2019 Employee Engagement Survey Handbook

Workforce Research and Performance

State Human Resources

Office of Financial Management

ABOUT THE TEAM

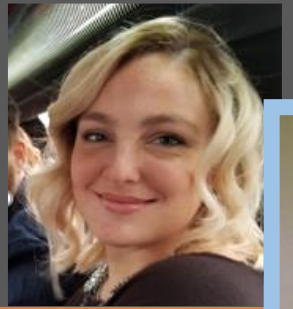Your OFM State Human Resources (SHR) Team

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INTRODUCTION

Why Engagement Matters

Decades of research have revealed a strong connection between employee engagement and organizational performance. Engaged employees find their work meaningful and are more likely to deliver results for their agency, coworkers and other stakeholders.

Focusing on employee engagement, using a data-driven and action-focused approach, can result in:

- Higher rates of success achieving strategic goals
- Better customer service
- More innovation
- Higher employee retention
- Better employee attendance
- Fewer equal opportunity complaints

> *"Engaged employees find pride in their work and are more likely to go above and beyond"*

While there are many definitions of employee engagement, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board defines the term 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 Washington State Employee Engagement Survey measures employee satisfaction with several components of the work environment, or "conditions of engagement," that can be grouped into categories based on the scope of the question (see Employee Survey Logic Model below). The survey also includes two questions that more closely approximate "outcomes of engagement," namely, general job satisfaction and employees' likelihood of recommending their agency as a great place to work. Lastly, the survey includes several demographic questions (geography, supervisor status, tenure with state, tenure with agency) to allow for group comparisons.
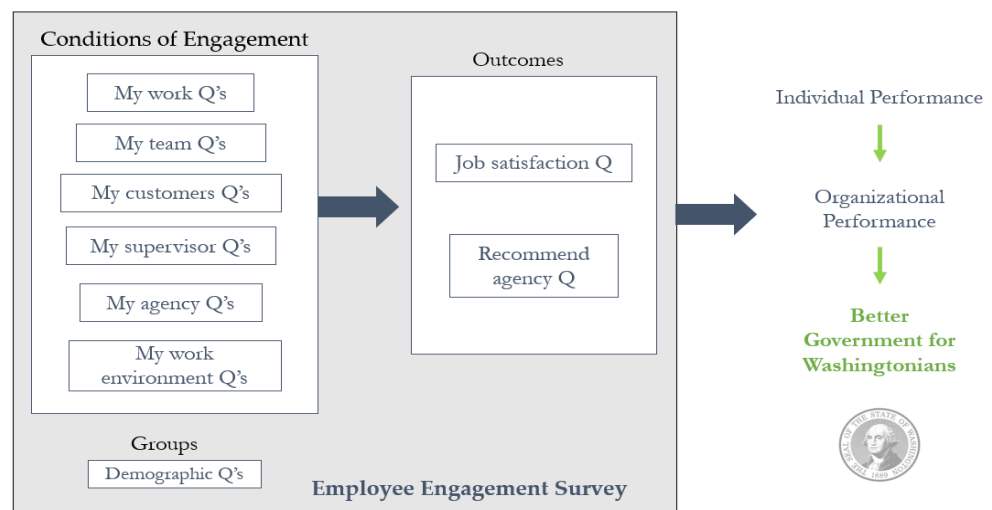
This Handbook

This handbook is intended for engagement survey contacts and contains all the communications materials handed out at contact meetings in past years – all in one place!

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.

SURVEY LOGISTICS

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

- Who is eligible to participate
- How the surveys are collected
- What services and products SHR provides to participating agencies
- Key agency responsibilities related to the survey

Survey Logistics Overview

Every year, the Washington State Office of Financial Management, State Human Resources (SHR) Division 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 permanent and nonpermanent employees are eligible. This excludes legislative and judicial branch employees as well as employees at the public higher education institutions. This also excludes Work Study students and nonemployee work contract employees. The Human Resources Management System (HRMS) Nonemployee Coding Reference Guide is available on the [HRMS Data Definitions](#) website.

HOW ARE THE SURVEYS COLLECTED?

Surveys are primarily collected on the internet using SurveyMonkey®, a web-based survey company. SHR provides two survey links: one main survey link, and one link for smaller agencies (fewer than 200 employees). Both links have the same survey questions, but this format helps SHR develop a small agency roll-up report during the analysis phase.

Paper copies are also available for employees who do not have computer access or feel more comfortable submitting a paper survey. (These paper copies must be entered by the agency into a third survey link dedicated to paper surveys, which closes one week after the main survey.)

SHR administers the survey for most agencies, but agencies may also choose to self-administer the survey and send data from the standard statewide questions to SHR.

SHR Services Provided to Agencies

SERVICES PROVIDED TO ALL AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY

Below is a brief outline of the services provided and the resources available to all agencies participating in the survey.

Planning Support
- Sample survey planning and communication materials
- In-person Engagement Survey Contact meetings to learn from and collaborate with other agencies

Reports Provided
- Within six weeks of the close of the survey:
  - Your agency-specific report (if your agency receives 10 or more responses) which includes:
  - Comparison to agency's previous survey results
  - Raw data for any questions added by the agency
  - Excel spreadsheet that agencies can use as a template to do drill-down reporting and analysis at the division level

- o The draft statewide roll-up report (and draft small agency roll-up report, if applicable) that you can use to benchmark your agency results.
- ▶ By late December
  - o The finalized statewide roll-up report (and finalized small agency roll-up report, if applicable) following agency validation of reports. At this time, agencies may share results internally (including agency intranet), but State HR requests that results are not published externally.
  - o Other agency results (if 50+ responses) for comparison
- ▶ By April
  - o The final statewide report and analysis to the hr.ofm.wa.gov website. The Governor will send an email sharing the formal report with all state employees.

SERVICES INCLUDED WHEN OFM STATE HR ADMINISTERS THE SURVEY

Below is a brief outline of the services provided when SHR administers the survey.

- Survey programming of the statewide questions (standard, rotating and demographic).
- Option to include additional agency-specific questions. Agency specific questions may include a question that makes it possible to drill-down results by division within an agency, agency-specific content areas, or a question asking for comments.
- Consultation on designing agency-specific questions.
- Protection of anonymity for employees responding to the survey.
- Paper versions of the survey, if requested.
- Periodic email response count updates during the survey.
- Access to shared data views (one for small agencies and one for large agencies) 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).
- Consultation for interpreting survey results.

SERVICES NOT COVERED BY OFM STATE HR

- ▶ Reports by drill-down groups.
- ▶ Analysis of any questions added by the agency.

NO CHARGE

There is no charge for the Employee Engagement Survey.

Agency Responsibilities

WHEN OFM STATE HR ADMINISTERS THE SURVEY

- Provide question text and response options for agency-specific questions to SHR.
- Inform SHR if you need a PDF version of the survey to print paper copies.
- Review "preview" survey link and provide any corrections to SHR.
- Send "live" survey link to employees in your agency.
- Ensure survey is available to employees for at least two weeks (the survey will be live for four).
- Enter paper copies into the dedicated paper survey link, if applicable.

WHEN AGENCY SELF-ADMINISTERS THE SURVEY

- Include the standard statewide questions (and the rotating question) in your survey questionnaire.
  - SHR will send an excel template with the current questions, response options, and data formats.
- Send SHR your data in the template provided within two weeks of the close of the survey.

See the "Survey Timeline" (pg. 13) for due dates associated with the above responsibilities.

THE 2019 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

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

- **The 2019 Survey Questionnaire**
- **The 2019 Survey Timeline**

2019 STATEWIDE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

*We added one rotating question to the survey about employees' perceptions of "feeling trusted to make decisions" as a key component of employee autonomy.

**We have also kept two components of the Modern Work Environment question pertaining to mobility and flexibility. Revised 7/24/19

Standard Questions

1) I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.
2) I receive the information I need to do my job effectively.
3) I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency.
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 ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance.
9) I receive recognition for a job well done.
10) We are making improvements to make things better for our customers.
11) A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work group.
12) I know how my agency measures its success.
13) My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce.
14) I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency.
15) I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.
16) We use customer feedback to improve our work processes.
17) People are treated fairly in my work group.
18) At my job, I have the opportunity to make good use of my skills.
19) At my workplace, I feel valued for who I am as a person.
20) *My supervisor trusts me to make decisions or recommendations that affect my work.
21) In general, I'm satisfied with my job.
22) 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 Supplemental Questions

23) **How satisfied are you with your flexibility?
    (the ability to adjust your scheduled hours as needed)

24) **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)

*Modern Work Environment Scale

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

Demographic Questions

25) In which area of the state do you work the majority of the time?
26) Are you a supervisor?
27) How long have you worked for the state?
28) How long have you worked for your current agency?
29) Which agency do you work for?

2019 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY TIMELINE

By When	Who	What
Fri, June 21	Agencies	Confirm with OFM if agency is choosing to opt-out of the 2019 survey.
Mon, June 24	OFM State HR Division and Agencies	**1st Survey Contact Meeting** – Provide to survey contacts: handbook, including information on the entire survey process, survey planning and communication.
Mon, July 29	OFM State HR Division and Agencies	**2nd Survey Contact Meeting** – Setting goals, designing agency-specific questions, survey accessibility and sharing results.
Wed, July 31	Agencies	Inform State HR if you will be self-administering the survey.
Wed, July 31	Agencies	Provide draft question text and response options for agency-specific questions to OFM State HR Division.
August – October	Agency survey contacts	Plan agency's communication including pre message, email message with link, reminder message during survey, communication of results, etc.
Mon, August 19	Agencies	Confirm any agency accessibility needs, including paper surveys and hard-to-reach population plan for the survey.
Mon, August 19	Agencies that are adding agency-specific questions	Finalize agency-specific questions. SHR will send a test link by 9/9 so you can confirm the questions and response options are correct.
Fri, August 30	OFM State HR Division	Send to agencies building their own survey: response format standards and Excel template to use when sending the data to State HR.
Mon, September 9	OFM State HR Division	Send survey preview link to agencies for testing and validation.
Wed, September 18	Agencies	Provide any corrections to survey preview link (including agency-specific questions, response options, skip logic, "inform" text in the preview link) to shrplanning@ofm.wa.gov.
Mon, September 30	OFM State HR Division	Provide to survey contacts: link to survey that will open Oct 1 and close Oct 31.
Tue, October 1 – Thurs, October 31	Agency survey contacts	Assure that the survey link is sent to agency employees and allow for at least two weeks for survey administration. Collect paper copies, if relevant, and enter into the dedicated paper survey link. Send reminder if needed.
Tue, October 1 – Thurs, October 31	OFM State HR Division	Survey is open to collect responses. Response rate calculations will be based on agency headcounts as of 10/1 following same data restrictions as published on hr.wa.gov Number of Employees & Headcount Trends
Mon, October 7, 14, 21, 28	OFM State HR Division	Provide response counts to survey contacts so reminder emails to employees can be sent, if needed.
Thurs, November 7	OFM State HR Division	Paper survey entry link closes one week after standard survey.
Thurs, November 14	Agencies that administered their own survey	Provide response data for the 29 questions (24 rated and 5 demographic questions) to shrplanning@ofm.wa.gov
Fri, December 6	OFM State HR Division	Distribute agency and statewide reports to survey contacts. Raw data included for added agency-specific questions.
Mon, December 9 – Fri, December 13	Agencies	Review your agency's results report and communicate any concerns about the data to shrplanning@ofm.wa.gov.
Fri, December 20	OFM State HR Division	Statewide data final and emailed to agency survey contacts.
April 2020	OFM State HR Division	Publish full survey analysis report.

SURVEY PLANNING

Overview

The key to a successful survey is good planning. Survey participation is influenced by a number of factors including advance 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 State HR is administering the survey for your agency or not, you will need to create and/or modify your agency's plan for the current year's State Employee Engagement Survey.

Successful surveys require collaboration, executive leadership support and communication.

In this section, you will learn how to plan for:

- **Effective collaboration**
- **Gaining leadership support**
- **Hard-to-reach populations**
- **Agency-specific questions, including:**
    - o **Tips for writing survey questions**
    - o **Question examples**

Collaboration

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

▸ **Support system.** A steering team can bring perspective, support, resources, and commitment to the survey. Typical team 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, determining resource 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. Obtaining senior management commitment before engaging in the survey is another way of encouraging employee participation and ensuring that the survey efforts result in effective actions

▸ **Set the stage.** Executives need to answer the question "Why does it matter?" This survey sponsor may need to "sell" employees on taking the survey and address its benefits and threats. We recommend that your executive send at least the initial invitation to employees to participate in the survey.

▸ **Share results.** Executives and managers should be first to see the results. This helps reduce the need to "find the guilty" and allows managers time to understand the results and be prepared to fully answer questions when they arise. Results of the survey should be shared throughout your agency as well as a follow up action plan based upon the feedback that was received. Acting on the feedback, and sharing the results of those actions, will lead to employees being more satisfied and inclined to participate in future surveys.

Hard-to-Reach Populations

Some agencies make paper surveys available to some employees so they can participate. 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 are able to add their own questions to the Employee Engagement Survey. This is a great opportunity to drill down into strategic focus areas.

Agencies can add up to 8 questions (including all skip logic questions) to the survey, though we recommend adding no more than 5. "Skip logic" means if the employee picks one particular response option it then takes them to a non-sequential question related directly to their choice.

Agency-specific questions come at the end of the survey, after the employee enters their agency.

(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.)

TIPS FOR WRITING SURVEY QUESTION

Types of Questions

▸ Demographic (such as asking what division the employee works in)
▸ 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 also more time-consuming to properly analyze and summarize. For that reason, we recommend no more than one comment question in a survey. The "voice" in a comment (names, grammar, "pet peeves") can give away who wrote it, so we do not recommend sharing the comments individually. Instead, comments should be categorized by theme and by "positive" and "negative" to summarize key topics. There are no comment questions in the standard survey questions.

Identify Clear Purpose/Goals

Clarifying what you want to accomplish is a critical first step before thinking about question wording.

▸ 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.)
▸ 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, or Corporate Leadership Council, etc.
▸ 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.**

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 anonymity policy. Contact us if you need a copy.
▸ Assure that there are enough employees in each group to result in at least 10 responses. As a general rule of thumb, we suggest that there be at least 20 employees in each group.
▸ If there are multiple added demographic questions, such as division and facility, make sure there are at least 20 employees who are defined by the combined characteristics. Demographic data will only be shared and reported if there are 10 or more employees in any group that's defined by the combined characteristics.

Scope

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

ANONYMITY

If any agency-specific drill-down groups have fewer than 10 responses, SHR will remove identifying information until the response is part of a group with 10 or more other responses.

Once the agency receives the individual response data for analysis, the agency survey contact is responsible, with the agency's HR and leadership team, for maintaining full and appropriate confidentiality for that data, including for any names, "voice" or other identifying information provided in comment questions.

QUESTION CHECKLIST

For each question you write, test by asking:

Purpose:
- ☐ Will we be able to act on the information we get from this question?
- ☐ 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 available 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. If a term needs to be defined to assure that all are interpreting it the same way, that might be an exception to plain talk.
- ☐ 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 wants to give me? (balance needed)
- ☐ 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

In order to assist in the development of questions, SHR has created a short list of some Industry Tested Questions as well as some examples of Agency Initiative Questions that have been used in the past.

Most of the suggested Industry Tested Questions directly relate to the current enterprise-wide focus of Employer of Choice and the Executive Order 16-07: Building a Modern Work Environment. Agency Initiative Questions allow agencies to get a "pulse check" of how employees have responded to agency specific initiatives.

INDUSTRY TESTED QUESTIONS
- My job allows for some flexibility in how, where, and when I work.
- 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.
- At my workplace, I feel valued by {pick one: my coworkers, my supervisor, management} for who I am as a person.

AGENCY QUESTION EXAMPLES
- My workplace has meaningful discussions on how to improve security/staff safety.
- I have a safe workplace.
- My supervisor discusses my workload with me.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS[2]

Overview

Communication is perhaps one of the most overlooked and under-executed elements of the employee engagement survey process. Your survey communication can increase participation rates, build employee trust, encourage open and honest feedback, and lead to positive organizational change.

Ineffective communication is one of the biggest barriers standing in your way of survey success.

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:

- **7 purposes of survey communication**
- **7 dangers of ineffective survey communication**
- **8 tips for communicating with employees**
- **How to build your communication plan, including:**
  - **A communication timeline**
  - **Sample communication pieces**
  - **And more**

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[2] 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/

7 PURPOSES

OF EFFECTIVE SURVEY COMMUNICATION

Top-down communication within an agency serves two essential functions: it provides the information employees need to get things done and builds relationships of trust and commitment. Communication within an employee engagement survey process serves the same main purposes with some additional benefits. Your survey communication strategy should:

1. INFORM AND EDUCATE

First, your communication strategy needs to provide employees with the 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 also help you get your employees excited about the process. Explain that this survey will allow them to freely voice their opinions about the agency and help to improve their work experience.

3. ENSURE ANONYMITY

Assure employees that their participation and responses are anonymous. The survey does not ask for any identifiable information or collect IP addresses. Demographic results (supervisor status, geography, agency tenure, state tenure) will only be shared with agencies if there are 10 or more responses and only in summary form.

4. ENCOURAGE HONESTY

Employee participation alone is not enough to make the positive changes needed in your agency. 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 taken seriously.

5. DISCLOSE INTENT

An explanation of leaders' intentions is often that extra bit of transparency employees need to drive participation in an agency-wide survey initiative. Explain to your employees what information will be shared post-survey and what you plan to do with the results. When

employees believe your intentions are good and for their benefit, they are more likely to participate.

6. CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT

An employee engagement survey process is not like spring-cleaning, where once a year you gather feedback to address old issues from last fall. It is an ongoing process that needs to be continually communicated throughout the year. To make the most of your survey process and improve engagement, remain in constant contact with your employees, frequently discuss how initiatives are working, address any lingering concerns, and celebrate successes.

7. GAIN BUY-IN

While your communication pieces primarily serve one of the six purposes listed above, they also should be leveraged to gain employee buy-in. Use each piece to build trust, value, and empowerment throughout your employee engagement process.

7 DANGERS

Do not underestimate this part of the engagement survey process. When communication is unclear or nonexistent, you risk:

1. LOW PARTICIPATION RATES

Neglecting to inform your employees of how and when to take the survey can result in confusion and missed deadlines. But 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. Explain the value of honest feedback to 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 of the survey's purpose, results, and positive outcomes, you will risk losing employees' trust in the survey assessment, future initiatives, and leadership.

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 leadership with little leverage to implement positive organizational change.

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 about 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.

> **Say this:** Take your survey to share your honest opinions.

> **Not this:** Take the survey to submit feedback.

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.

> **Say this:** Your feedback is extremely important to this agency's future and greatly affects our direction. Thank you for your participation and support.

> **Not this:** We appreciate your participation and support of this important initiative.

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. Make benefits of the workplace and entire organization secondary.

> **Say this:** This survey gives you an opportunity to improve your work experience while helping shape the future of your agency.

> **Not this:** This survey will give leadership the opportunity to make this agency a better place to work.

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 a majority of your employees are not online, email communication might not be your best option. Be creative! Consider using internal communication channels such as email, your intranet, newsletters or bulletin boards to inform employees about the coming survey. Encourage them to participate and offer an outlet in advance for addressing questions or concerns they may have. The outlet could be to contact the agency's human resources staff.

5. MAKE IT SCANNABLE

Your employees are busy. Make your survey communication short, to the point, and easy to read. For scan-ability, use headlines and subheads, bulleted or numbered lists, adequate spacing, and bolding of important points. Avoid bogging your communication pieces down with text-heavy, paragraph formatting.

6. SEGMENT YOUR AUDIENCE

Target specific 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.
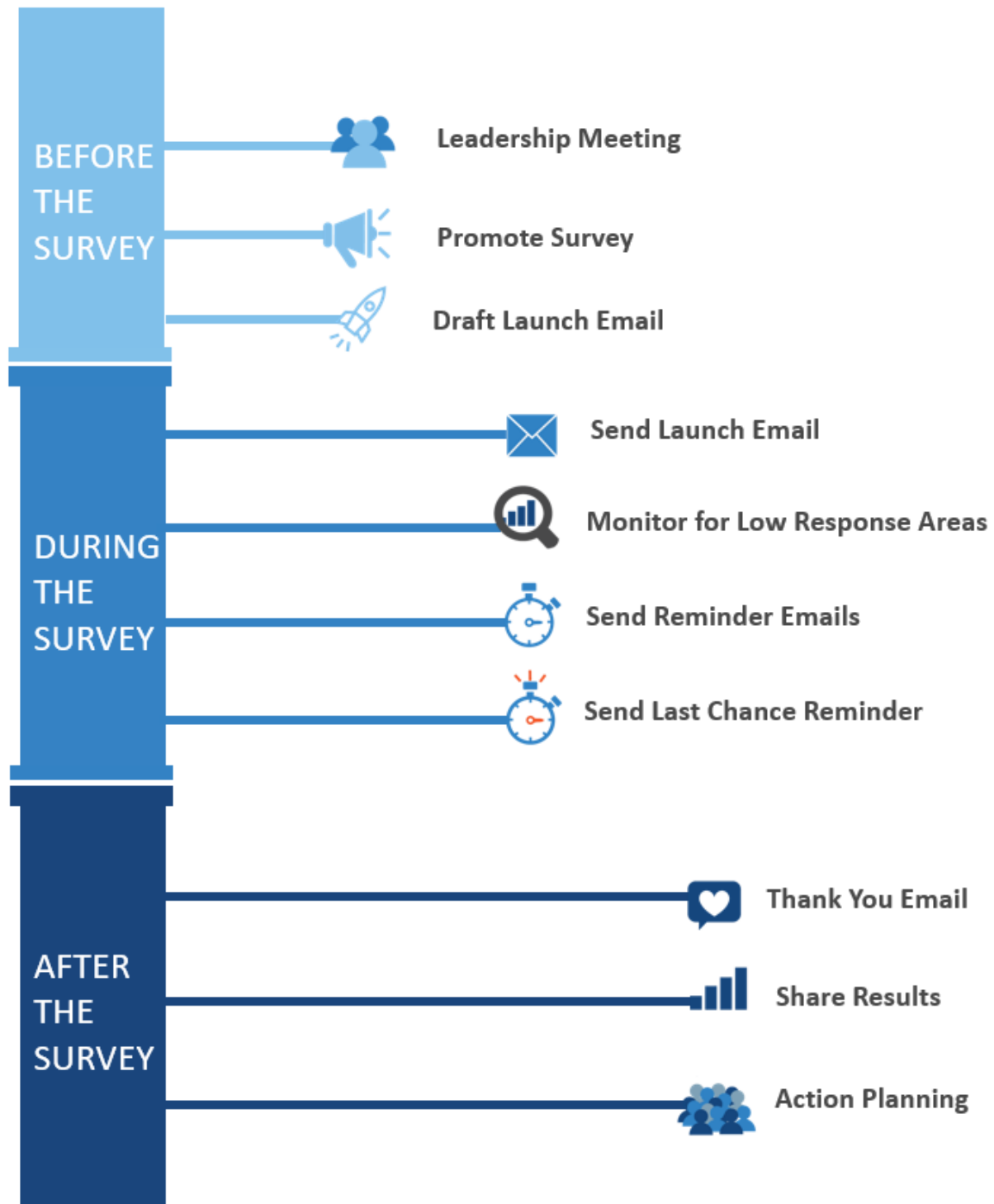
7. CREATE A CALL TO ACTION

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
- Promote Survey
- Draft Launch Email

DURING THE SURVEY
- Send Launch Email
- Monitor for Low Response Areas
- Send Reminder Emails
- Send Last Chance Reminder

AFTER THE SURVEY
- Thank You Email
- Share Results
- Action Planning

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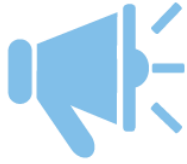
Gain employee buy-in, generate awareness, and spark enthusiasm

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 lunchroom or conference room.

3. COMPETITIONS

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

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 anonymity
- 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:** Note about the survey link: State HR 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.
- **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 on an annual basis enables us to 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 anonymous.** The survey does not collect personally identifiable information from you or your computer (IP address). The survey is analyzed on a collective — not individual — basis. answers to the standard demographic questions (geographic location, supervisor status, and state and agency tenure) 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 completely anonymous 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

SHR will send periodic email response count updates during the survey, at the end of the first, second and third week of the survey.

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 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."

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

Thank employees for participation. Make this communication piece 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. 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.

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

BAD

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

GOOD

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

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 take action. Strike while the iron is hot!

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

SHR 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 anonymity.) 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

GOOD

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 STATE HR 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 window has closed for respondents and agencies have received their agency level results, OFM-SHR begins the task of analyzing the statewide results. OFM's analysis typically is broken out into multiple areas. A few being:

- How did the state do overall for the year? Compared to previous years?
- What were our participation rates and how do they compare?
- 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 will also look at areas that could be influencing results outside of the survey such as union representation, compensation, trainings and turnover. However, because the survey is anonymous, OFM is limited to what it can connect to the respondent.

A few sources of information OFM uses that are critical to understanding your agency results are the Point of Contact meetings, the HR Management Report, and simply having an open dialogue with your agency. Your "on the ground" narrative of what's going on with your agency's employee engagement helps make stories come to life within the numbers.

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

One of the more significant uses of the survey results is with the Employer of Choice performance measure. OFM works with Results Washington to assess each agency and the state using an average of 13 questions from the Employee Engagement Survey.

These Employer of Choice questions fall into four indicator categories: Job Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, Respect and Feedback, and Customer Value.

More information on the Employer of Choice measure and related data can be found in the Goal 5 section on the Results Washington webpage.

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 work to create a statewide Employee Value Proposition (EVP).

COMMUNICATING THE RESULTS

Your survey results are shared with policy makers in a variety of ways, including a formal report, leader briefings, and even 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.

The statewide results are also highlighted at an event called a "Results Review." Results Washington hosts this event and TVW televises it. The Governor, agency leadership, and invited attendees review the results from the survey with a focus on a few critical areas of interest. We encourage survey contacts to attend or tune-in to the Results Review. The content will help validate your hard work towards making the results actionable.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the Workforce Research and Performance Team

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- **Walt Jones**, (360) 407-4121 or walt.jones@ofm.wa.gov: Outreach / Team Support

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