

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD

Attention Employers! Cultivating Talent in the Airport Environment

October 12, 2021

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#TRBWebinar



Learning Objectives

1. Identify how to cultivate talent in an airport organization
2. List the three major categories of talent cultivation techniques
3. Discuss how to implement talent cultivation



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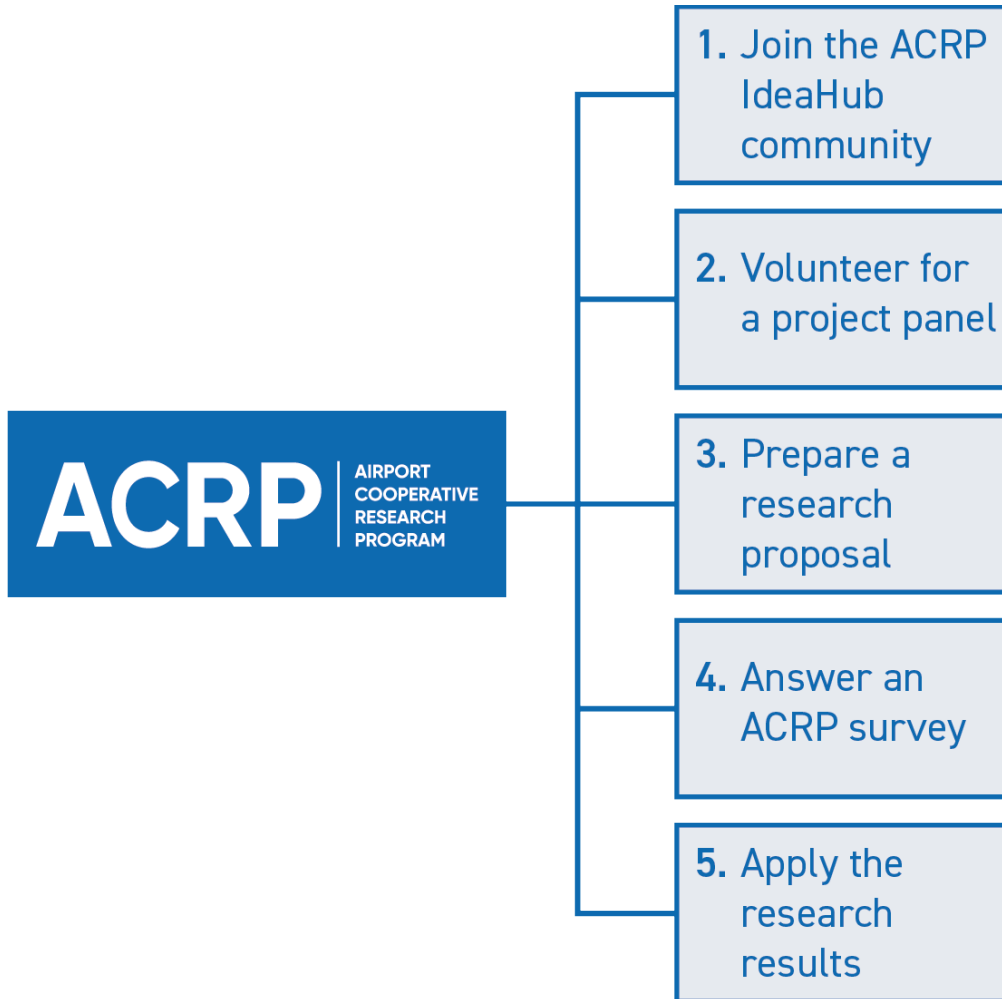
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Report 232: *Cultivating Talent in the Airport Industry*
- PM, ACRP 06-07
Report 230: *Enhancing Academic Programs for Future Airport Professionals*
- PM, ACRP 06-02
Report 75: *Airport Leadership Development Program*



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Playbook for Cultivating Talent in the Airport Environment

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ACRP Report 44 Oversight Panel

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Project Goal



A “playbook,” for airport leaders and managers, that will provide inspiring, tested, and readily implementable techniques to enhance talent cultivation and knowledge transfer within airport organizations.

Work Performed

Conducted Literature Review

- Reviewed literature to develop an understanding of the issues that impact the ability of the airport industry to retain individuals who can lead, guide, manage, and carry out airport-centric initiatives

Conducted Gap Analysis

- Conducted interviews and focus groups to identify challenges and barriers to talent cultivation and professional growth

Developed Strategies and Tools

- Developed strategies, or plays, that will enable airport leaders and managers to enhance talent cultivation within airport organizations
- Conducted interviews with airport leaders to understand innovative and successful workforce strategies being implemented, and developed case studies

Developed Metrics to Measure Effectiveness

- Identified metrics that airport leaders and managers can use to measure the effectiveness of each play

Developed Playbook

- Plays are broken into three workforce challenge areas: Creating an Environment that Cultivates Talent, Supporting Employee Growth, Preparing to Meet Future Needs
- Includes a Needs Assessment to help airport leaders and managers understand where the airport/organization has a need for improvement around talent cultivation

Talent Cultivation Playbook

- Designed for quick and easy application
- Can be used by airports of different types and sizes
- Addresses all levels of the organization from entry level through leadership
- Includes approaches that are tactical, strategic, and structural in nature
- Each play includes:
 - Brief description
 - Potential indicators of a need for the play
 - Detailed implementation steps
 - Success story
 - Key success factors
 - Potential obstacles and considerations
 - Additional resources
 - Metrics to measure success
 - Related case study examples

Play 1: Implement Cross-Functional Group Sessions to Promote Organization-Wide Knowledge Sharing (cont.)

Key Success Factors

- Increase satisfaction among participants by identifying gaps in employees' desired or required knowledge and skills and develop the cross-functional group in a way that best addresses these gaps.
- Fostering a climate of knowledge sharing rather than knowledge hoarding by highlighting the benefits of collaborative learning will encourage participation and engagement in the sessions.

Obstacles & Considerations

- It may prove difficult to get achieve active participation among all employees, but participation may be encouraged by highlighting the benefits of the sessions and ensuring that employees are given time in their schedules to participate.
- Managers may be hesitant to adopt these sessions given the time required to organize them, but emphasizing the benefits of the sessions may help increase buy-in.

Play Adjustments to Achieve a Similar Outcome in Different Ways

If you are not ready to host cross-functional group sessions, try creating a repository or library of resources. If you already host cross-functional group sessions, hosting open houses might be a good next step for you.

- **Create a repository or library of resources:** You and your employees can continually update this to share content and knowledge with each other.
- **Implement cross-functional group sessions (e.g., brownbags, lunch and learns) to promote organization-wide knowledge sharing**
- **Host open houses:** Employees can learn more about the airport and its functions, informally meet employees within their functional area as well as others, and ask leaders questions.

Additional Resources

If you are looking for more information about cross-functional knowledge sharing sessions, visit these sources:

- [Example brownbag series from the University of Arizona?](#)
- [How to run successful Lunch and Learns from MindTools?](#)
- [Example flyer promoting a brownbag series from the Oregon Department of Transportation?](#)

Play 1: Implement Cross-Functional Group Sessions to Promote Organization-Wide Knowledge Sharing

A cross-functional group session is a formal meeting within the airport, who meet to exchange ideas and information. These sessions can be in the form of lunch and learns, brown bag sessions, or other formats. Cross-functional group sessions may be considered training that is unparalleled in its ability to foster learning. In cross-functional group sessions, employees learn from each other based on their unique experiences and perspectives. A cross-functional group session is a solution-oriented meeting providing employees with an opportunity to discuss and solve problems they are encountering in their work more efficiently.

Cross-Functional Group Sessions

Southwest Florida International Airport instituted lunch and learn sessions about improving customer service. Through these Lunch and Learn sessions, employees can enjoy learning about the work that occurs across functional areas.

Implementation Steps

- Step 1:** Establish the purpose of the communication between members.
- Step 2:** Determine the program format for functional group sessions and establish the format of the session.
- Step 3:** Obtain support from management to promote the group sessions.
- Step 4:** Invite employees and their managers to be included in these group sessions or teach about the desired topic areas.
- Step 5:** Schedule speakers (internal or external).
- Step 6:** Ensure that invited employees are prepared to participate in the cross-functional group session.
- Step 7:** Host the cross-functional group session.
- Step 8:** Regularly assess whether the cross-functional group sessions are meeting the needs of employees and be open to making changes to ensure maximum benefit and learning.

Implementation Tools and Resources

- Managers can use check-ins with their employees to make sure their employees are aware of the cross-functional group sessions, link participation in these sessions to their employees' performance goals, and even provide incentives for participating.
- Surveys may be used to assess employees' desire for sessions about various topic areas, comfort level with participating, knowledge or skills gained through participation, and their satisfaction with the format of group sessions.

Potential Indicators

Indicator #1
Experienced gaps in employees' required or desired knowledge

Indicator #2
Employees want more teamwork, collaboration, or connection with those outside of their immediate working group

Plays: Creating an Environment that Cultivates Talent

Play	Overview
<p>Implement cross-functional group sessions to promote organization-wide knowledge sharing</p>	<p>A cross-functional group session can enhance employee retention by providing employees with an opportunity to develop relationships, learn from their colleagues, and get guidance regarding problems they are encountering at work, which in turn helps them perform better and accomplish tasks more efficiently.</p>
<p>Host “learning moments” forums to share lessons learned</p>	<p>Learning moments forums can be described as formally organized and structured discussions in which employees share something they learned, a best practice they developed, or skills they utilized to accomplish a difficult goal.</p>
<p>Facilitate Think Tank forums to promote innovation</p>	<p>“Think Tank” forums are useful for encouraging innovation amongst employees and allowing employees to have their voices heard in decision-making processes, both of which help increase employee engagement and satisfaction.</p>
<p>Conduct group visioning sessions with employees to outline shared values and goals</p>	<p>Group visioning sessions may be described as formally organized gatherings of employees with the purpose of establishing goals to work towards as a team and values to uphold in pursuit of these goals.</p>
<p>Conduct employee pulse surveys to understand employee attitudes about work</p>	<p>Employee pulse surveys can provide airport managers with an easy and cost-effective way to track their employees’ attitudes throughout the year.</p>
<p>Articulate a peer-nominated employee recognition approach to honor work successes</p>	<p>An employee recognition program is a system used to acknowledge individuals who go above and beyond when performing their job duties and deserve to have their work successes celebrated.</p>

Plays: Supporting Employee Growth

Play	Overview
Provide job shadowing opportunities to broaden employee skills	Job shadowing provides employees the opportunity to learn about and observe the responsibilities and interactions of different jobs within the airport without transitioning from their current role.
Facilitate reciprocal mentoring opportunities to increase employee capabilities	Facilitating a reciprocal mentoring program is a cost-effective strategy for encouraging collaborative learning within the airport and provides employees with opportunities to engage with and learn from their colleagues.
Guide employees in pursuing relevant training or certifications to improve their skills	Managers may be able to generate a list of acceptable training opportunities for employees by consulting with the HR department or training personnel, discussing possible opportunities with other department managers, inquiring about any opportunities offered by organizations such as the AAAE or ACI, and searching the internet for any relevant programs.
Conduct constructive feedback sessions for leaders to promote consistency across employees	Constructive feedback involves using facts (versus opinions) to support appraisals of employees' performance, describing the impact of employees' actions, and providing guidance for future behavior.
Share sources for publicly available developmental opportunities to promote growth	Providing employees with resources that may aid in their personal and professional development (e.g., online training materials, magazine subscriptions, research articles, conference or workshop materials) is a cost-effective way to encourage their skill-building and knowledge growth and to support a knowledge-sharing culture.
Facilitate career path discussions to share career development opportunities with employees	A career path is a sequence of different jobs that an employee can progress through within an organization, which can guide them and provide an understanding regarding how to reach their overall career goals.

Plays: Preparing to Meet Future Needs

Play	Overview
<p>Create partnership opportunities for airport leaders to engage with academic programs</p>	<p>Fostering relationships and partnership opportunities with academic programs can help create a pipeline for new talent in the airport, resolve the learning gaps that new employees may have when first entering the airport industry after completing their education, and provide current airport employees an avenue to continue their education.</p>
<p>Conduct “stay interviews” to learn from employees and improve employee retention</p>	<p>Stay interviews should be conducted during an employee’s tenure at the airport to help managers better understand what makes employees remain at the organization and what factors might cause them to leave.</p>
<p>Design internal internship opportunities to prepare future talent</p>	<p>Internal internships are opportunities in which employees work in a different position and/or functional area for a fixed period (e.g.,1-3 months, full year) with the purpose of developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Employees who participate in internships can gain exposure to other career paths and pursue their career goals and aspirations.</p>
<p>Create a personal career narrative to share work experiences with employees</p>	<p>A personal career narrative is a short description of why individuals selected their career or field, how they have progressed in their career, and their short- and long-term goals.</p>
<p>Conduct futuring workshops to understand future workforce needs</p>	<p>A futuring workshop involves a thought exercise in which managers, key stakeholders, and employees describe the current trends and demands for the specific airport or the airport industry that will impact workforce needs in the future.</p>

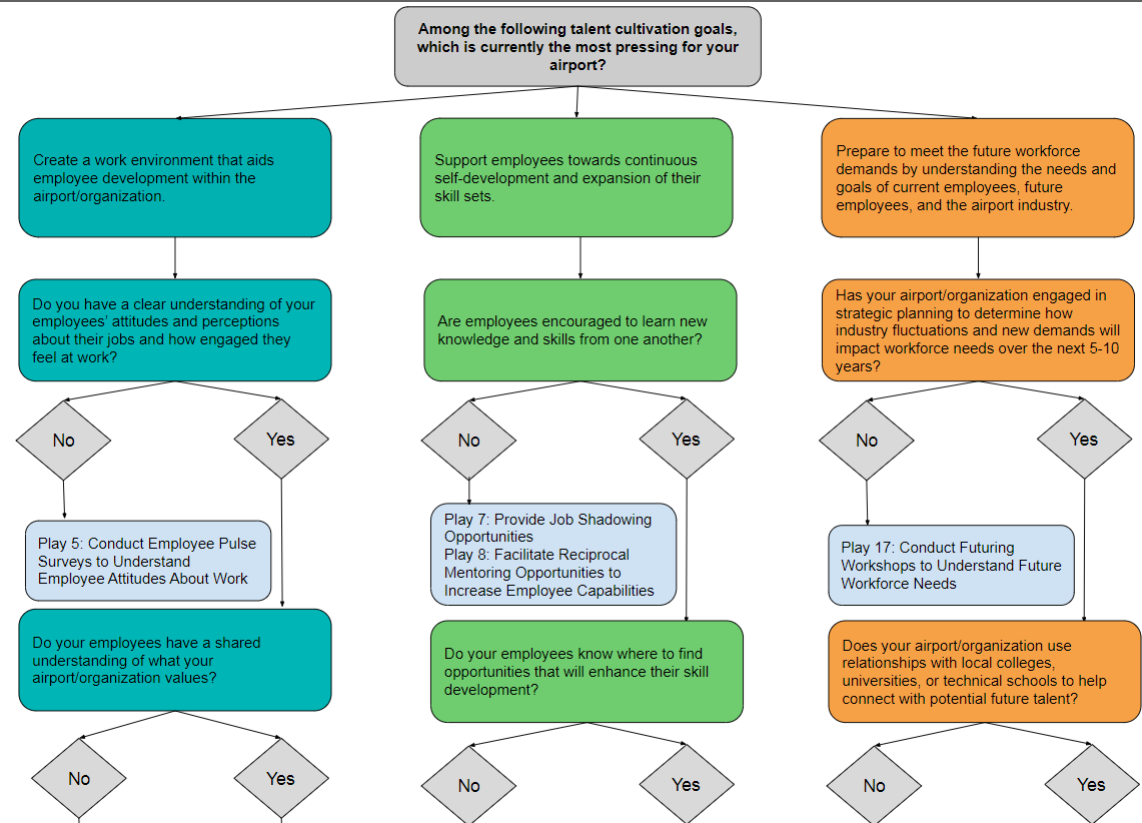
Putting the Plays into Practice

- **Incremental Use of Selected Plays**
 - Plays can be used as standalone techniques or combined with other plays depending on the need
- **Levels of Plays**
 - Each play contains suggested adjustments for how it can be leveled up or down as needed
- **Airport-Wide Processes and Procedures**
 - Airport-wide talent cultivation processes and procedures can be developed using the plays as a baseline and expanding the scope and stakeholders involved

Needs Assessment

Purpose: Help airport leader or manager understand where the airport/organization has a need for improvement around talent cultivation

Airport leader or manager answers the question to identify play(s) designed to help solve their specific talent cultivation challenges



Metrics and Metric Scorecards

Purpose: Provide a consistent and quantifiable approach to evaluate the impact of talent cultivation plays

- **The metrics are designed to be easily understood and used, have broad applicability, and be adaptable to the needs of diverse audiences**
- **Metrics:**
 - Time to implement
 - Cost to implement
 - Amount of time to realize results
 - Sustainability
 - Stakeholder support
 - Percentage of employees able to participate
 - Percentage of individuals who participated (of those able to participate)
 - Supervisor perception of employee performance post implementation of play
 - Percentage of participants satisfied with experience



Metric Scorecard

- All metrics associated with each play should be used together to evaluate the play, and then a new scorecard can be completed for a second play if comparison is desired
- By comparing the plays using a consistent set of metrics and anchors, airport leaders can simplify difficult decisions and articulate the costs and benefits of each approach

Metric Scorecard					
Title of Play: <i>[Insert Play Title Here]</i>					
Metrics	0-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	Score
Time to implement	Over 12 months	6 to 12 months	3 to 6 months	Less than 3 months	
Cost to implement	More than budget target	Right at budget target	Slightly under budget target	Significantly under budget target	
Amount of time to realize results	Over 12 months	6 to 12 months	3 to 6 months	Less than 3 months	
Sustainability	One-time occurrence	Information or context must be continually updated to remain current	Information or content can be updated annually and reused	Can occur frequently with minimal maintenance	
Stakeholder support	Stakeholders unaware of program	Stakeholders know of program and do not support it	Stakeholders know of program and slightly support it	Stakeholders fully support the program	
Percentage of employees able to participate	Up to 25% of employees can participate	25% to 50% of employees can participate	50% to 75% of employees can participate	75% or more of employees can participate	
Percentage of employees that participated (of those able to participate)	Up to 25% of employees can participate	25% to 50% of employees can participate	50% to 75% of employees can participate	75% or more of employees can participate	
Supervisor perception of employee performance post implementation of play	Decline in performance	No change in performance	Slight improvement in performance	Significant improvement in performance	
Percentage of participants satisfied with experience	Less than 50% satisfied	50% up to 75% satisfied	75% to 90% satisfied	Greater than 90% satisfied	
Total Score:					

Case Studies

Purpose: Provide examples that airport leaders and managers can reference to see how airports have been successful in creating an environment that enhances talent cultivation, supporting employee growth, and preparing the airport to meet future talent needs

- Each case study includes:
 - Brief description
 - Airport demographics
 - Implementation information
 - Keys to success
 - Challenges and lessons learned
 - Impact to the organization

Airports

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport
 Naples Airport
 Philadelphia International Airport
 San Diego International Airport
 San Luis Obispo Airport

Effective Use of Recognition & Performance Management Program for Talent Cultivation

The Minneapolis, St. Paul (MSP) Airport believes in fostering a relationship-oriented culture where employees work together to get the job done, rather than through an authoritative approach, by acting upon employee feedback. MSP captures employees' thoughts and ideas through their annual employee survey (AES) so they can address their workforce's needs and concerns. One initiative that emerged from previous AES results was the creation of an employee recognition program, giving employees the opportunity to acknowledge each other for exemplary performance. Also based on additional AES feedback that employees wanted to see more accountability, MSP is in the process of roll out a new performance management program with a greater focus on accountability. This another example of how MSP values their employees and helps foster a culture where people work together to solve problems and accomplish tasks.

Airport Demographics

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Approximately 700 employees

Participant: Manager Human Resources

Keys to Success

- Survey employees to understand what they need and to measure the success of programs. MSP's goals are directly generated from the AES results.
- Develop pilot programs (like MSP did for their performance management program) to identify what works and what elements require change before rolling out a program across the entire organization.
- Ensure that employee development is a priority and is modeled by senior leadership.

Employee Recognition and Performance Management to Cultivate Talent

Monthly and Annual Employee Recognition Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program began in response to employees' request through the AES that they wanted an opportunity to be recognized for their contributions. Launching the program required a written strategy presented to the executive team to gain their buy-in to ensure they would support it financially. Employees nominate one another for exemplary performance each month to receive a \$25 gift card; there are 10 winners each month. If an employee demonstrates the airport's vision by providing the best customer service, they are nominated for the annual award of \$500. The program gained momentum after a few months of winners being advertised online, and employees began recognizing the value in recognizing one another.
Performance Management Enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AES results suggested that employees wanted to see more accountability throughout the organization and that supervisors to manage poor performers better. Previously, performance reviews were not routinely done in the organization. MSP realized they needed to put practice in place that would strengthen manager skills and guide them in conducting performance reviews. MSP went through several iterations of the performance review process through piloting the program and

Greatest Challenges & Lessons Learned

Award limitations for public organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since MSP is a public organization, they cannot offer generous gifts or have big celebrations for employee recognition awards. MSP conducted ample research on what other jurisdictions were offering and mirrored that value, while still striving for a meaningful program.
Manager skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When piloting the performance management process, MSP realized many of their managers did not know how to properly write goals. Training on goal writing had to be embedded in the new process so managers knew how to write and guide their employees on writing SMART goals.

Impact to Organization

The new performance management process increases expectations of all employee levels by increasing accountability and enhancing manager skill level. The employee recognition program has helped foster a relationship-oriented culture at MSP; the possibility of being recognized for collaborative and supportive behavior increases teamwork and fellowship. Both efforts enhance the trust and dedication employees have in their employer.

Case Studies

Naples Airport Authority



Career Pathing

Naples Airport has established career paths, which outline advancement opportunities for progressive growth and leadership.



- Future trajectory added to job descriptions
- Supervisor buy-in
- Understand employee needs
- Supervisor conversation template



- Supervisor buy-in
- Increase retention rates

San Diego Regional Airport Authority



Leadership Development

The airport has a designated team devoted to developing and organizing programs that help their employees grow within the organization and as leaders.



- “Leading at All Levels”
- Career Development Program
- Executive leadership buy-in
- Use of promotional materials
- Surveys to assess program value



- Shift worker participation
- Budgetary issues
- Helps employees get promoted
- Engaged employees

Case Studies

Philadelphia Airport System



Leadership Development

The Philadelphia Airport System offers various professional development and leadership programs.



- Stars and Leads Program
- Supervisors and Management Development



- Clear objectives and outcomes
- Leadership buy-in
- Flexibility



- Time commitment
- Group projects



- Employees feel valued

Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport



Employee Recognition Program and Accountability Through Performance Management Program

The employee recognition program allows employees to acknowledge each other for exemplary performance and the airport is rolling out a new performance management program with a greater focus on accountability.



- Monthly and Annual Employee Recognition Program
- Performance Management Enhancements
- Understanding employee needs
- Measuring program success
- Implementing pilot programs



- Award limitations for public organizations
- Manager skills



- Increased expectations
- Relationship-oriented culture



Case Studies

San Luis Obispo Airport

Learning and Development Center

The Learning and Development Center helps shape the future workforce in an airport that generally struggles with succession planning and limited advancement opportunities.



- Learning and Development Center



- Leader and Manager buy-in
- Careful and consistent promotional efforts
- Proper communication

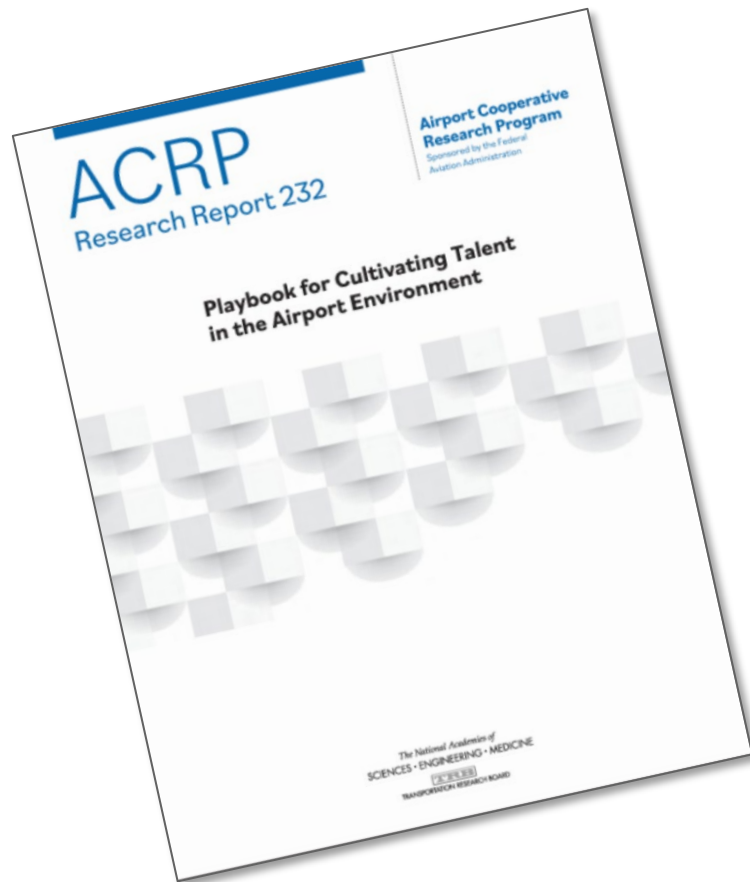


- Tracking organizational development



- Employees understand career paths
- Shapes well-rounded employees

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



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Today's Panelists



Moderator: Seth Young,
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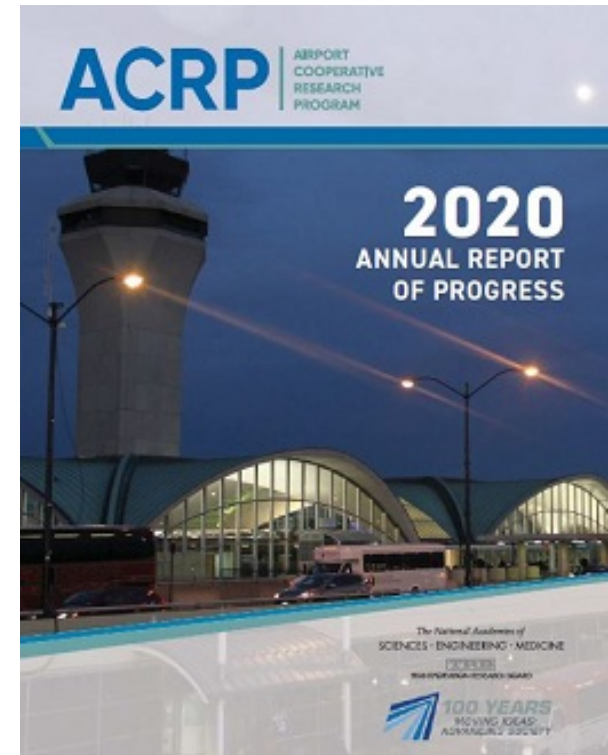
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- ➔ Managed by TRB and sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- ➔ Seeks out the latest issues facing the airport industry.
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- ➔ Publishes and disseminates research results through free publications and webinars.



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Other ACRP Research on Today's Topic

Research Report 186: *Guidebook on Building Airport Workforce Capacity*

Research Report 217: *Guidance for Diversity in Airport Business Contacting and Workforce Programs*

Research Report 230: *Enhancing Academic Programs to Prepare Future Airport Industry Professionals*

Synthesis 18: *Aviation Workforce Development Practices*

Synthesis 113: *Airport Workforce Programs Supporting Employee Well-Being*

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