of leadership development opportunities](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2019/02/21/14-smart-strategies-for-supporting-leadership-development-at-every-level/?sh=1d8d8eed3d2d)[[13]](#footnote-14) that can be used for leaders across organizational levels.
* OPM provides a [leadership development toolkit](https://www.opm.gov/wiki/uploads/docs/wiki/opm/training/leadership_toolkit.pdf)[[14]](#footnote-15) that was designed for USDA and provides resources and tools to support leader development in various ways.
 |
| **Tool: Coaching Habits Model** | The Coaching Habit[[15]](#footnote-16) framework describes coaching as an essential leadership behavior that can result in more effective leadership. The Coaching Habit can be used as a starting point to help leaders understand how to be coaches. The table below provides an overview of this model.

|  |
| --- |
| **Framing** |
| * Coaching conversations are an essential leadership behavior.
* Coaching should be a daily, informal act (e.g., 10 minutes).
* Identify opportunities to change leadership behavior and implement coaching habit behaviors.
* Practicing coaching behaviors and building coaching skills takes time.
 |
| **Avoiding the Advice Trap** |
| * Leader behavior of sending their knowledge down the organization is not always effective.
* Leaders must be "curious" for longer periods before giving advice because:
	+ - Typically, the "problem" subordinates come up with is not the root of the real problem.
		- Leader advice may not be as effective as they believe.
		- Only giving advice robs subordinates of the opportunity to take ownership and come up with their own solutions.
* Leaders must resist giving the answer until the right moment.
 |
| **Coaching Habit Guidelines** |
| * Say Less, Ask More.
	+ - Hear the other person and help identify the real issue at hand.
		- Listen with the intent to understand rather than to reply.
* Expect resistance to change when starting something new.
	+ - Anticipate and prepare for possible setbacks when starting out coaching behaviors.
* Create space for others to have learning moments.
	+ - Rather than providing guidance or the right answer, create the opportunity for the subordinate to engage with the lesson and connect the dots themselves through their own experience.
* Ask the Seven Essential Questions to guide coaching conversations:
* “What's on your mind?”
* “And what else?”
* “What's the real challenge here for you?”
* “What do you (really) want (from me)?”
* “How can I help?”
* “If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?”
* “What was most useful for you?”
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## Strategy 7: Implement Cross-Functional Team Building to Promote Knowledge Sharing across the DOT

| **Implement Cross-Functional Team Building to Promote Knowledge Sharing Across the DOT** |
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| **Brief Description of Strategy:** Professional capacity and increased understanding of roles across DOTs are essential as roles change and transferability of skills becomes increasingly important. By bringing staff together from across the DOT to work together to solve a problem, staff can learn about different resources and technology across the organization, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the DOT’s work. During focus groups, state DOT transit office staff indicated that a common challenge experienced is siloed transit offices, where offices seem to be separate from the rest of the DOT. Encouraging knowledge sharing across organizational boundaries and breaking down these silos could benefit transit offices by increasing the resources available and creating connections across the DOT.Cross-functional team building can provide transit employees with a greater understanding of other departments or functions within their DOT and reveal the important interdependencies between jobs and functions. Cross-functional team building can also enable better integration across DOT functions, supporting high quality performance and effective progress towards mission achievement. There are various ways transit cross-functional team building can be accomplished. Some examples include:* **Shared or multi-departmental training**, where employees from various functions complete a training course together, thus learning what is expected of different functions, not just their own. This training can provide employees with basic knowledge and skills across a range of positions.
* **Brown bag sessions** are informal meetings or presentations in which a speaker provides cross-functional training or discusses technical concepts or industry best practices. These meetings can introduce employees from different functions to new concepts.
* **Shadowing rotations** can be organized for members of a cross-functional team to see how other departments function. This would allow employees to understand the challenges other functions face while, at the same time, developing cross-functional skills.
* **Cross-functional project teams** can also provide opportunities for knowledge sharing. Whenever possible, identify projects within the DOT that can benefit from a cross-functional team. Through these experiences, employees can gain knowledge from other positions and functional areas.

Ultimately, transit cross-functional team building activities are valuable because they provide a means for new and existing employees to gain important skills and a broader perspective of the transit agency. When employees are trained across different areas of work, they can then complete job tasks within other positions in the event of retirements, turnover, or employee leave. By instilling transit employees with a broader base of expertise and greater sense of interrelatedness of departments or functions, transit agencies can develop a workforce capable of better achieving positive results in terms of safety, service delivery, and customer service. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Set goals:**Create clear goals for team building that indicate how the DOT and transit office want to include employees or what should be accomplished in a cross-functional team. Creating these goals is the best way to make sure that the needs of the DOT are defined, and the organizational structure is considered. The goals can include enhancing knowledge, learning about other functions, and increasing the ability to support other functions, as needed.
2. **Assemble a cross-functional team:**After goals have been set for the program, participants need to be identified. To be effective, cross functional teams should include:
* **Influence-makers from each functional area or department.** Influence-makers are employees who others look to for guidance or advice. These employees do not necessarily have to be members of leadership; employees from all levels should be considered.
* **Subject matter experts (SMEs) across the DOT.** These people are experts in the various processes, procedures, or skills required for success. SMEs have in-depth knowledge of their specific job function within the DOT and can share that knowledge with others.
1. **Share expectations for participants:** Selected employees should be interested in and committed to collaboration and knowledge transfer across the DOT. Consider starting with a pilot group of eight to ten members to make sure that the program is set up in a way that works for the organization. After identifying the pilot cross-functional team, share the developed goals with the team to help them understand where they fit in, how their participation is essential, and create a sense of commitment to the team.
2. **Identify strategies for cross-functional team building*:*** All team members should be encouraged to identify strategies for cross-functional team building. Examples include shadowing an employee in another transit department or function, having employees give a presentation on their area of expertise, and identifying a project that requires support from across several transit departments or functions. The team facilitator should supervise, but not micromanage, the activities.
3. **Monitor performance:** As cross-functional team building activities occur, there will likely be a need to adjust the teams or activities if knowledge is not flowing as expected or if conflict arises. Leadership should monitor the general interactions of the cross-functional team for any conflict and address it through a discussion that allows all team members to share their points of view. Open communication is a necessity for these teams and team building activities to be successful.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Throughout the course of the cross-functional team, DOTs should consider putting mechanisms in place to facilitate active reflection. Doing so will encourage participants to process what skills they are developing, cross-functional knowledge they are learning, and how those skills and knowledge may be utilized.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Creating and implementing cross-functional teams requires a time commitment that is outside of normal work responsibilities. To overcome this potential problem, ensure that no employee is being overworked due to cross-functional activities and job responsibilities are spread equitably among all employees.
* Existing silos may hinder knowledge sharing or willingness to collaborate with employees in other parts of the DOT. If employees view this collaboration as an opportunity to expand their own skillset and strengthen both their job security and transit agency mission achievement, they are more likely to support the initiative.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * [This article](https://asana.com/resources/cross-functional-team)[[16]](#footnote-17) by asana provides an overview of cross-functional teams, why they are important, and how to best create them.
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## Strategy 8: Conduct Knowledge Interviews to Gather Critical Knowledge from Employees

| **Conduct Knowledge Interviews to Gather Critical Knowledge from Employees** |
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| **Brief Description of Strategy:** A challenge expected to impact state DOT transit offices in the next 10-15 years is the likely turnover due to retirements of tenured staff. This challenge will be exacerbated because many state DOT transit office employees indicated that there is not currently documentation of process and procedures performed in their office. Additionally, in state DOT transit offices, there are many instances in which there is only one person responsible for a specific task or duty in the transit office, with many jobs being very specific (e.g., to one grant type) and distinct from one another. As such, there is often not a second person in the office with the needed knowledge or skills to complete a specific job. This situation can create challenges when an employee leaves the DOT or needs to take an unexpected leave of absence. Similarly, this creates difficulties if the amount of work needed surges and there are no other people in the office who can effectively complete the needed work.To address this challenge, state DOT transit offices can use knowledge interviews to gather information from current employees about their work. Knowledge interviews provide an opportunity for employees to share specific on-the-job tasks, the skills needed to complete these tasks, and useful background or historical knowledge about their job from throughout their career. Knowledge interviews should allow employees to share information and knowledge that another person without familiarity with the job would need to be successful in the position. Beyond the day-to-day work of the job, this could also include information about processes and procedures followed, valuable resources, and colleagues who are beneficial for collaboration.Transit offices will benefit from having a structured knowledge interview plan that guides when and how to conduct these interviews throughout the duration of an employee’s career. This will allow the office to have confidence that critical information is gathered as necessary from employees. The information will be documented and able to be shared with others who may need it, both in routine and emergency situations. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Identify jobs or roles to discuss:** Start by identifying the specific jobs or roles for which knowledge interviews will be most helpful. For example, identify employees who may be retiring soon so that their knowledge of the job can be gathered and documented before they leave. Alternatively, focus on jobs in which only one employee conducts the work or knows what is required for the job or jobs that are critical to the transit office, but few people are knowledgeable about. The specific job focus for the knowledge interviews will determine the questions to ask and the employees to interview. Ideally, knowledge interviews would be conducted for all jobs in the state DOT transit office so that the information about the job can be formally documented. However, prioritizing specific jobs first can be beneficial.
2. **Identify knowledge recipients:** As part of knowledge interviews, the information gathered is documented. However, other people can learn from hearing about the job directly from a current employee. For example, a new employee to the transit office may benefit from hearing about the tasks in a job that they could be promoted to in the future. Identify employees who would most benefit from another employee’s knowledge and experience and determine what is valuable for them to learn from the current employee. Understanding who knowledge recipients will be helps to frame knowledge interviews and ensure the most important, relevant, and needed knowledge is gathered.
3. **Develop a protocol for the knowledge interviews:** Have a plan for the knowledge interviews to ensure all necessary questions are included. With an understanding of the focus job and the type of knowledge that needs to be gathered, develop a protocol that includes questions to ask interview participants. Questions should focus on how the work is done rather than solely asking about what is done. When developing interview questions, structure them in a way that promotes free sharing. This is accomplished by asking open-ended questions that encourage providing details when responding. Open ended questions start with words like who, why, or how rather than words that promote one-word responses (i.e., “Do you…”). The tool provided at the end of this strategy descriptive provides example questions that can be used to develop the knowledge interview protocol.
4. **Conduct knowledge interviews:** Use the developed protocoltoconduct knowledge interviews with employees performing the job on which you are focusing. The purpose of these interviews is to gather knowledge and information on the job. Knowledge collected during these interviews should include how the work is done, processes and procedures followed, materials/equipment used, colleagues worked with, and potential challenges that an employee should be prepared for. Audio recording these interviews can be helpful for understanding tone and context after the interview is completed. The audio recording can also be used to transcribe the knowledge interview to further preserve the knowledge for other employees.
5. **Conduct follow-up knowledge interview:** For some jobs, there might be seasonal or cyclical changes to the work that is done. To ensure knowledge about the entire job is documented, follow up with employees at a different time of year to determine if there is other information to document about the job, what is required, and how the work is completed.
6. **Conduct exit interviews:** While knowledge should be gathered from employees through the knowledge interview while they are on the job, conducting knowledge interviews as a part of exit interviews when employees depart the transit office can also be valuable. These exit interviews can ask similar questions to those posed in the knowledge interviews but also ask the exiting employee more generally about their job and knowledge that they believe needs to be shared for the transit office to remain successful.
7. **Document, store, and share relevant information:** After gathering information through the knowledge interviews, make sure that the information is not lost and that the people who may need the information are able to access it. This involves creating a plan so that employees know where this information is stored, and all information is in the same location. Information can be stored in shared folders (e.g., online network folders like SharePoint) or document libraries so future employees have access to them.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * It can be beneficial to Interview employees periodically throughout the year and across their careers. Employees may have difficulties thinking about the breadth of their work in a single knowledge interview. Especially when work is cyclical (e.g., annual grant cycles), employees may be better able to share accurate and comprehensive information about their work around the time that it is occurring.
* Create a repository or location where knowledge interview information can be housed. This is important so that state DOT transit office leaders and staff know where job information can be found and that it is accessible to those who would benefit from having this information as they do their work.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Current employees may be hesitant to share what they know about the job in a knowledge interview if they feel that doing so will make them less relevant or make them replaceable in their job. To overcome this challenge, explain to employees the benefits of sharing knowledge and creating a record of information about the job. Ensure that they understand that the purpose of capturing this information is to make certain that when employees leave unexpectedly, high quality work will continue with fewer disruptions.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * The MASK process (Method for Analyzing and Structuring Knowledge) can be used to gather knowledge about their jobs from employees. [This TR News article](https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/trnews/trnews305.pdf)[[17]](#footnote-18), entitled *Preserving Institutional Knowledge Through Knowledge Books: Models, Insights, and Impacts* (see pg. 22), provides an overview the MASK process to conduct knowledge interviews. Additionally, the Minnesota DOT has successfully used this method to gather knowledge from retiring workers and [documented their efforts](https://mntransportationresearch.org/2020/07/16/knowledge-books-preserve-expertise-of-retiring-workers/#more-7578)[[18]](#footnote-19).
 |
| **Tool: Example Questions to Ask in a Knowledge Interview** | The specific questions asked during a knowledge interview will depend on the specific job and the employee participating. The list below provides a starting point for identifying questions that may be valuable for learning about a job and what is required to effectively perform it. One key element to gathering detailed information through a knowledge interview is to ask open-ended questions that solicit needed details rather than asking yes or no questions that do not require an employee to provide specific details about their work.**Questions about the Specific Job or Role**1. Describe a typical day in your job. What tasks do you complete? How do you complete these tasks?
2. Please tell me about tasks that may be less frequent but are still an important part of your job. How do you perform these tasks?
3. What processes or procedures do you follow as a part of this job? Where are these processes and procedures documented?
4. What are common obstacles you have encountered in this job? How have you overcome them?
5. How is your success measured in this job? How do you know when you have done high quality work?
6. What skills do you use that make you effective at this job?
7. What skills have you found that you needed to develop throughout your career to be able to do this job better?

**Questions about Helpful Resources**1. What types of tools do you use to complete your work?
2. What technology do you use to complete your work? For what types of tasks do you use this technology?
3. Where do you find resources that help you effectively perform your job?

**Questions about Connections or Collaborators**1. Who do you interact with in the transit office as a part of your job? What do these interactions entail or when do you need them?
2. Who do you interact with across the state DOT, but in different offices or areas? What is the nature of these interactions and what type of information or resources come from the interactions?
3. Who do you interact with outside of the DOT as a part of your job? What is the importance of these interactions or connections?
 |

## Strategy 9: Use Salary Studies and Incorporate Total Compensation to Understand the Current Job Market

| **Use Salary Studies and Incorporate Total Compensation to Understand the Current Job Market** |
| --- |
| **Brief Description of Strategy:** State DOT transit offices can experience workforce capacity challenges when staff who have needed skills and abilities leave the office for other employment. One of the greatest reasons for state DOT transit office employee attrition is that employees go to other jobs for a higher salary. Across state DOT transit offices, many leaders and employees indicated that the DOT salaries are lower than other employers in their local area. Changing salaries within the state DOT may not be a feasible solution for the perceived low pay of state DOTs. One potential solution is to understand the salaries offered by other employers in the area. Using or conducting a salary study can provide information on local salaries. Competing for top talent on salary alone is challenging for many state DOT transit offices. However, state DOT transit offices can often attract new employees because these offices provide benefits that are valued by the employees. State DOT transit offices can show current or potential employees the total value of their compensation package by including benefits and indirect pay that employees receive. Total compensation packages provide information about complete pay that will be provided to employees on an annual basis, including both direct (e.g., salary) and indirect (e.g., employer-paid medical benefits) compensation. Oftentimes, employees do not think about indirect sources of compensation as part of their pay for a job. Common items that could be included in a compensation package statement include salary, medical benefits coverage paid by the employer, flexible spending accounts, paid leave, disability insurance, life insurance, retirement benefits (e.g., pension plans, 401k plans), employee assistance program, educational assistance programs, learning and development opportunities, and career development opportunities. All of these combined make up the total compensation an employee receives. Including these additional sources of indirect compensation may make state DOT compensation more similar to other employers than when considering salary alone. |
| **Key Challenges Addressed** | * Challenges Attracting Employees and a Small Applicant Pool
* Retaining Skilled Workers
* Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Needed Skills
* Knowledge Management and Sharing
* Perceptions of Relatively Low Pay
 |
| **Key Implementation Steps** |
| 1. **Select positions and define job duties:** To understand state DOT transit office compensation in comparison to other local employers, first identify the jobs or positions that need to be analyzed. Because organizations may have different job titles for a position with similar responsibilities, understand what the job requires so that appropriate benchmarks can be identified.
2. **Access internal salary and compensation data:** For the positions identified for the salary analysis, locate internal information about salaries and other forms of compensation provided to employees.
3. **Identify relevant sources of external data:** Once your positions are identified, determine the sources of salary information from other employers. Some organizations pay an outside contractor to conduct a salary survey or for access to a salary database. However, there are free sources that include salary data. Sources of free data include:
* [**Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)**](https://www.bls.gov/oes/data-overview.htm)**[[19]](#footnote-20):** Provides data by occupational title, and the state and national level. Includes total employment numbers and data about hourly and annual salaries for the occupation.
* [**O\*NET Online**](https://www.onetonline.org/)**[[20]](#footnote-21)**: Includes detailed descriptions of occupations, including salary data by occupation, job title, state, and metropolitan area.
* [**Salary.com**](https://www.salary.com/research/salary)**[[21]](#footnote-22):** Provides salary (median and 10%, 25%, 75% and 90% levels), bonus, and benefits data for individual positions, and can be filtered by major city.
* [**Indeed.com**](https://www.indeed.com/career/salaries?from=gnav-homepage)[[22]](#footnote-23): Includes salary information based on job title, industry, and location.
* **AASHTO Salary Survey:** Each year, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) releases a salary survey that includes various transportation jobs divided into five main categories. This survey provides information about the job, salary ranges, and benefits available to employees. [The 2020 salary survey results](https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/RPTD%20Document%20Library/2020-AASHTO-Salary-Survey.pdf)[[23]](#footnote-24) are available can be used to examine salaries for various transportation jobs across the country.

With the data from these sources, you can identify appropriate job titles and then record the salary information.1. (Optional) **Conduct a salary survey:** If your transit office wants to gather data that are more specific to your area or tailored to a specific job or organization, you may want to conduct a customized salary survey. To do this, you need to:
* *Provide information* about the jobs you are requesting salary information for, including job duties and features.
* *Create a simple, user-friendly survey* that allows local employers to input pay data. The survey should include questions about salary. It can also include information on available bonuses and other benefits that provide indirect compensation to employees.
* *Distribute the survey* to local employers who have similar job positions in their organization.
* *Follow-up with contacts* to answer questions and encourage survey completion if it has not been completed yet. When reporting on any data from the salary survey, only report results if there are three or more responses received to preserve anonymity.
* *Analyze the data gathered* by calculating means, standard deviations, and other descriptive statistics.
1. **Analyze and share salary results:** After all data are gathered, combine the data so that comparisons can be made across organizations. This includes incorporating the monetary value of benefits received. You can create summaries by job, frequency distributions, or other data visualizations that display salary data comparisons. If state DOT transit office compensation is very different from other compensation in the area, sharing results with DOT or state leadership may be worthwhile, so they have an understanding of what the competition for qualified talent looks like.
 |
| **Key Success Factors for Implementation** | * Salary studies can be challenging because of the many different job titles that are used and the fact that not all organizations have the exact same positions. To gather accurate results for the salary survey, be deliberate in gathering data and ensuring that it aligns with the target job.
 |
| **Potential Obstacles and Considerations** | * Even when considering benefits and other indirect pay offered as part of total compensation in state DOTs, jobs outside of the state DOT transit office may still be more highly compensated than DOT jobs. If this occurs, leaders can work with the DOT to identify opportunities to increase pay or offer additional benefits to employees to offset the lower compensation.
 |
| **Helpful Resources** | * Forbes provides [this article](https://www.forbes.com/sites/financialfinesse/2018/09/24/how-much-are-your-benefits-really-worth/?sh=68c7c6d77879)[[24]](#footnote-25), which details the monetary value of various benefits that can be combined with salary to comprise a more complete picture of overall compensation for state DOT transit office employees.
* Guidance for [conducting a customized salary survey](https://hr-guide.com/Compensation/SalarySurveys.htm)[[25]](#footnote-26) is detailed in this article by HR-Guide.
 |
| **Tool: Example Salary Survey Questions** | Planning for a salary survey is very important to ensure accurate, needed data are gathered. To conduct the survey, outreach can be conducted to local businesses to request their participation. Example questions to include on a salary survey include the following.**On the survey, provide information about the target job(s), including:*** Job title
* Brief description of job duties or requirements
* Related job titles
* Required education or other requirements.

**Ask the respondent: For this organization,*** What sector is it in?
* What is the zip code?
* How many employees does it have?

**Ask the respondent: For this position,*** What is the average base salary?
* What is the salary range?
* What is the bonus structure and what is the average annual bonus?
* What health benefits are available?
* What other benefits are available to employees?
* How many paid holidays are given to employees each year?
* How many days of paid time off are offered each year?
* How much other time off is offered?
* Are employees eligible for telework or flexible work arrangements?
 |

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