

ABOUT THE TEAM

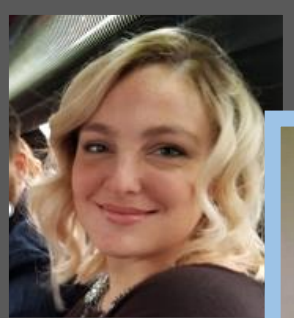
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INTRODUCTION

Why engagement matters

Decades of research has revealed strong connections between employee engagement and organizational performance. Cultivating employee engagement can result in:

- more innovation
- lower costs
- employee retention
- fewer equal opportunity complaints
- higher employee satisfaction and well being
- achieving strategic goals
- better customer service

employee engagement is defined as, “a heightened employee connection to work, the organization, the mission or co-workers. Engaged employees find personal meaning—and pride—in their work. They believe that their organizations value them and, in return, engaged employees are more likely to go above the minimum and expend ‘discretionary effort’ to deliver performance.”¹

The Statewide Employee Engagement Survey measures many dimensions of employee engagement. The survey uses two outcome variables: job satisfaction and likelihood of recommending the agency. Demographic questions debuted in 2020 to identify and remedy inequities among different groups.

This handbook

We wrote this handbook for our engagement survey contacts. It contains all the materials you need for your role. We hope to provide the necessary knowledge and tools to help you develop an effective survey plan and ensure you get the most out of your employee survey.

This is a living document. If you have any feedback, please let us know so we can improve this resource for next year!

SURVEY LOGISTICS

In this section, you will learn about survey logistics, including:

- **Who is eligible to participate?**
- **How are the surveys collected?**
- **What services and products will I receive?**
- **What are my responsibilities?**
- **What is the timeline?**

Survey logistics overview

Every year, the Washington State Office of Financial Management, State Human Resources (OFM SHR) administers the Employee Engagement Survey for executive branch agencies. All agencies are strongly encouraged to participate in the survey.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?



All executive branch, permanent and nonpermanent, employees are eligible. Work Study students and nonemployee work contract employees are excluded. Also excluded are legislative, judicial, and higher education employees.

HOW ARE THE SURVEYS COLLECTED?



We use SurveyMonkey, which allows employees to take it on any device that can access the internet. We provide survey links to the survey contacts. Your job is to ensure that the survey is sent to your employees.

Paper copies are also available for employees who do not have internet access or feel more comfortable submitting a paper survey. This does create some extra work for you, as you'll enter these surveys into a separate survey link. This link closes one week after the main survey.

We administer the survey for most agencies, but your agency can administer your survey. Self-administering agencies are required to ask the standard engagement questions and send that data to SHR.



If you would like, we can deploy the survey directly to your employees via SurveyMonkey. This approach puts less administrative burden on you, and provides better data integrity, since each employee can only take the survey once. Plus, they will not receive those pesky reminder emails if they already completed the survey! If you are interested in this approach, please let us know by July 31.

Services provided to agencies

SERVICES PROVIDED TO ALL AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY

Planning support

- ▶ Sample survey planning and communication materials
- ▶ Contact meetings to learn from and collaborate with other agencies

Reports provided

- ▶ In October (during survey):
 - Weekly response count dashboards that include:
 - Weekly and yearly comparisons
 - Benchmarking to other participating agencies
 - Real-time survey counts at agency and divisional levels
- ▶ In November:
 - Access to a Power BI report of the survey results. It includes:
 - standard question results
 - trend data
 - demographic filters

- Your agency-specific raw results workbook
 - Individual responses (excluding all demographic answers)
 - agency-added questions results
- The draft statewide roll-up report
- Updated Engagement Survey dashboards on our public website
- ▶ By mid-December
 - The final statewide roll-up report
 - Data requests begin to be fulfilled
- ▶ By April
 - The final statewide report
 - Published on our website
 - The Governor will send an email with the report

WHY HAVE OFM SHR ADMINISTER THE SURVEY?

In most cases, we recommend you have us administer the survey for your agency. There is **no charge** to have us administer! This way, you will receive the following benefits:

- We will create and test your survey link (standard, rotating and demographic).
- We will add any additional agency-added questions to your survey, if requested. Popular questions are division, agency-specific content areas, or a comment question.
- Help design agency-specific questions.
- Data protection for employees responding to the survey.
- Paper versions of the survey, if requested.
- Periodic email response count updates during the survey.
- PowerBI Dashboard tracking of survey responses while survey is live.
- Access to shared data views in SurveyMonkey where contacts can see response counts, by agency, in real-time. Links to these password-protected views will be shared with contacts the day after the survey opens.
- If requested, a shared data view in SurveyMonkey with response counts by division (if agency added a division question).
- Help interpreting survey results.

Agency responsibilities

WHEN OFM SHR ADMINISTERS THE SURVEY

By July 31, let us know if your agency is:

- ✓ opting out of participating in the 2020 survey
- ✓ opting out of demographic questions
- ✓ wanting direct deployment
- ✓ needing paper copies for hard-to-reach individuals
- ✓ wanting to participate in the Fairness Study (see handout for details)

By Aug 7:

- ✓ Provide draft question text and response options for agency-added questions.

By Aug 18:

- ✓ Finalize agency added questions.

By Sept 17:

- ✓ Review survey link and check that all questions, answer options, survey logic works correctly (sent to agencies on Sept 3).

By Sept 30:

- ✓ Let us know if your agency would like real-time agency and divisional survey counts.

October:

- ✓ Send survey out to employees. Please send survey link out as soon as possible, preferable on the first day the survey opens if you do not have us directly deploy.
- ✓ If you do not have us directly deploy, we recommend weekly survey reminders. The survey will be open for the whole month of October.

By Nov 13:

- ✓ Enter all paper copies into the paper copy link

WHEN SELF-ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY

By July 31, let us know if your agency is:

- ✓ opting out of participating in the 2020 survey
- ✓ self-administering the survey
- ✓ opting out of demographic questions
- ✓ wanting to participate in the Fairness Study (see handout for details)

October:

- ✓ Include all the standard statewide questions (including rotating and COVID-19 questions) in your survey questionnaire.
 - We will send an Excel template with the current questions, response options, and data formats.

By Nov 13:

- ✓ Send us your data in the template provided within two weeks of the close of the survey.

See the “Survey Timeline” for more information.

2020 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY TIMELINE

By when	Who	What
Tues, June 30	OFM SHR and agencies	1st Survey contact meeting – Provide survey contacts: handbook, information on the survey process, survey planning, survey needs.
Tues, July 28	OFM SHR and agencies	2nd Survey contact meeting – Discuss agency-added survey questions, rotating question(s).
Fri, July 31	Agencies	Participation deadline - Inform OFM SHR of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in survey (opting out) • If opting out of demographic questions • If self-administering survey • If you would like direct deployment • If you would like paper copies of survey
Fri, August 7	Agencies that are adding agency-specific questions	Provide draft question text and response options for agency-specific questions to josh.calvert@ofm.wa.gov .
Tues, August 11	OFM SHR and agencies	3rd Survey contact meeting – Communication, incentivizing participation, deploying survey
Tues, August 18	Agencies that are adding agency-specific questions	Finalize agency-specific questions.
Thurs, September 3	OFM SHR	Send survey preview link to agencies for testing and validation.
Thurs, September 3	OFM SHR	Send agencies building their own survey: response format standards and Excel template to use when sending the data to SHR.
Thurs, September 17	Agencies	Provide any corrections to survey preview link (including agency-specific questions, response options, skip logic, “inform” text in the preview link) to josh.calvert@ofm.wa.gov .
Wed, September 30	OFM SHR	Provide to survey contacts: link to survey that will open Oct 1 and close Oct 31 (except for paper copy link).
Wed, September 30	Agencies	Agencies must notify OFM SHR if they would like real-time agency and divisional count access to SurveyMonkey by this date. Links to will be sent out starting Oct 5.
Thurs, October 1 – Sat, October 31	Agencies	Ensure the survey link is sent to agency employees and allow at least two weeks for survey response. Collect paper copies, if relevant, and enter into the dedicated paper survey link. Send reminders if needed.
Mon, October 5, 12, 19, 26, November 2	OFM SHR	Provide response counts to survey contacts so reminder emails to employees can be sent, if needed. Response rate calculations will be based on agency headcounts as of 10/1.
Mon, November 9	OFM SHR	Paper survey entry link closes one week after standard survey.
Fri, November 13	Agencies that administered their own survey	Provide response data for the statewide survey to josh.calvert@ofm.wa.gov .
Mon, November 16	OFM SHR	Official response rates calculated for state and each agency.
Fri, November 20	OFM SHR	Agency Power BI reports and raw data available.
Tue, December 1	OFM SHR	Increased bandwidth for data requests.
Tues, December 15 (tentative)	OFM SHR and agencies	4th Survey contact meeting – Review results, action planning.
Fri, December 18	OFM SHR	Statewide data is final.

THE 2020 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

This section contains information specific to the current survey, including:

- **The 2020 survey questionnaire**
- **Accepted survey responses**
- **Data protection**

2020 STATEWIDE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE

Standard questions

- 1) I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.
- 2) I receive helpful communication from my agency.
- 3) I find meaning in my work.
- 4) I know what is expected of me at work.
- 5) I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.
- 6) I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively.
- 7) My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.
- 8) My supervisor gives me helpful feedback.
- 9) I receive recognition for a job well done.
- 10) A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work group.
- 11) I know how my agency measures its success.
- 12) My agency supports a diverse workforce.
- 13) My agency helps me navigate change.
- 14) I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.
- 15) At my job, I have the opportunity to make good use of my skills.
- 16) At my workplace, I feel valued for who I am as a person.
- 17) How satisfied are you with your flexibility?* *(the ability to adjust your scheduled hours as needed)*
- 18) How satisfied are you with your mobility?* *(the ability to work remotely from a variety of locations, such as your home or alternate work sites)*
- 19) My agency sets the expectation for inclusion by embedding it in everyday interactions. *(2020 Rotating Question)*
- 20) In general, I'm satisfied with my job.
- 21) I would recommend my agency as a great place to work.

Standard Response Scale

Please tell us how often the given statement is true.

- 1 - Never or Almost Never
- 2 - Seldom
- 3 - Occasionally
- 4 - Usually
- 5 - Almost Always or Always

*Modern Work Environment Scale

- 1 – Very Dissatisfied
- 2 – Dissatisfied
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Satisfied
- 5 – Very Satisfied
- N/A – Doesn't apply to my position

COVID-19 Supplemental Questions

- 22) My agency makes decisions that prioritize my safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 23) My agency has taken steps to positively impact my work/life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 24) I have found meaningful ways to stay connected to coworkers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 25) My agency keeps me informed about workplace impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 26) When the workplace is safe *(such as low case counts, vaccine)* to reopen for employees, I would be interested in teleworking**:

**Question 26 Scale

- Not telework at all
- Less than 1 day per week
- 1-2 days per week
- 3-4 days per week
- 100% every week
- N/A – Doesn't apply to my position

Demographic questions

Starting in 2020, all employees will be presented with additional demographic questions to answer. These questions are voluntary to answer. If an agency opts to not have demographic questions on their survey, we ask that agencies include a question on their survey that asks employees if they would be interested in answering these questions in the future. For information on how demographic data is used, please see page 14.

Note: Demographic question numbers subject to change based on COVID-19 supplemental questions.

STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

27) How long have you worked for your current agency?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 or more years
- Prefer not to say

28) Are you a supervisor?

- Supervisor
- Non-supervisor
- Prefer not to say

29) In which county do you work a majority of the time?

- All counties listed
- Prefer not to say

30) What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

31) What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/X
- Prefer not to say

32) Are you a U.S. Veteran?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

33) Do you identify as having a disability?

- I have a disability.
- I do not have a disability.
- Prefer not to say

34) Do you identify as LGBTQ+?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

35) What race and/or ethnicity do you consider yourself?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White
- Another race or ethnicity
- More than one race or ethnicity
- Prefer not to say

36) Which agency do you work for?

- All agencies listed

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS FOR AGENCIES WHO ARE OPTING OUT

27) How long have you worked for your current agency?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 or more years
- Prefer not to say

28) Are you a supervisor?

- Supervisor
- Non-supervisor
- Prefer not to say

29) In which county do you work a majority of the time?

- All counties listed
- Prefer not to say

30) Which agency do you work for?

- a. All agencies listed

31) Would you be willing to answer additional demographic questions in the future?

- Yes
- No

Complete survey responses

OFM SHR considers a survey response as complete when there are at least five responses to the standard survey questions.

For an agency to get credit for a response, the respondent must select the agency they work for. Like all other questions, this one is voluntary.

Data privacy

If employees choose to take the survey and OFM SHR administers, we will keep all information confidential. This means we will not disclose individual responses connected to sensitive demographic information. For agencies (supervisors, leadership, agency contacts), OFM SHR will not release individual responses to demographic questions. Agencies will only receive this information in summary data.

The results report agencies receive will only show data for groups of 30 or more. An agency can request summary data for groups of 10 or more. It is our commitment to protect individual demographic information before publishing or sharing the data.

Starting in 2020, additional demographic questions will be on the survey. It is our goal to create an environment that works for everyone, not just a loud majority. This additional demographic data will allow the state and each agency the ability to better fulfill our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

If you find that employees are still uncomfortable answering all or some of these questions, make sure to communicate that they can skip or select “Prefer not to say” on any demographic question.

If you are an agency that self-administers the survey, OFM SHR strongly encourages development of similar data privacy policies as outlined in this handbook.

SURVEY PLANNING

Overview

The key to a successful survey is good planning. Survey participation is influenced by several factors including awareness, the invitation, the survey itself, reminders and the agency's past actions and future plans. The following tips are designed to help you ensure a successful survey in your agency.

As your agency's designated contact, you will have certain responsibilities for carrying out the survey. Whether OFM SHR is administering the survey for your agency or not, you will want to create and/or modify your agency's plan for the current year's Statewide Employee Engagement Survey.

In this section, you will learn how to:

- **Collaborate effectively**
- **Gain leadership support**
- **Outreach to hard-to-reach populations**
- **Design agency specific questions, including:**
 - **Tips for writing survey questions**
 - **Question examples**

Collaboration



Successful surveys require collaboration. Whether you are at a large agency or a small agency, the Employee Engagement Survey is like planning and administering a project. It requires collaboration and defining the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

- ▶ **Support system.** A team can bring perspective, support, resources, and commitment to the survey. Typical roles include: survey sponsor/executive, survey contact/project manager, and coordinators. A large agency may have as many as ten people sharing these responsibilities, while a small agency may only consist of one or two.
- ▶ **Process and planning.** Effective surveying requires good processes and planning prior to the administration of the survey. Items for discussion may include focus areas or targets, needs, buy-in from stakeholders, and ultimately, a commitment to the action plan.
- ▶ **Other agencies.** Collaborating with other agencies can provide feedback and lessons learned. In-person meetings are designed to allow for brainstorming between agencies.

Executive support



Executive leadership support is essential for a successful survey. Tips for gaining leadership support:

- ▶ **Start right.** Involve executives and leadership from the beginning of the process. Having senior management involved will assist with action planning and make respondents feel they are listened to. We recommend that your executive send at least the initial invitation to employees to participate in the survey.
- ▶ **Set expectations.** You may need to convince employees to take the survey, while addressing its benefits and threats.
- ▶ **Share results.** Executives and managers should be first to see the results. This allows managers time to understand the results and be prepared to answer questions. Results should then be shared throughout your agency with an action plan based on the feedback received.

Hard-to-reach populations



If you have employees with barriers to access, plan for that now. Agencies that need to use paper surveys will be responsible for entering that survey data in the online survey paper link.

Agency specific questions

Agencies may add their own questions to the Engagement Survey. This is a great opportunity to drill down into strategic focus areas.

Agency-specific questions come at the end of the survey, after the employee enters their agency. Skip logic then will take them to their agency's questions.

Agencies do their own reporting and analysis for the questions they add to the survey. SHR provides analysis and reporting of results from the standard survey questions.

As a reminder, adding too many questions in your survey can deter respondents for finishing all questions.

TIPS FOR WRITING SURVEY QUESTIONS

Types of questions



- ▶ Demographic (such as division)
- ▶ Open-ended or comment
- ▶ Rated (the standard questions use a [1 through 5 frequency scale](#))

Comment questions can provide data in the employee’s own words but are time-consuming to analyze. For that reason, we recommend adding these only if you can read through all responses or use a software with sentiment analysis. Further, the “voice” in a comment (names, grammar, style) can identify who wrote it, so we do not recommend sharing individual comments. Instead, comments should be categorized by theme and by “positive” and “negative” to summarize.

For the reasons above, there are no comment questions in the standard survey questions.

Identify clear purpose or goals

- ▶ What do you want to be able to do with the information you get?
- ▶ What information do you need to meet these goals?
- ▶ Is a survey the best way to get this information? (Versus conversation, focus group, social media, observing the situation, etc.)
- ▶ Is this survey the best way to get this information? (Versus the statewide exit survey, customer feedback surveys, or ad hoc surveys, etc.)
- ▶ Will you want to benchmark? If yes, this is the time to see what questions and data are already available. Other questions and results may be available from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.
- ▶ What do your employees want you to learn from the survey?

TIP: Employees want to feel heard. Do not ask for input if you don’t plan to take reasonable action.

Response options

Rating scale:

To avoid confusion from changing the scale mid-survey, we recommend:

- ▶ Keep the 1 at the “negative” end of the scale and the 5 at the “positive” end of the scale.
- ▶ Use the same 1 through 5 scale that’s used for the standard survey questions.

Demographic questions

- ▶ Examples: What division do you work in? What is your location?
- ▶ Make sure it meets the goals outlined in the data protection policy. Contact us if you need a copy.

- ▶ Assure that there are enough employees in each group to result in at least 10 responses. More responses will improve data quality, and we recommend aiming for 30 employees in each group.

Scope

- ▶ Is the question intended for all the agency employees?
- ▶ If it's just for some employees, what "sorting question" will we ask to reach the target group?

PROTECTING EMPLOYEE IDENTITY

If any groups from the agency-specific questions have fewer than 10 responses, OFM SHR will not show data for this group.



Once the agency receives the individual response data they are responsible to ensure data confidentiality.

QUESTION CHECKLIST

For each question you write, test by asking:

Purpose:

- Will we be able to act on the information we get?
- Is it a question for right now or for the long run? Is that ok?
- If needed, does the question relate to performance measures, strategic plan, workforce data, etc.?
- Does the question link back to the purpose/goal identified above?
- How easy will it be to summarize the responses? Do we have the resources for that?

Clarity:

- Does the question ask multiple questions? Will that make it hard to interpret the data? Look for "and", "or", multiple adjectives or nouns, etc.
- Is it plain English? Avoid acronyms, jargon and abbreviations. Does a term need to be defined?
- For questions using a rating scale (such as 1 through 5), is it a positive statement like the other standard survey questions so 1 is low/negative and 5 is high/positive?
- Does it have double negatives?
- Is it too long?
- Are any words "loaded" with prior meaning or emotion that could muddy the response?
- Is the question leading? Are you priming respondents to answer a certain way?

Relevance:

- Is it information I want or information the employee is willing to give me?
- If I have too many questions, what is the priority of the questions?
- How will I report the results of the question?
- Do I already get this information another way? Is there a better way to get the information?

Question examples

Here are some question examples from the past or from other sectors' engagement surveys.

INDUSTRY TESTED QUESTIONS

- ▶ My job allows me to balance work with the other parts of my life that are important to me.
- ▶ My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues. (federal & private sector benchmarks available)
- ▶ I am proud of the work that I do.

AGENCY QUESTION EXAMPLES

- ▶ I have a reasonable workload assigned to me
- ▶ My supervisor discusses my workload with me.
- ▶ My supervisor and I collaboratively set my performance goals.
- ▶ The performance feedback I provide my staff has positively affected their performance.
- ▶ There is someone at work who encourages my development.
- ▶ My workplace has meaningful discussions on how to improve security/staff safety.
- ▶ My supervisor provides impromptu, informal, ad hoc feedback on a regular basis.
- ▶ My supervisor helps me navigate through the challenges I face in my work.
- ▶ The managers in my agency demonstrate strong leadership skills.
- ▶ What one thing could (agency name) do better?
- ▶ My staff meetings are useful.
- ▶ Issues and concerns originating in my work group are accurately communicated through the chain of command to employees in a timely manner.
- ▶ My supervisor models the work behaviors and ethics that are expected of all employees in this division.
- ▶ I am comfortable seeking perspectives from people who are different from me.
- ▶ I feel a sense of pride when I tell people I work for (agency name).
- ▶ I have opportunities to support and participate in the agency community.
- ▶ My agency encourages me to be innovative.
- ▶ My leadership supports ideas that are different from their own
- ▶ I trust others to do what they say they will do.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS¹

Overview

Effective communication is the most essential element of the engagement survey process. Your survey communication can increase participation rates, build employee trust, encourage open and honest feedback and lead to positive organizational change.

Poor communication can result in damaging and costly consequences, including:

- low participation rates
- employee distrust
- confusion
- decreased morale
- loss on investment
- disengagement

In the next section, you will learn:

- **Purpose of survey communication**
- **Dangers of ineffective survey communication**
- **Tips for communicating with employees**
- **How to build your communication plan, including:**
 - **A communication timeline**
 - **Sample communication**

¹ Much of the information in the “Communications Plan” section was pulled from a Quantum Workplace report “How to Increase Employee Participation with an Employee Survey Communication Plan” available for download here: <https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/increase-workplace-survey-participation-workplace-survey-16-tips-success/>



PURPOSES

OF EFFECTIVE SURVEY COMMUNICATION

Communication within an agency serves two essential functions: to provide the information employees need to get things done and build relationships and trust. Your survey communication strategy should:

1. INFORM AND EDUCATE

First, your communication strategy needs to provide employees with basic information. Inform employees that you will ask them to take a survey, including how and when it will launch. You will also want to educate your employees on what employee engagement is, what the survey will measure, and how they will benefit from participating.

2. GAIN ENTHUSIASM

Your survey communication can get your employees excited about the process. Explain that this survey will allow them to voice their opinions and help improve their work experience.

3. ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY

Assure employees that their participation and responses are confidential. Demographic results will only be shared with agencies if there are 10 or more responses and only in summary form. It may also be a good idea to share a link to the data protection policies.

4. ENCOURAGE HONESTY

Participation is not enough to make change. Encourage your employees to answer honestly. Make sure your employees know that this is their chance to make a difference in their organization and each survey submission will be confidential and taken seriously.

5. DISCLOSE INTENT

When employees believe your intentions are good and for their benefit, they are more likely to participate. Explain to your employees what information will be shared post-survey and what you plan to do with the results.

6. CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is an ongoing process that needs to be communicated throughout the year. To make the most of your survey process and improve engagement, remain in constant contact with your employees by discussing how initiatives are working, addressing any concerns, and celebrating successes.



DANGERS

OF INEFFECTIVE SURVEY COMMUNICATION

When communication is unclear or nonexistent, you risk:

1. LOW PARTICIPATION RATES

Your biggest risk is lack of buy-in. To gain buy-in and drive participation rates, effectively communicate why each employee should take the survey.

2. DISHONEST AND INSINCERE RESPONSES

Why would your employees answer honestly and sincerely if they do not believe their opinions will be heard? Be straightforward about the survey's benefit and your post-survey plans. Make the survey worth their time and effort.

3. DECREASE IN EMPLOYEE TRUST

If you implement an agency-wide initiative without proving its worth to your employees, you may lose trust. If you do not inform your employees, you may lose trust.

4. ORGANIZATION-WIDE DISENGAGEMENT

If you do not effectively communicate through every step of the survey process, you risk further disengaging valuable employees. Do not let ineffective communication make your employee engagement efforts backfire.

5. LITTLE OR NO POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

If you have low participation rates and receive insincere responses, then you will not get a realistic view of your agency's engagement level. An inaccurate collection of employee feedback provides false data.

6. LOSS ON INVESTMENT

Employee surveys take time and effort. Without employee participation and sincere feedback, your agency is unable to implement positive change, and ultimately, increase engagement. Communicate effectively throughout the entire process to get the most on your investment.

7. INCREASE IN TURNOVER

Ineffective communication can lead to distrust, disengagement and turnover. Not only could ineffective communication cost you your survey investment, but it may also cost you the investment of valuable employees.



8 TIPS

FOR COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES

Tone and voice drastically affect the effectiveness of your communication pieces. Whom are you talking to, and how do you address them? Is your piece easy to read with a clear call to action?

1. TALK ABOUT THEM

Talk with your readers, rather than at them. Use “you” at every opportunity and stick in “we” and “us” as secondary pronouns. People like to read about themselves. Make your employees the subject of your communication to spark interest and gain buy-in.

2. MAKE IT PERSONAL

Your survey communication should connect with employees on a personal level. Relate to them, talk about specifics and relay your personal voice.

3. RELAY THE BENEFITS

If your employees are not gaining from the survey process, why should they put in the time and effort? Show them how they will benefit from participating.

4. CHOOSE A METHOD THAT FITS YOUR EMPLOYEES’ NEEDS

Choose a communication mode that will reach your employees in the most effective way. For example, if your employees have access to computers, email communication might make the most sense. On the other hand, if most of your employees are not online, email communication might not be your best option. Be creative! Consider using internal communication channels such as your intranet, newsletters or bulletin boards to inform employees. Encourage them to participate and offer an outlet in advance for addressing questions or concerns they may have.

5. MAKE IT SCANNABLE

Your employees are busy. Make your survey communication short, to the point, and easy to read. Use headlines and subheads, bulleted or numbered lists, adequate spacing, and bolding of important points. For more guidance, check out *Don’t Make Me Think*.

6. USE YOUR COMMUNITIES

Reach out to employee groups in order to connect with them on a personal level. For example, in your formal announcement, recite location or departmental initiatives that are currently in place because of past surveys to motivate different employee groups to participate again.

7. CREATE A CALL TO ACTION

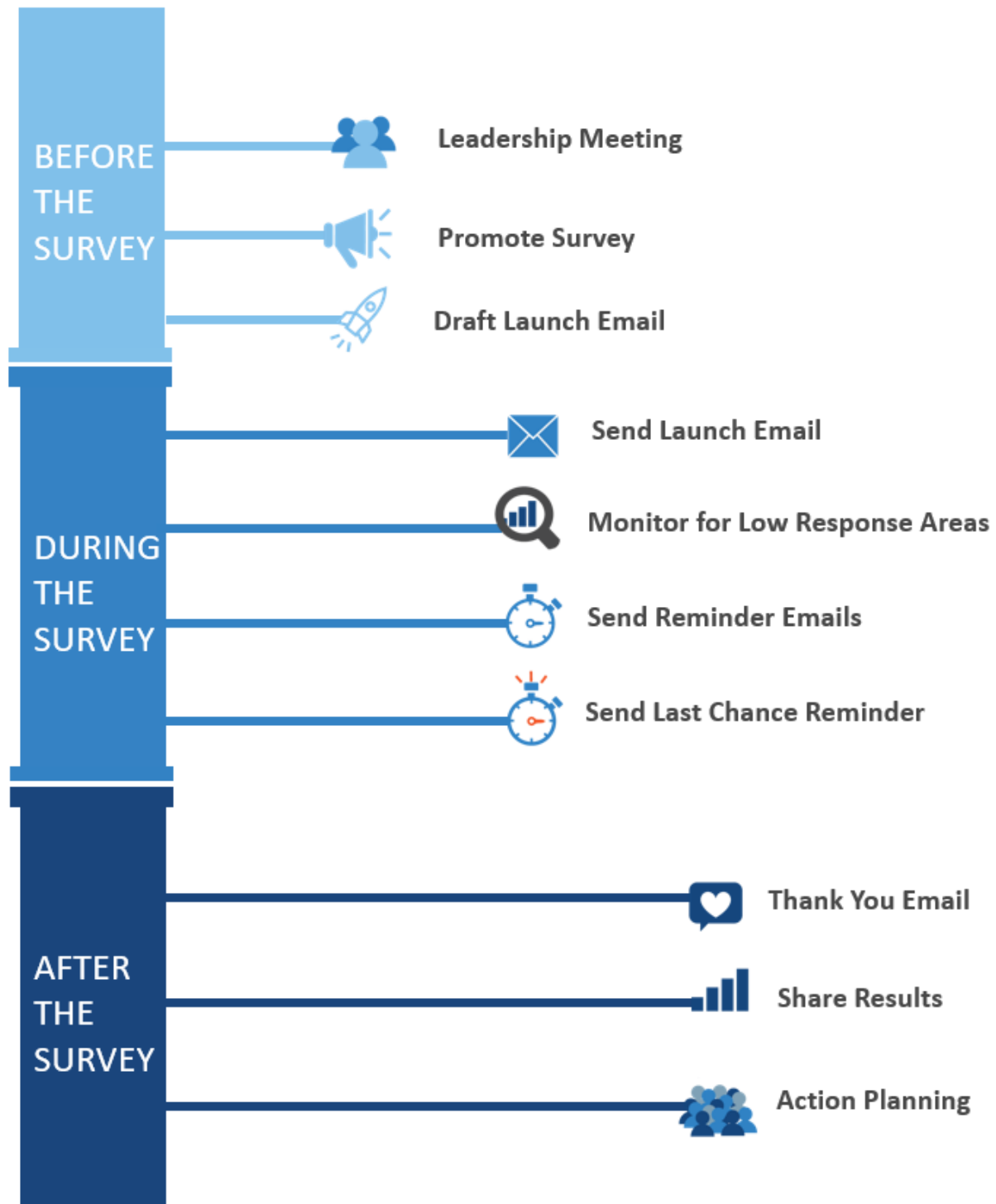
Creating a call to action is one of the most important aspects of your initial survey communication. If you do not tell your employees what to do, how will they know? Place the

survey link in multiple places, including the beginning of your communication pieces. That way, employees can choose to act immediately or continue reading for more details.

8. BRAND YOUR SURVEY

Brand your employee engagement survey to help your employees connect with the process and gain enthusiasm. Refer to your survey as its branded identity to make the entire process more meaningful, personalized, and fun for your employees. Choose a brand that makes sense for your employees, the agency, and your culture.

COMMUNICATION TIMELINE



BEFORE THE SURVEY

LEADERSHIP MEETING



Set up meetings with leaders to gain buy-in and assign roles.

EXAMPLE LEADERSHIP MEETING AGENDA

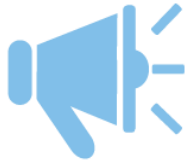
Employee Engagement Survey Meeting Agenda

Objective: Discuss the upcoming Employee Engagement Survey and assign leadership roles

Agenda:

- **Purpose of Survey (5 min)**
 - Leadership benefits
 - Employee benefits
 - Agency benefits
- **Review Last Year's Survey (5-15 min)**
 - Brief overview of results
 - Implemented changes
- **Details for Upcoming Survey (5-10 min)**
 - Date and timeline
 - Expected leadership roles
 - Agency-specific questions
- **Post-survey Expectations (5 min)**
 - Share results
 - Action planning

PROMOTE THE SURVEY



Gain employee buy-in, generate awareness, and spark enthusiasm

Ideas to Drive Employee Participation

1. POSTERS

Hang up posters to advertise the survey in office hallways, entryways and high-traffic areas.

2. TABLE TENTS

Place table tents on tables in common areas, such as a breakroom or conference room.

3. COMPETITIONS

Encourage divisions or locations to engage in friendly competition for the highest participation rate. Treat the winners to a snack.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL NEWSLETTERS

Dedicate a section in your newsletter to promote the Employee Engagement Survey.

5. OFFICE COUNTDOWNS

Create an office countdown as a daily reminder to employees of how many days they have left to take the survey.

6. INTRANET POSTING

Post survey details, reminders and updates on participation rates.

7. EMAIL SIGNATURE

Ask leadership (and even influential employees) to include a survey reminder in their email signature.

8. BLOCK TIME ON CALENDARS

Send a calendar invitation to employees to block time on their calendars for the engagement survey. Include the link to the survey in the meeting invitation. You could even turn this into part of your campaign, like the “Washington Great Shakeout.”

DRAFT THE SURVEY LAUNCH EMAIL



Prepare your survey launch email early so you will have time to review before crunch time.

What to include:

- Survey link
- Participation encouragement
- Assurance of confidentiality
- Recap of timeline and purpose
- What action was taken based on past results

Logistics tips:

- **Director value:** Have your director send the link and invitation email to employees in your agency.
- **Test link before sending the survey to employees:** we will send you the live survey link the day before the survey-fielding period begins so you can copy and paste into your invitation email. To be sure the link has copied successfully to your invitation email, send the email to one co-worker. Ask if he/she can successfully take the survey.
- **If direct deployment is requested:** OFM SHR will validate the survey link is working. Make sure to contact us prior with eligible employee emails.
- **Update distribution lists:** Make sure you will be able to reach all your employees.

Suggested key messages:

- Meaningful and regular employee feedback is essential to our agency's success.
- Employee feedback helps us:
 - Identify trends and possible areas for improving agency operations and service delivery.
 - Create a better work environment and make sure employees have the tools they need to do their jobs.
- Improve our ability to attract and retain talent.
- In previous years, survey feedback from you and your colleagues has led to improvements in our agency (include a few examples).
- Conducting the survey annually gives us get employee feedback on a timely basis for ongoing improvements.
- We are interested in learning about broad trends in employee views on the workforce, not in individual responses.



EXAMPLE INVITATION EMAIL

BAD

To: All Employees
From: Team Leader
Subject: Employee Engagement Survey

The annual Employee Engagement Survey is now open.

Below is the link to the survey.

The survey will close at the end of the month.

www.surveylink.com

-HR



EXAMPLE INVITATION EMAIL

GOOD

To: All Employees

From: Agency Director

Subject: The “Your Opinion Counts” Employee Engagement Survey is here!

“Your Opinion Counts” Employee Engagement Survey has launched. Please complete your survey by October 31 at 5 p.m.

[Take my survey.](#)



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is extremely important to {agency} and will be used to improve your workplace.

For example, responses to last year’s survey led to a new “Meet the Team” page on our agency’s intranet to improve collaboration and communication.

Before you start the survey, there are a few important items to note:

- **It’s confidential.** The survey is analyzed on a collective — not individual — basis. answers to the standard demographic questions (geographic location, supervisor status, agency tenure, etc.) will be shared only in summary form and only if there are 10 or more responses for each demographic group. [If your agency has open-comments] Your answers are will be kept strictly confidential unless you choose to self-disclose in an open-comment field.
- **It’s quick.** The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete.
- **Take it before it closes.** The deadline for completing the survey is October 31.

Questions? If you have any questions about the survey process, email or call {First Name, Last Name} at email.com or call (XXX) XXX – XXXX.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this very important initiative and sharing your valuable insights!

Click [here](#) to take the survey.

DURING THE SURVEY

SEND LAUNCH EMAIL



Your agency director should distribute the invitation email with the survey link. The survey will be open for four weeks. You may give your employees all or part of that time to respond to the survey, but please allow the survey to be open for at least two weeks. Once employees complete the survey, their responses will be automatically sent to a SHR database on SurveyMonkey.

MONITOR FOR LOW RESPONSE AREAS



We will send periodic email response count updates during the survey including access to a PowerBI dashboard.

You will also have access to shared data views (one for small agencies and one for large agencies) in SurveyMonkey where you can see response counts, by agency, in real-time. Links to these password-protected views will be shared with contacts the day after the survey opens.

If requested, we will also provide a shared data view in SurveyMonkey® with response counts by division (if your agency added a division question).

Keep an eye out for areas with low response counts in case targeted reminders are necessary. Share updates with leadership as appropriate.

SEND REMINDER EMAILS



Best practice suggests that at least two follow-up emails will improve response rates. Do not overdo it. There is a fine line between encouraging your employees to complete the survey and perceptions that the agency simply wants to hit a participation target without regard to the quality of the information. Do not cross that line.

To send a reminder to employees, have your agency director forward the earlier email with the survey link, adding something like “Thank you to those who have already responded to the State Employee Engagement Survey. Your feedback is important to me and to our agency. If you have not yet had time, I hope you will take a moment now to respond. The link below will take you to the survey.”

To avoid this, you can have us directly deploy for you, since we send reminders only to employees who haven’t completed or attempted the survey.

SEND LAST CHANCE REMINDERS



Send a reminder a day or two before the survey closes to make sure your employees know time is running out. Incorporate “last chance” into the subject line and email body.



EXAMPLE SURVEY REMINDER

BAD

To: All Employees

From: Team Leader

Subject: Employee Engagement Survey Reminder

The Employee Engagement Survey is now open. If you don't complete the survey, you will decrease our agency's participation rate.

If you have not yet completed the survey, do so by **October 31**.

-HR



EXAMPLE SURVEY REMINDER

GOOD

To: All Employees

From: Agency Director

Subject: Participate in "Your Opinion Counts" to tell us what you think!

Don't forget to submit your survey before **October 31**.

Thank you to those who have already responded. If you have not yet had time, I hope you will take a moment now to respond.

[Click here to take your survey.](#)

Take this opportunity to shape the future of your workplace. Please take your time and answer sincerely, so your feedback can be used to make your agency a great place to work.

-Agency Director

AFTER THE SURVEY

THANK YOU EMAIL



Confirming the close of the survey, sincerely thanking your employees, and foreshadowing follow-up plans, is your first opportunity to assure employees that you plan to act on the results. Make this short and to the point. However, be as specific as possible about when they can expect your next follow-up. This communication piece might seem simple, but do not undervalue it.

What:

- Confirm survey close
- Personal thank you
- Share follow-up plans

Who:

- Sent by top leadership

When:

- Day after survey closes



EXAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

To: All Employees
From: Top Leadership
Subject: Survey Close

The employee engagement survey is now closed. If you have not taken it, your voice will not count.

No additional surveys will be accepted.

-Agency Director



EXAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

To: All Employees

From: Top Leadership

Subject: Thank you for participating in “Your Opinion Counts”

The Employee Engagement Survey is now closed. Thank you for your participation and sincerity. Your feedback is an invaluable tool for this organization’s success.

What’s Next?

The Office of Financial Management has collected the completed surveys and will begin compiling the results. Below are the next two updates you will receive:

Results Overview: Once we receive our agency report from OFM, leadership will send a short memo to every employee sharing our organization’s top three and bottom three survey items.

Detailed Results: By {month}, leadership will share detailed results via email and an all-company meeting. Brief, brainstormed action plans will also be discussed.

Thanks again for your sincere participation! Your feedback will help make {agency} a great place to work.

-Agency Director

SHARE RESULTS



Once you receive employee survey results, move quickly to communicate the data and begin implementing change. It is important to act while the survey is still fresh in employees' minds. When people complete a survey, they are excited about seeing the results and the possibility of change. They are open to participating in organizational change initiatives. Surveys energize people to act. Strike while the iron is hot!

If time passes with no word about the survey results, enthusiasm wanes and frustration builds. Employees may begin to see the survey as another pointless exercise.

We will share your agency's report within six weeks of the close of the survey. The report includes a PDF version and excel version so you can manipulate the data. (Individual-level demographic data will be cleared out to protect employee confidentiality.) The excel version of your reports contains raw survey data for your agency-added questions. We will also share an excel template you can use to generate division drill-down reports (if you agency added a division question).



EXAMPLE SURVEY RESULTS EMAIL

BAD

To: All Employees
From: Top Leadership
Subject: Survey Results

Your survey results have now been analyzed. Be advised that leadership has decided to work on:

- Goal alignment
- Customer satisfaction
- Doing more with less

Leadership plans to move forward with action planning in the upcoming months. Pay attention for further instruction.



EXAMPLE SURVEY RESULTS EMAIL

To: All Employees

From: Top Leadership

Subject: “Your Opinion Counts” Survey Detailed Results

Thanks to all of our employees who participated in the Employee Engagement Survey that closed in October.

Overall, our survey responses were very positive and are in line with our survey results from past years. Positive or neutral responses outweighed negative responses to every question.

Twelve of the 21 standard questions saw significant improvement. Eighteen were flat—or within two percentage points from the previous year. Two saw meaningful declines.

Areas of Focus - After analyzing our detailed results, leadership has decided to work on the following three areas:

- **Professional development:** Many employees stated that they didn’t feel like they had “opportunities at work to learn and grow.”
- **Agency success measures:** “I know how my agency measures its success” scored consistently low across our organization. The category of goal alignment dropped nearly 11 percentage points.
- **Recognition:** Employees shared that staff does not receive satisfactory recognition (“I receive recognition for a job well done”), despite the programs already in place. Scores in this area dropped almost 16 percentage points from last year.

In the next few months, we’ll be reaching out to employees to gain more feedback on these areas and gather ideas on how we can improve.

Next Steps- To continue improving, the following steps will be taken:

We will create focus groups, beginning in {month}, comprised of employees representing all levels and functional areas of the company. As our focus group implementation plan becomes available in the next few weeks, we will share this information with you.

To respond to sentiment around our agency success measures, I’m writing a memo that seeks to answer the question in depth. An email will be sent by the end of the month.

Thank you for your participation and we look forward to working with you to build an even better place to work.

WHAT DOES OFM SHR DO WITH THE RESULTS?

A common question when taking any survey is to wonder what happens to the results. The great news is that plenty of people are listening and taking note of the survey results at the state level!

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Once the survey is closed, OFM SHR analyzes the statewide results. The analysis typically consists of:

- How did the state do overall for the year? Compared to previous years?
- What were our participation rates and how do they compare to the past?
- Did we meet statewide improvement goals?
- How did agencies stack up for the year compared to previous results and other agencies?
- Are there specific themes emerging, especially related to statewide priority areas?

OFM SHR will also look at areas that could be larger organizational influences such as compensation changes, training opportunities, fallout from COVID-19, mobility options, along with respect and inclusion felt in the workplace. However, because the survey is confidential, we will not connect additional data to individual responses.

To learn about this analysis, we recommend attending the December contact meeting and reading the [HR Management Report](#).

RAMP

OFM SHR uses the RAMP model in our analysis. The RAMP model focuses on four main intrinsic motivators: Relationships, Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose. More information on the RAMP model can be found [here](#).

STATEWIDE STRATEGIES

Your survey results also make an impact on statewide strategies. These strategies include trainings offered by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), priority areas for Results Washington and State HR's DEI, culture and Employer of Choice work.

COMMUNICATING THE RESULTS

Your survey results are shared with policy makers in a variety of ways, including a formal report, dashboards, leader briefings, and a televised presentation to the Governor.

The Employee Engagement Survey Report summarizes detailed survey analysis and results. In April, the Governor sends a link to the finalized report to all state employees.

OFM also presents the survey findings to multiple decision makers such as agency HR Directors, the Governor's staff, Agency Directors, Deputy Directors, and individual agency leadership per request.

QUESTIONS?

Contact us!

- **Emily Beaulieu**, (360) 688-0760 or emily.beaulieu@ofm.wa.gov: Workforce Research and Performance Team Supervisor / Employer of Choice Lead
- **Josh Calvert**, (360) 810-1479 or josh.calvert@ofm.wa.gov: Survey Project Manager / Questionnaire Design / Communication / Data Analysis / Reporting
- **Hayley Hohman**, (360) 790-3007 or hayley.hohman@ofm.wa.gov: Data Analysis / Reporting / Demographic Lead
- **Walt Jones**, (360) 407-4121 or walt.jones@ofm.wa.gov: Outreach / Team Support
- Team email address: shrplanning@ofm.wa.gov



