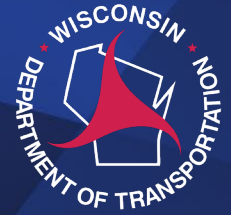


Centralizing Workforce Development Activities and Increasing Engagement within an Organization



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INTRODUCTION

Developing and engaging a workforce is an on-going challenge for organizations. In 2022, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) recognized the significant impacts these challenges were having on employees. Through impacts of the pandemic, a shared services model for state agencies in Wisconsin which reduced the strategic human resources partnership, growing recruitment and retention issues, and lower employee satisfaction, WisDOT was determined to re-focus efforts on employee engagement.

In 2023, WisDOT created the Office of Workforce Development to centralize workforce planning efforts and to develop long-term strategies to better retain, grow, and engage employees.

DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS

WisDOT used a strategic approach to create the Office of Workforce Development. Through efforts from the Secretary's Office, Human Resources, an internal research team, and senior leadership, the following actions were taken and/or reviewed.

- ☐ Identified and documented barriers and challenges with existing workforce.
- ☐ Reviewed previous employee engagement and development efforts.
- ☐ Brainstormed new ideas to increase pride and satisfaction working at WisDOT.
- ☐ Conducted an internal workforce data analysis, including recruitment and retention trends, and retirement vulnerabilities.
- ☐ Reviewed previous results and staff feedback from employee satisfaction surveys.
- ☐ Partnered with UW-Milwaukee on an additional workforce analysis.
- ☐ Reviewed the AASHTO Transportation Workforce Management Playbook.
- ☐ Reviewed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- ☐ Reviewed organizational structures of other DOTs.

CREATING THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Through the above data collection and analysis, WisDOT decided to centralize workforce development efforts. Creating the Office of Workforce Development required WisDOT leadership to identify position needs to "right-size" the office. Leadership across WisDOT's divisions were committed to this effort and transferred vacant positions to create the office.

The final staffing of the Office of Workforce Development included the following positions:

- ☐ Director (1)
- ☐ Employee Engagement Officer (1)
- ☐ Program Development Officers (2)
- ☐ Program and Policy Analyst (1)
- ☐ IT Professional (1)
- ☐ Staff Development Specialist (1)

FOCUS AREAS, PROGRAMS, AND INITIATIVES

Through additional data collection and senior leadership interviews, the initial areas the Office of Workforce Development focused on was:

- ☐ Retention
- ☐ Engagement
- ☐ Leadership Development
- ☐ Employee Connections
- ☐ Onboarding
- ☐ Supervisor Training and Development

Since early 2024, the following programs and initiatives have been implemented to increase employee engagement and development:

- ☐ Developed an employee recognition program connected to WisDOT's values.
- ☐ Facilitated the creation of six (6) Colleague Engagement Networks.
- ☐ Developed a Stay Interview pilot program.
- ☐ Created the WisDOT Leadership Development Program.
- ☐ Implemented a Storytelling Series focused on Employee Journeys, Emerging Initiatives, and Program Connections.
- ☐ Created a formal Mentorship Program.
- ☐ Created an Individual Development Plan Program for interested employees.
- ☐ Developed a training series for supervisors on leading and engaging their teams.
- ☐ Created opportunities for colleague connections across the agency.
- ☐ Created a WisDOT Ambassador Program for employees to get involved.

SUMMARY

Feedback from employees and supervisors about WisDOT's employee engagement and development efforts has been positive. WisDOT has seen an increase in employee engagement and satisfaction. WisDOT's strategy of making data-driven decisions and using technology to create electronic workflows and to analyze data has assisted with the success.

By involving and empowering employees in efforts, WisDOT is in a good position to expand workforce development activities by building out knowledge management activities, connecting employees, and driving effective recruitment strategies to attract a qualified workforce.