

# Strategies for Improving Agency Outcomes on the Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics Report and Increasing Employee Engagement

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## Areas identified for improvement:

- 1) two-way communication;
- 2) working collaboratively with labor organizations;
- 3) increasing training and employee development opportunities;
- 4) supporting workplace flexibilities such as Telework;
- 5) differentiating between levels of performance; and
- 6) promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce.

## 1) Two-Way Communication

### Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors, and Senior Executives

*How:* Discuss support for all six of these strategies at All Hands Meetings, Town Hall meetings, E-mail blasts, on-site meetings, webinars, Newsletters, blogs, teleconferences, brown bag meetings, focus groups, and individual performance feedback discussions.

*What to communicate:* Employees are our most valued resource and our mission accomplishments serving the public are a direct result of their efforts.

- Discuss efforts to ensure employee security and continuity of operations;
- Name specific Agency goals and recognize teams and individuals who have supported them;
- Provide informational updates and progress reports on reaching goals;
- Share information about how you have used employee input;
- Share new training opportunities;
- Form an Agency Communications Board to foster effective communication at every level;
- Discuss the value and importance of workplace flexibilities such as Telework;
- Highlight efforts being made toward reaching milestones;
- Highlight labor management relations progress;
- Conduct pulse surveys or focus groups and discuss the results with employees.

### **Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors**

*How:* Staff Meetings, Team Meetings, E-mail blasts, on-site visits, teleconferences, Newsletters

*What to communicate:*

- Discuss efforts to ensure employee security and continuity of operations (e.g., testing operations plans, building safety plans, and phone trees);
- Name specific Agency goals and verbally recognize teams and individuals who have supported them;
- Provide informational updates and progress reports on reaching goals;
- Share new training opportunities;
- Discuss the value and importance of workplace flexibilities;
- Share information about how you have used employee input;
- Highlight efforts being made toward reaching milestones;
- Highlight labor management relations progress;
- Conduct Pulse Surveys and focus groups and discuss the results with employees.

### **Addresses FEVS:**

Q24: In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.

Q36: My organization has prepared employees for potential security threats.

Q 53: In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.

Q 56: Managers communicate the goals and priorities of the organization.

Q57: Managers review and evaluate the organization's progress toward meeting its goals and objectives.

Q 64: How satisfied are you with the information you receive about what's going on in your organization?

## **2) Working Collaboratively with Labor Unions**

### **Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors, and Senior Executives**

*How:* Be a visible champion for the collaborative approach. Regularly publicize your support for collaboration to the union, management, and employees in general. *What:* Support joint labor-management training in collaborative problem-solving throughout the union and management leadership.

- If a member of the labor-management forum, attend all meetings to the maximum extent possible and engage the union positively by extending opportunities for meaningful contributions to issues of importance to both sides that advance the improvement of the delivery of government services. If not a member of the labor-management forum, get regular reports of progress and instruct management to cooperatively resolve obstacles whether process or substantive.
- Include labor-management collaboration goals in the agency's strategic plan.
- Hold management that deals with the union and bargaining unit employees accountable for collaborative efforts through the development of relevant performance measures.

### **Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors**

- Establish a mutual expectation with the union of what collaboration will be at all relevant levels of the organization.
- Share relevant information on all changes that impact bargaining unit employees freely with the union as soon as practicable.
- Invoke confidentiality only when necessary and share the information if the union accepts the requirement to keep the matter confidential.
- Keep focused on resolving the issue at hand.
- Give union input serious consideration and provide feedback whether or not the input is used.
- Periodically conduct a 360° evaluation of how collaboration is working and make adjustments as needed.
- At the end of each collaborative effort, give the union bargaining notice as required by law, unless the agency was given a clear and unmistakable written waiver to bargain by the union.

### **Addresses FEVS:**

- Q30: Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
- Q53: In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.
- Q64: How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?

## **3) Increasing Training and Employee Development Opportunities**

### **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)**

#### **Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors, and Senior Executives**

- Create an Executive Development Plan (EDP) to address on-going learning for SES in your Agency.
- Ensure those in the SES update their EDP annually.
- Include IDPs as an item in the performance plans of managers and supervisors, and hold them accountable for results.

#### **Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors**

- Meet individually with employees to identify development and training goals and opportunities.
- Ensure that each eligible employee has an IDP and that it is, at a minimum, updated annually.

### **Addresses FEVS:**

- Q53: In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.
- Q 68: How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?

## Training and Employee Development

### Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors, and Senior Executives

- Ensure all new and experienced supervisors are trained including leadership, Telework, diversity and inclusion, and performance management training.
- Request a 360 assessment and develop an IDP to address skill gaps.

### Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors

- Ensure new employees receive effective on-boarding, using the [www.dm.usda.gov/OBP](http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP) website available external to USDA.
- Ensure the training needs of employees are assessed, and develop and implement IDPs to address skill gaps.
- Encourage the use of employee development resource tools, such as AgLearn's Books 24x7, on-line courses, mentoring, details, and simulations.

### Addresses FEVS:

Q30: Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.

Q68: How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?

## 4) Supporting Workplace Flexibilities Such as Telework

### Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors and Senior Executives

- As required by the Departmental Regulation on Telework, ensure that managers and supervisors consistently provide all eligible employees with the opportunity to Telework on a regular and recurring basis.
- Support events such as the National Telework Week, National Car Free/Car Lite Day, and National Work and Family Month.

### Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors

- Ensure that all eligible employees either submit a Telework Agreement Form or complete a Voluntary Opt-Out Declination Statement. (Templates reside with local Telework Coordinators.)
- Work with local Agency Work/Life and Telework Coordinators to request customized briefings on tips for successfully implementing Telework within a work group.
- Schedule all required meetings with a teleconference line to accommodate those who are Teleworking or working remotely to participate and feel connected.
- Encourage the use of flexible work schedules and Telework and hold employees accountable for their performance while Teleworking.
- Publicize Telework and other work schedule flexibilities to new employees during on-boarding or via the vacancy announcement process to help boost diversity recruitment efforts.

- Consider to the maximum extent possible Telework and work schedule flexibilities as retention tools.

### **Addresses FEVS:**

Q30: Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.

Q42: My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues.

## **5) Recognizing Differences in Performance**

### **Awards and Recognition**

#### **Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors and Senior Executives**

- Make maximum use of the awards program and publicly recognize recipients, including non-monetary awards and recognition.
- Ensure the program is tied to clearly-stated organizational goals, and is administered according to a set of written standards widely shared in advance that are fair and transparent.

#### **Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors**

- Hold regular meetings with employees to give and receive feedback about performance.
- Recognize positive results, as well as creative and innovative employees and teams in staff meetings.

### **Addresses FEVS:**

Q24: In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.

Q32: Creativity and innovation are rewarded.

## **6) Promoting a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce**

#### **Responsible Official: Agency Heads, Directors, and Senior Executives**

- Demonstrate support for recruiting and hiring a diverse and inclusive workforce in selections made for the senior management team. Monitor and track hiring results through the Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics.
- Ensure that managers and supervisors are held accountable for recruiting, hiring, and promoting a diverse and inclusive team.
- Promote the value of diversity and inclusion for employees and customers through communications, training, and other efforts.

#### **Responsible Official: Staff Managers and Supervisors**

- Demonstrate support for recruiting and hiring a diverse and inclusive workforce in selections.
- Consistently use a full range of hiring authorities, including hiring of Veterans and persons with disabilities.

- Share outreach notices and vacancy announcements with partner groups to target a diverse applicant pool.
- Ensure the value of diversity and inclusion is recognized and supported for employees and customers through communications, training, and other efforts.

**Addresses FEVS:**

- Q30: Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
- Q32: Creativity and innovation are rewarded.
- Q 53: In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.