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FY 2025 HR Management Roll-up Report



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State Human Resources



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Table of Contents

Report purpose, process, and focus areas	4
Purpose of the FY 2025 HR Management Roll-up Report	4
Analytical Framework	5
FY 2025 HR Management Roll-up Report Focus Areas.....	6
Where Can I Find Executive Branch Workforce Data?.....	7
Hybrid Workforce and Government Efficiency	8
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Access	16
Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency	24
Retention Strategies and Workforce Stability	33
Succession Planning for Sustainable Leadership.....	40
Employee Engagement and Its Role in Government Performance	46
Labor Relations Collaboration and Support	54
Legislative and Policy Impacts on Workforce Efficiency	59
Executive Branch Workforce Management Landscape	65
FY 2025 Executive Branch Workforce Management Landscape.....	66

Report purpose, process, and focus areas

Purpose of the FY 2025 HR Management Roll-up Report

The FY 2025 HR Management Report analyzes key executive branch workforce focus areas, highlighting key trends and developments from the past fiscal year (FY). The main objectives of the report include:



Facilitating Awareness and Engagement

Providing senior leadership and partners with clear, agency-driven insights into the workforce to foster collaboration on strategic initiatives and inform decision-making.



Strategic Alignment

Identifying HR activities that align workforce initiatives with broader organizational goals, ensuring that HR efforts support business strategies.



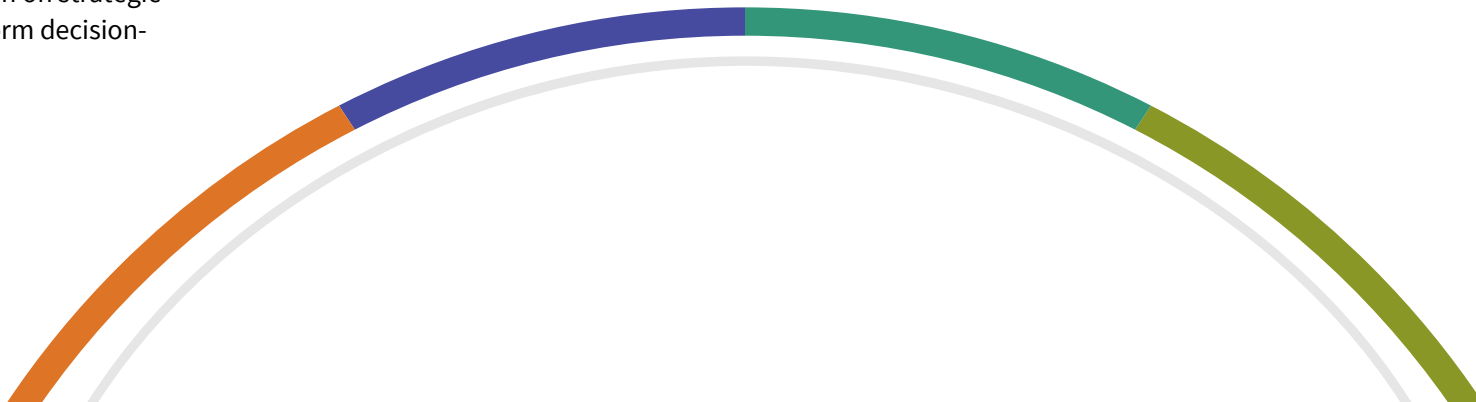
Workplace Culture Insights

Evaluating key workforce metrics to gauge workplace culture's health and identify improvement areas.



Highlighting HR's Impact

Showcasing HR contributions by demonstrating how workforce initiatives align with and drive overall business success.



Reporting Process

To compile this report, all executive branch agencies were surveyed on core workforce topics for the fiscal year. Agencies responded to 54 multi-part questions covering a range of workforce management areas. For FY 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025), 82 out of 84 executive branch agencies submitted responses. The Washington state organizational chart is available on the [OFM website](#).

A team of 21 subject matter experts from the OFM State Human Resources Division (State HR) developed the questionnaire, reviewed agency submissions, and conducted the topical roll-up analysis. Generative AI tools — including MS Copilot, ChatGPT, and Qualtrics Stats iQ — were used to support data synthesis, thematic coding, and pattern identification. These tools were applied to enhance efficiency and clarity while preserving the integrity of agency-provided data.

All outputs generated through these tools underwent quality assurance and control. Findings were reviewed, refined, and validated by designated subject matter expert analyst teams to ensure accuracy, contextual relevance, and alignment with state workforce policy standards. The final insights reflect a collective, expert-derived understanding of the workforce landscape and emerging trends across the executive branch.

Analytical Framework

Assessment Factors:

- **Drivers:** Factors or conditions that actively promote, accelerate, or enable progress toward a goal.
- **Constraints:** Factors or conditions that limit, slow, or obstruct progress toward a goal.
- **Opportunities:** Situations or actions that can be leveraged to improve outcomes or achieve goals more effectively.

Agency Size Categories

- Small agency (53): 1–199 employees.
- Medium agency (16): 200–699 employees.
- Large agency (15): 700 or more employees

Core Function Categories

- Education (8)
- Governmental Operations (39)
- Human Services (14)
- Natural Resources and Recreation (12)
- Transportation (9)

This structured approach ensures the report provides a credible and comprehensive view of workforce conditions across Washington state government’s executive branch. By combining expert analysis with AI-assisted tools, the findings reflect both quantitative insight and qualitative understanding of the factors shaping the state’s workforce landscape.

FY 2025 HR Management Roll-up Report Focus Areas

This annual fiscal year roll-up provides an analysis of the workforce management strategies for 82 agencies managing a workforce of 75,000+ employees within the executive branch of Washington state government. The report examines these critical areas to assess the current state and identify opportunities for improvement:

- **Hybrid Workforce and Government Efficiency**
How effectively hybrid work models support our adaptability to change.
- **Workforce Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Access (DEIBA)**
How operational improvements are aligned with and enhancing our DEIBA commitments.
- **Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency**
How agile we are in responding to emerging hiring strategies and evolving challenges aimed at attracting a diverse and skilled workforce.
- **Retention Strategies and Workforce Stability**
How workforce stability strengthens service delivery and elevates quality of service.
- **Succession Planning for Sustainable Leadership**
How succession planning strategy influences performance and ensures service continuity.
- **Employee Engagement and Its Role in Government Performance**
Initiatives we have implemented to improve the workforce experience and strengthen change management.
- **Labor Relations Collaboration and Support**
Understanding agencies' labor relations activities and where additional support or resources should be prioritized.
- **Legislative and Policy Impacts on Workforce Efficiency**
Proactive measures taken to remain compliant and ahead of evolving legislation.

Where Can I Find Executive Branch Workforce Data?

Workforce data gives employers strategic insights to manage and develop an engaged, high-performing workforce effectively. By leveraging this data, organizations can make proactive, data-driven HR decisions that enhance recruitment, improve retention, boost employee satisfaction, and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

Throughout this report, you may find topic-specific analytics to inform the analysis and recommendations.

The OFM State HR regularly publishes both fiscal-quarter and fiscal-year workforce data products on the public website. This data aligns core employee lifecycle metrics and meets the State Labor Relations legislative requirements to post annual workforce data. All published data adhere to the Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech) open data policy standards.

We invite you to explore the various dashboards, charts, and graphs available on the OFM website under [Workforce Data](#) for comprehensive insights into the executive branch workforce.

Executive branch: fiscal year trend overview example

Topic	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Executive Branch Headcount	67,027	66,085	70,556	75,108	75,311
Median Age	46 yrs	46 yrs	45 yrs	45 yrs	45 yrs
Female	51.5%	50.6%	49.2%	48.4%	47.8%
X/Non-Binary	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
LGBTQ+	1.7%	2.9%	3.9%	4.7%	4.9%
Persons of Color	21.4%	22.1%	22.8%	23.5%	24.0%
Persons with Disabilities	3.8%	4.3%	4.7%	5.3%	5.6%
Persons 40 and Over	40.9%	39.7%	43.0%	41.8%	42.5%
All Veterans	6.8%	6.4%	5.9%	5.5%	5.4%
Military Spouse	0.6%	0.9%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%
Permanent Employees	89.2%	90.7%	91.0%	91.4%	92.4%
Median Length of Service	8 yrs	7 yrs	7 yrs	6 yrs	6 yrs
Full-time	95.8%	96.2%	96.3%	96.3%	96.5%
Turnover Rate (Average)	9.2%	15.7%	10.5%	9.7%	9.3%
Median Annual Base Salary	\$67,560	\$72,372	\$77,460	\$80,569	\$86,244

Data source: HR Management System (HRMS). Data includes permanent, nonpermanent, and seasonal employees.

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Hybrid Workforce and Government Efficiency

Hybrid Workforce and Government Efficiency

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Hybrid work is now common across agencies and is delivering clear benefits — better work-life balance, higher job satisfaction, more focus, and less absenteeism. Agencies say it helps with recruiting and retaining employees, but most are using it reactively rather than as a strategic tool for long-term planning, performance, or workforce management.

Employers also see challenges. Some report reduced team connection, uneven access to hybrid work, and feelings of isolation for some staff. Even though the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey shows employee high satisfaction with telework, agencies say it can be harder to maintain collaboration and team cohesion. Another major issue is that data about hybrid work is often fragmented and not used consistently, making it hard for agencies to plan or evaluate its full impact.

Hybrid work has helped agencies stay adaptable during disruptions, but it is not yet consistently built into formal business continuity plans. To make hybrid work more effective over the long term, agencies need better data, stronger engagement practices, and more intentional use of hybrid work to support efficiency, service quality, and workforce experience.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Operational Benefits:** Hybrid work improves focus, reduces absenteeism, and increases employee satisfaction — supporting overall productivity.
- **Continuity Readiness:** Agencies see hybrid work as valuable for continuity during disruptions, but few have formally integrated it into continuity planning.
- **Strategic Data Use:** Hybrid work data is mostly used for recruiting and retention — not for forecasting, scheduling, or performance management.
- **Data Analytics Capacity:** Limited analytics capacity, inconsistent data management, and siloed data make it harder to make informed decisions about hybrid workforce planning.
- **Efficiency Opportunity:** With shared metrics, stronger analytics, and updated performance goals, hybrid work could become a key tool for improving efficiency.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Employee Experience Supports Service Delivery:** Better work-life balance and job satisfaction contribute to more stable, engaged, and reliable service delivery.
- **Team Connection Matters:** Reduced communication and collaboration can affect coordinated service delivery and internal teamwork.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Not all employees have the same access to hybrid options or technology, which may affect consistency in service quality.
- **Tools Enable, But Need Management:** Virtual tools improve coordination, but success depends on intentional leadership and communication.
- **Engagement Drivers Service Quality:** Customer service improves when hybrid engagement is supported through clear communication, inclusion, and employee recognition.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on their experiences with the hybrid workforce, including recent business changes, operational challenges, and areas for improvement. The feedback also addressed eligibility and participation criteria, as well as how hybrid work arrangements shape workforce planning and long-term staffing strategies. Additionally, agencies shared insights on how the hybrid model supports adaptability to external impacts, helping to identify what is working well, where adjustments may be needed, and how statewide policies can better support a flexible, effective, and resilient hybrid workforce.

Drivers

- **Work-life balance and job satisfaction** — Over 85% of agencies reported an improved work-life balance via hybrid work, leading to higher job satisfaction for all agency sizes and functions.
- **Technology adoption**
 - High adoption of virtual appointments, digital-first processes, and self-service options indicates that tech tools are successfully enabling hybrid service delivery.
 - Moderate adoption of re-engineered approval workflows and use of remote collaboration tools lead to streamlining operations.
- **Communication and coordination**
 - High adoption of increased check-ins in conjunction with additional efforts to provide clearer communication protocols and support team alignment.
 - While challenges continue to exist, two-thirds of large agencies also reported improving cross-functional coordination to break down silos and enhance operational agility.
- **Adaptivity for external impacts** — A growing enterprise-wide focus on service continuity and resource optimization was reflected by two-thirds of agencies agreeing that hybrid work environment can:
 - Maintain operational resilience amid environmental disruptions (e.g., inclement weather).
 - Provide continuity of service despite hiring or budget constraints.
 - Enhance ability to pivot quickly under executive or legislative directives.
- **Data-driven talent management strategies** — Over half of agencies reported using hybrid work data to support their recruitment and retention strategies, highlighting that hybrid flexibility offers key competitive advantage in today's job market.

- **Cost savings, work agility, and process efficiency**

- Cost savings through reduced office usage in the hybrid work environment was reported by half of the large agencies.
- Nearly half of agencies introduced flexible work practices to support employee productivity and morale.
- 40% of agencies reported efforts to streamline workflows and standardize documents to enhance consistency and reduce bottlenecks.

FY 2025 Executive Branch Hybrid Work Participation Rates*

81.3%

Telework Participation Rate

46.6%

Flextime Participation Rate

36.5%

Compressed Workweek Participation Rate

***Hybrid work:**

- Telework is the practice of working from home or other alternative locations closer to home using technology which allows the employee to access normal work materials.
- Flex time or flex work allows the employee to have flexible start and end times that are outside the agency's normal work hours.
- Compressed work week is an alternative schedule that allows full-time employees to eliminate at least one workday every two weeks by working longer hours during the remaining days, resulting in less commute trips for an employee.
- Employees may be participating in multiple hybrid work categories, e.g. teleworking with a compressed work week schedule.
- Not all work allows for hybrid work participation. Data reported is for employees who are participating in hybrid work options.

Constraints

- **Performance management in hybrid work**
 - Limited adoption of hybrid-specific performance management practices reflecting major gaps in structured productivity tracking, flexible goal setting, and evaluation metrics.
 - Lack of performance measurement tools for hybrid workforce constrains agencies' ability to improve operational speed and agility.
- **Data used for workforce planning** — Around one-third of agencies reported not using hybrid work data for workforce planning (indicated either “not applicable” or “collected but not used”) which underlines gaps in data awareness or data collection and analytics capacity.
- **Unique business lines limit hybrid work enablement** — Agencies with unique business lines that rely heavily on fieldwork or onsite service delivery, such as natural resources, social services and law enforcement, encounter inherent challenges in adopting a hybrid work model.
- **Change management**
 - A small number of agencies are still evaluating needed changes in the hybrid work environment.
 - Lack of change management practices can further hinder improvements in operational efficiency.
- **Challenges in team cohesion and collaboration**
 - Decreased team cohesion and collaboration emerged as the most frequently cited workforce challenges by employers (reported by one-third of agencies) despite high employee satisfaction for telework/remote work and work-life balance reported from the 2024 statewide Employee Engagement Survey.
 - Large- and medium-size agencies experienced these issues more acutely than small agencies, underscoring that team size and complexity intensify collaboration barriers in hybrid contexts.
- **Training and support**
 - Agencies reported moderate uptake in providing training and support for hybrid technologies and etiquette.
 - Compared to the widely adopted hybrid work technology across the enterprise, agencies are still catching up to fully equip staff with the tools and knowledge to operate effectively in hybrid environments.

Opportunities

- **Hybrid work best practices and alignment**
 - Moderate adoption of flexible work practices across agencies presents an enterprise-wide opportunity to develop evaluation tools, training, and templates for consistent implementation — particularly for agencies with limited resources.
 - Varying levels of hybrid work impact assessment among large, medium, and small agencies highlight an opportunity to establish consistent change management practices that enhance operational effectiveness and ensure equitable service delivery.
- **Integrate hybrid work data into broader workforce planning frameworks**
 - Opportunity to expand the hybrid workforce data use to inform staffing models, schedules, and workforce modernization initiatives.
 - Use hybrid work data to forecast workforce needs and skill gaps supporting succession planning and remote skill development strategies.
 - Build data literacy and analytical capacity among HR and planning teams with training and tools.
 - Bridge workforce and facility data systems by defining new hybrid work metrics and aligning them with organizational key performance indicators to improve enterprise-wide data tracking and insight generation.
- **Performance metrics and goal alignment** — Limited adoption of new monitoring tools presents a long-term opportunity to standardize performance metrics through structured goal setting, productivity tracking, and outcome-based evaluation practices across the enterprise.
- **Communication and team cohesion** — Reports of communication challenges and tool limitations reveal an opportunity to invest in real-time collaboration platforms, set clear meeting and communication expectations, and foster engagement and well-being through initiatives that strengthen virtual team cohesion and organizational culture.
- **Equitable hybrid work access and transparent decision-making** — Agencies reporting limited hybrid compatibility present an opportunity to define equitable eligibility, reassess role flexibility, and promote transparency in hybrid work decisions to ensure fairness and inclusion.
- **Upgrade onboarding and tool access** — Feedback on slower onboarding and reduced innovation points to a quick-win opportunity to acquire or enhance digital onboarding systems and adopt hybrid-friendly collaboration tools like digital whiteboards and virtual brainstorming platforms to strengthen innovation and new employee integration.

Emerging Themes

- **Shift from operational survival to strategic optimization** — Agencies are beginning to explore how hybrid work can enable organizational performance, not just employee flexibility. There's a growing opportunity to link hybrid models with broader goals such as cost savings, efficiency and productivity, and service continuity.
- **Data-driven workforce planning is on the rise but inconsistent** — Some agencies are starting to leverage hybrid work eligibility and participation data for workforce planning, but many still face barriers for consistent data practices and standard definitions.
- **Equity, engagement, and culture are moving to the forefront** — Agencies recognized challenges in equitable access, maintaining organizational culture, and preventing disengagement, indicating a need for intentional and updated policies and practices that go beyond logistics and tools.
- **Enterprise alignment for resilience building** — There is growing recognition that hybrid flexibility enhances continuity, adaptability, and readiness for external disruptions.

Recommendations

Hybrid work best practices

- **Develop standardized hybrid work frameworks** — Create enterprise templates for evaluation tools, training materials, and communications to guide consistent adoption.
- **Strengthen change management adoption** — Establish structured change management processes to identify service delivery gaps and guide transitions.
- **Expand customer self-service and digital access** — Develop shared resources to help agencies redesign service delivery for digital-first and self-service models.
- **Share hybrid “success models”** — Document successful workflows and practices from high-performing agencies as replicable blueprints.

Workforce performance and planning

- **Redesign performance management systems for hybrid work** — Define enterprise-wide hybrid work metrics, structured goal setting, and modern productivity tools.
- **Establish enterprise guidance on performance expectations** — Introduce competency-based metrics emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and autonomy.
- **Integrate hybrid data into workforce planning** — Use hybrid participation data to forecast skill gaps, inform staffing models, and align scheduling practices.
- **Increase transparency in hybrid eligibility decisions** — Create standardized metrics to evaluate hybrid role flexibility and ensure equitable access across functions.

Technology and data

- **Invest in modern collaboration and communication tools** — Enhance access to real-time communication, shared document systems, and virtual team-building platforms.
- **Improve digital onboarding and innovation tools** — Streamline onboarding with hybrid-friendly digital flows and virtual brainstorming tools.
- **Strengthen data literacy and analytics capacity** — Use training and dashboards for HR and planning teams to better analyze and apply hybrid data.
- **Enterprise resource to standardize hybrid metrics across agencies** — Leverage unified data definitions and enterprise data frameworks (via resources such as [HRMS Data Stewards](#), [HRMS Data Definitions](#), [HRMS Support Hub](#)).

Leadership and training

- **Develop targeted supervisor and leadership training** — Focus on hybrid team management, engagement strategies, and equitable evaluation methods. Establish a community of practice for agencies to share insights, tools, and challenges.
- **Expand hybrid technology and change management training** — Provide enterprise-level programs to build digital fluency and adaptive leadership capabilities.

Culture, communication, and equity

- **Reinforce communication norms and team connection** — Implement clear expectations for meeting frequency, virtual check-ins, and informal interactions.
- **Prioritize employee engagement and well-being** — Take actions on employee survey results to address engagement gaps and improve employee well-being.
- **Advance equitable access to hybrid work** — Use data-driven decisions to ensure fairness in eligibility decisions and track diversity and inclusion outcomes.
- **Communicate and measure hybrid impact** — Regular evaluation and share results on hybrid outcomes, including service continuity and workforce resilience.

The background of the slide features a photograph of the Washington State Capitol building, a large neoclassical structure with a prominent dome, situated on a hillside. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green filter. The text is centered over the right side of the image.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Access

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Access (DEIBA)

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Agencies across the Executive Branch share a strong commitment to DEIBA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility), but their ability to put it into practice varies. While intent and learning cultures are strong, progress is slowed by uneven resources, inconsistent measurement tools, and a lack of shared systems to support long-term change.

To make DEIBA efforts sustainable, agencies will need to move beyond isolated initiatives and shift toward a statewide accountability approach, supported by shared tools, leadership engagement, consistent resources, and measurable outcomes. Recent Governor's Executive Orders ([EO 24-04](#), [EO 24-05](#)) will help guide this shift.

The data across questions reveals five major themes:

- Leadership and Culture as Primary Drivers
- Resource and Capacity Constraints
- Uneven Measurement and Data Infrastructure
- Growing Use of Structured DEIBA Tools
- Cultural Awareness Outpacing Structural Change

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Resources and Capacity Matter:** Agencies want to make progress, but limited staffing, tools, and funding slow implementation and affect outcomes.
- **Implementation Drives Impact:** While agencies agree on the importance of DEIBA, inconsistent operational practices, duplicated efforts, and lack of shared systems reduce efficiency and slow enterprise-wide progress.
- **Measurement Ensures Momentum:** Without common metrics and a strong data system, agencies struggle to track results, learn from each other, or scale what works, limiting evidence-based decision-making.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Equity Influences Service Quality:** Uneven DEIBA progress can lead to inconsistent experiences for both employees and the public, which may affect trust and satisfaction.
- **Leadership and Culture Set the Tone:** Agencies with strong leadership support and a culture of learning are more successful in advancing DEIBA and improving both internal operations and service quality.
- **Structured Tools Improve Consistency:** Where agencies use shared DEIBA tools and frameworks, outcomes are more predictable, equitable, and aligned with enterprise expectations.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on the tools and initiatives used to advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility (DEIBA) within their workforce. This included assessing measurable improvements linked to these tools or efforts, identifying barriers to effectiveness, and highlighting resources needed to better support employees participating in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or Business Resource Groups (BRGs). Agencies also shared insights on strategies for fostering psychological safety, managing conflict, and promoting intercultural competence, including the use of assessment tools to gauge progress. Collectively, this feedback provides a comprehensive view of current practices, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening an inclusive and equitable workplace across the state workforce.

Drivers

- **Leadership commitment** — Active engagement by executive management and senior leaders sets organizational tone, legitimizes DEIBA work, and links inclusion to performance. Leadership commitment was reported both as a key resource to support internal and statewide employee resource groups' participation and a barrier for positive DEIBA impacts.
- **Psychological safety and inclusive culture** — While almost all agencies reported adopted practices to foster psychological safety, teams with higher psychological safety report stronger team collaboration and teamwork, innovation, and employee engagement and morale, which leads to improving government responsiveness and internal efficiency.
- **Structured tools and data-informed approaches** — Adoption of consistent frameworks (e.g., [Intercultural Development Inventory or IDI](#), [Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory or BEVI](#), [Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks or GDEIB](#), custom equity tools) clarifies goals, tracks measurable outcomes, and embeds accountability. While large and medium agencies reported DEIBA tools are highly effective accelerators, *access is uneven* — smaller agencies lack capacity or infrastructure to implement them.
- **Symbolic and practical inclusion signals** — Simple, symbolic, and visible efforts such as pronouns and visible DEI statements and training participation are *low-cost but high-impact* catalysts for culture change.
- **Efficiency gains in operational performance** — Agencies, primarily large- and medium-size agencies, collected or analyzed recruitment data on applicant diversity, engagement, or inclusion see clearer improvement paths and better resource allocation. Operational efficiency gains are most apparent when DEIBA is integrated with operational performance, not treated as a standalone initiative.
- **Enterprise alignment with government goals** — Agencies aligning DEIBA work with broader government goals (such as HR modernization, employee engagement, culture transformation) accelerate overall performance improvement. Enterprise alignment remains an emerging but critical driver for system-level improvement.

Constraints

Structural barriers

- **Measurement challenges and data gaps** — Agencies struggle to define or measure “measurable improvements” tied to DEIBA and lack of data systems to link outcomes to interventions. Measurement and data gaps make it difficult to demonstrate impact, leading to underinvestment or skepticism from leadership.

Capacity barriers

- **Small and medium agencies face capacity and resource limitations** — Small- and medium-size agencies indicated lack of staffing, funding, and time to meaningfully engage in DEIBA activities or apply advanced tools. This appears to be a structural inequity that undermines statewide consistency.
- **Cross-agency collaboration remains sporadic** — DEIBA work often occurs in pockets or committees without integration into core operations or alignment across functions and is often fragmented or siloed in its implementation. Furthermore, smaller agencies often operate in isolation and lack coordinated mechanisms to share tools, templates, or best practices from larger agencies. Currently, there is no unified, enterprise-wide DEIBA framework or performance measures in the state executive branch, which leads to fragmented interpretations and implementations at the agency level and hinders comparability and scaling. This also suggests a missed opportunity for shared learning and efficiency gains.

Cultural barriers

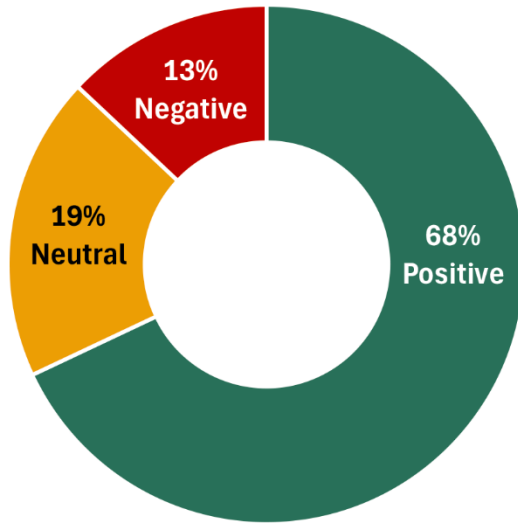
- **Inconsistent executive buy-in and lack of enterprise alignment** — Leadership commitment varies widely across agencies based on the qualitative survey responses. Without clear top-down advocacy, DEIBA work lacks authority, priority, and sustained funding, which directly limits pace and depth of implementation.
- **Overemphasis on optics (performative inclusion)** — Some DEIBA actions are perceived as symbolic or compliance-driven and not tied to measurable change with several agencies reporting inconsistent understanding or awareness of DEIBA goals, which can lead to skepticism and fatigue.

Opportunities

- **Develop a statewide DEIBA measurement and accountability framework** — Inability to consistently measure DEIBA outcomes was the second-most reported gap that limits DEIBA's role in improving government efficiency. The enterprise opportunity is to create a consistent enterprise-wide system to measure progress, track outcomes, and align reporting across agencies using shared metrics, tools, and definitions.
- **Leadership accountability** — Leadership engagement and model commitment is a key driver of success for DEIBA initiative implementation. Increase leadership accountability by building DEIBA structures that require active leadership participation and accountability for DEIBA goals, such as executive performance measures or DEI scorecards, resulting in reduced resistance in the organization.
- **Cross-agency collaboration and resource-sharing and access equity** — Many agencies use the same DEIBA tools but do so in isolation. Establishing a coordinated mechanism for agencies to share templates, equity tools, and success stories (especially between large and smaller agencies) will be the most actionable opportunity for policy alignment. Broaden the use of validated assessment tools (such as [IDI](#), [GDEIB](#), [Cultural Intelligence Scale or CQS or CQ](#), [BEVI](#)) to build internal analytics capacity to track cultural competence growth over time.
- **Integrating DEIBA into core operations and policy** — While most agencies reported improvements in tying DEIBA efforts with policy development and implementation, half of the agencies still reported facing limited resources or budget for DEIBA initiatives, and a few agencies indicated facing difficulty integrating DEIBA into existing policies and practices. This indicates that agencies still consider DEIBA as separated from their general work, and its priority is determined by the time, effort, and funds allotted by their agency. There is a clear opportunity for agencies to move their DEIBA efforts beyond HR or training efforts and embed equity impact assessments into budgeting, procurement, and policy design.

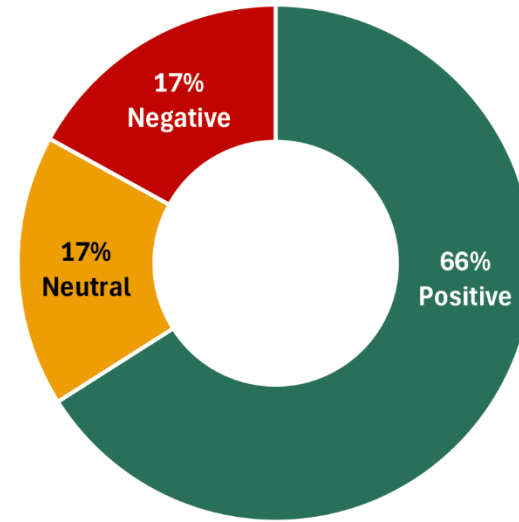
DEIBA-related engagement dimension ratings from 2024 [State Employee Engagement Survey](#) (data collected in October 2024)

Diversity



The Diversity index measures employee sentiment around agencies valuing diversity, treating people fairly, and benefitting from a diverse workforce.

Involvement & Belonging



The Involvement & Belonging index provides important feedback on how employees feel about their level of input on decisions that affect their work, psychological safety, and feelings of belonging.

Emerging Themes

- **Desire for standardization versus one-size-fits-all** — Many respondents recognized the benefit of shared tools or best practices for DEIBA efforts such as supporting employee participation in Employee/Business Resource Groups. Considering the wide spectrum of sizes, business lines, missions, cultures, capacity, and risk context of state agencies, enabling adaptability at the agency level can lead to successful adoption compared to mandating a rigid, universal approach. This underscores the importance of modular, configurable frameworks rather than monolithic mandates.
- **Smaller agencies report unique “scale disadvantage”** — Observed from overarching responses, small- and medium-size agencies jointly face a scale disadvantage: resource constraints, limited staff, and fewer opportunities to pool investments in DEIBA tools.
- **“No measurable improvements yet” is a frequent, yet legitimate, response** — Some agencies explicitly shared that they had not observed measurable outcomes yet, often citing lack of evaluation metrics, competing priorities for budget and resources, or resistance to cultural or organizational change. This also suggests the reality — and cautions against unrealistic expectations — that many agencies are in early stage of DEIBA efforts and still overcoming a delayed curve of time, efforts, and data infrastructure before visible outcomes.

Recommendations

Washington state government’s DEIBA success relies on systemic alignment — connecting leadership accountability, policy standardization, and equitable access to tools and data. The recommended actions aim to support a phased enterprise roadmap that reduces fragmentation, increases equity in capacity across agencies, and embeds DEIBA as a measurable, operational competency statewide.

Governance and Policy

- **DEIBA is not a standalone initiative** — Embed it as a foundational component of operational excellence, organizational performance, and equitable service delivery.
- **Develop an enterprise-wide DEIBA policy framework** — Establish a consistent set of statewide DEIBA definitions, performance indicators, and reporting expectations to ensure comparability and accountability across agencies.
- **Establish tiered implementation models by agency size** — Ensure all agencies can meet core DEIBA goals regardless of size or budget by creating scalable policy guidance (e.g., “DEIBA Essentials” for small agencies, “DEIBA Advanced” for large agencies) to reduce inequities in implementation capacity.

Data and Technology

- **Standardize DEIBA metrics across HR, training, and operations systems** — Align HR Management System (workforce data), Learning Management System (training data), statewide Employee Engagement Survey, and agency program data to establish/standardize statewide DEIBA metrics and capture consistent DEIBA indicators regularly. This can enable cross-agency comparisons and shared accountability.
- **Develop equity impact analysis templates and toolkits with equity analytics training** — Streamline the compliance process and encourage consistent practices, providing standardized digital templates that guide agencies through evaluating policy or program equity impacts. Improve data use for decision-making, communication, and building agencies' internal capabilities to interpret DEIBA data responsibly and avoid misapplication or overgeneralization.

Leadership and Learning

- **Incorporate leadership DEIBA accountability and strengthen enterprise leadership development program** — Link DEIBA progress to performance evaluations for agency senior leader and executive teams to strengthen leadership accountability and culture of follow-through. Provide structured leadership coaching focused on inclusive management, psychological safety, and intercultural competency.

Equity and Capacity Support

- **Fund shared access to tools and create technical assistance hub** — Expand access to reliable DEIBA measurement instruments (such as [Intercultural Development Inventory or IDI](#)) for all agencies with training for program administrators. Creating a centralized DEIBA support hub to provide on-demand technical assistance (such as reasonable accommodation) can also ensure consistent guidance and reduce duplication across the enterprise.

The background of the slide features a photograph of the Washington State Capitol building, a large neoclassical structure with a prominent dome, situated on a hillside. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green filter. The text 'Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency' is centered over the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency

Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Agencies are working through major changes in FY 2025 — new executive order deadlines, a hiring freeze, layoffs, and updates to recruitment policies and business processes. These overlapping demands require careful planning, strong coordination, and more time to ensure quality outcomes.

Washington is one of 26 states leading the shift to competency-based hiring. Agencies support this change but need more guidance, training, and tools to apply it effectively. Even though job postings have dropped by about half due to the hiring freeze, applications have increased — likely due to tech and federal layoffs, along with broader access created by removing degree requirements.

Recruitment is strongest in Administrative Services and Financial Services. However, specialized and high-demand roles — like fiscal analyst, registered nurse, program specialist, and science and engineering positions — remain difficult to fill. These areas will need targeted recruitment strategies and continued support for long-term workforce planning.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Competing Priorities Create Pressure:** Agencies must balance hiring freezes, policy changes, layoffs, and executive order requirements, making it hard to plan strategically.
- **Competency-Based Hiring Is Promising but Still Developing:** Washington is ahead in this work, but agencies need clearer guidance, training, and best practices to implement it efficiently.
- **Hard-to-Fill Roles Need Special Attention:** Highly specialized and high-demand jobs require tailored recruitment strategies and more support.
- **Better Use of Data Can Strengthen Workforce Planning:** Expanding analytics and guidance can help agencies make more informed hiring and staffing decisions.
- **Standardized Processes Show Success:** Strong recruitment in administrative and financial roles suggests that some practices can be scaled to support broader efficiency.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Staffing Stability Strengthens Service Delivery:** Filling core administrative and financial positions helps ensure continuous services to the public.
- **Specialized Roles Affect Service Quality:** Difficulties recruiting nurses, engineers, and analysts can impact service delivery, program operations, and public support.
- **Broader Hiring Practices Expand Opportunity:** Competency-based hiring and the removal of degree requirements help widen applicant pools and support equity in hiring.
- **Agencies Are Adapting to Market Conditions:** Even with fewer job postings, agencies are attracting more candidates, showing that responsive strategies can maintain service capacity.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on their recruitment and hiring activities, including efforts to transition job descriptions from traditional degree requirements to competencies or skills-based criteria. Agencies shared what facilitated this transition, the barriers encountered, and any observed changes in the applicant pool or other benefits resulting from these efforts. Feedback also addressed the use of recruitment data to identify points in which underrepresented candidates may be falling out of the hiring process and the actions taken to improve equity in hiring. Agencies provided insights into the resources needed to support effective recruitment, the candidate skill categories most critical to their operations, and the involvement of recruiters in strategic workforce planning.

Additionally, agencies reported on how recruitment teams have been managing hiring priorities during a hiring freeze, their resource and training needs, and the top five positions for which they most actively recruited. This feedback offers a comprehensive view of current recruitment practices, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening equitable and strategic hiring across the state workforce.

Drivers

Agency responses captured recruitment success and efficiency drivers that demonstrate how state agencies are modernizing recruitment practices through collaboration, leadership, process innovation, data-informed decision-making, and inclusive hiring. The shift from credential-based to skills-based hiring directed by executive order and legislative mandate is not only expanding job access and equity, but it also improves process efficiency, adaptability, and long-term workforce sustainability across the state government.

Legislative and policy changes advancing competency-based hiring

- The major recruitment transformation forces in FY 2025 were the issue of [Executive Order \(EO\) 24-04](#) “Increasing Employment Opportunities in Washington State Government” and [SHB 2216](#) “Reducing barriers to state employment by eliminating two-year and four-year degree requirements that are unnecessary.”
- These legislative and policy changes codified the state’s focus on increasing employment opportunities and promoting workforce equity. By shifting from credential-based to skills-based qualifications directed by the EO and statute, agencies have started pivoting their recruitment practices to focus on fairer and more inclusive hiring practices that are also better aligned with actual operational needs.

Process optimization and recruitment efficiency

- Agencies are improving efficiency by streamlining recruitment workflows to enhance coordination and remove bottlenecks.
- The focus on process optimization (e.g., adjusted interview processes, increased use of skills-based assessments) reflects a broader shift toward continuous improvement and adaptive talent management. These process improvements can reduce hard-to-fill vacancies and improve operational resilience, especially during hiring freezes.

Broader and more diverse talent pools

- The removal of degree requirements and a shift toward skills-based hiring have started showing results of expanding access to qualified talent.
- One-third of the agencies reported larger, more diverse applicant pools and increased candidate quality in FY 2025. This also highlights the enterprise's efforts to carry out the work to create a more inclusive and capable workforce that better reflects public needs.

Enhanced candidate experience and talent pipeline development

- Despite the hiring freeze and budget constraints, over one-third of agencies reported continuing initiatives on improving candidate experience, through multipronged approaches such as anti-bias training for hiring managers, clearer communication, better outreach, and recruitment marketing to attract and retain top talent.
- 40% of large agencies also reported working on creating internal talent pools. By cultivating both external and internal talent pipelines, agencies can ensure readiness to fill critical positions and strengthen their reputation as employers of choice.

Leadership and collaboration driving strategic workforce alignment

- 45% of agencies reported successfully transitioning to writing job descriptions using competencies or skills in place of degree requirements. Strong leadership commitment and close collaboration between HR teams and hiring managers are central to advancing skills-based hiring and long-term workforce efficiency.
- When leaders champion recruitment modernization and HR partners collaborate closely with operational managers, job descriptions can better reflect actual competencies/requirements and agency needs. This alignment also promotes shared accountability, integration of hiring strategies with overall workforce planning, and ensures that recruitment reforms are both strategic and sustainable.

Data, tools, and analytics enabling strategic and skills-based workforce planning

- Access to structured tools and workforce data is accelerating the successful implementation of skills-based hiring and strategic workforce planning across the enterprise. The use of analytics enables data-driven decision-making to evaluate hiring metrics, guide sourcing strategies, forecast staffing needs, and inform recruitment equity.
- Resources such as competency tool kits and standardized templates provide clarity and consistency in defining role requirements. Together, these tools and insights help agencies align recruitment practices with long-term workforce goals, improve hiring quality, and strengthen overall organizational efficiency.

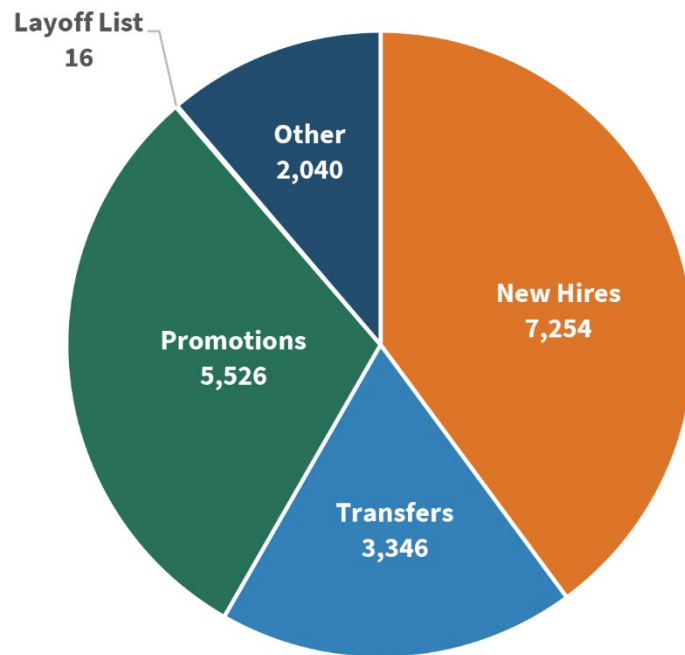
Tailored recruitment strategies based on agency size and occupational focus

- Recruitment success reported across agencies is strongly influenced by organizational size and occupational needs. Larger agencies benefit from structured recruitment processes, centralized HR technology, dedicated recruitment teams, and broader position diversity that enable effective

hiring focused on law enforcement/public safety, IT/information systems, and engineering/technical job categories in FY 2025.

- In contrast, smaller agencies leverage adaptability and closer proximity to decision-makers to accelerate hiring concentrated on administrative, clerical, and general operations positions.

FY 2025 Executive Branch Appointments



Data notes:

- “Other” appointments include personnel actions such as probationary and project appointments, and the transition of successful hires from nonpermanent to permanent employment.
- “Transfers” are appointments for a **permanent employee-initiated** move from one position to another position within or between employers in the same class or different class with the same salary range maximum, or same salary standard and/or same evaluation points.
- “Promotions” are appointments of a permanent employee to a job class with a higher salary range maximum that results in a salary increase.
- “New Hires” are appointments of an employee into state service.
- The Statewide Layoff List is administered by the Washington State Department of Enterprise Service and provides employment opportunities throughout general government. The list is available to employees who have:
 - Been laid off or are scheduled for layoff.
 - Accepted a voluntary demotion in lieu of layoff.
 - Accepted through layoff a less-than-comparable position.
 - Remained in a position reallocated to a lower salary range.

Constraints

The primary constraints limiting agencies transition to competency-based hiring practices in FY 2025 include inconsistent frameworks, lack of tools and data capacity, and agency capacity and resource barriers.

- **Concerns over consistency and alignment for skills-based hiring**
 - Over one-third of agencies that faced challenges in transitioning to skills-based hiring reported concerns over inconsistent new practice, uncertainty about which job skills should be prioritized.
 - Regardless of transitioning status, additionally, agencies also reported training needs for data analytics, strategic planning, and candidate sourcing skills.
 - The lack of clarity and resources can slow the shift toward competency-based recruitment or lead to uneven implementation across the enterprise.
- **Lack of staff capacity, tools, technology, and expertise to support competency-based hiring model** — About one-third of in-transition agencies also reported their progress was further limited by insufficient staff capacity, tools, technology, and internal expertise. This gap further hinders data-driven decision-making, weakens accountability, and slows modernization efforts.
- **Limited data analytic capacity for equity tracking** — 60% of the agencies reported not using recruitment data in FY 2025, and half of them cited the need for integrated systems that include diversity metrics and clear ethical standards for collecting and managing demographic information. This underlines the difficulty some agencies are facing in monitoring equitable hiring progress without consistent data practices or benchmarks.
- **Recruitment disruptions due to budget and capacity constraints**
 - Agencies also reported recruitment efforts have been hindered by budget limitations, hiring freezes, and shifting organizational priorities, leading to interruptions or cancellations in critical hiring efforts, including:
 - 41% of positions in the technical/engineering-related job category,
 - 38% of positions in the law enforcement/public safety-related job category, and
 - 34% of positions in the administrative or clerical-related job category.
 - Smaller agencies often have fewer specialized classifications and leaner HR capacity, which may also slow or constrain recruitment progress.
 - Even during budget and hiring freezes, agencies must continue to prioritize essential services to the public. Public health and safety roles are exempted from the hiring freeze to ensure these critical positions remain staffed. Agencies must document hiring exceptions for other mission-critical roles to maintain continuity of core services.

Opportunities

- **Leverage the executive order to deepen hiring equity and access — [EO 24-04](#)** promotes skills-based and equity-centered hiring that also provides a strong policy direction for systemic improvement. Agencies can use this momentum to review outdated qualifications, ensure pay equity, and expand access for historically underrepresented groups to build a workforce that better reflects the diverse communities the state government serves.
- **Strengthen workforce data insights for strategic decision-making —** Agencies have an opportunity to build stronger data analytics capabilities to inform recruitment strategy, monitor equity outcomes, and measure hiring effectiveness. Investments in analytic training, standardized data tools, and integration of diversity metrics into applicant tracking systems would allow agencies to turn data into actionable insights, improving both efficiency and accountability.
- **Expand training and professional development for recruiters —** Recruitment teams can benefit from expanded professional development to strengthen strategic planning, analytics capability, and candidate sourcing skills. Building internal expertise and utilizing statewide forum for shared resources will improve process efficiency, enable proactive workforce planning, and reduce reliance on external hiring resources.
- **Align hiring practice with available technology**
 - Two-thirds of agencies reported that they do not analyze recruitment data and roughly half report that they need tools to help with data analysis.
 - Most small agencies noted struggles to use data to improve recruitment — not because they lack a data practice, but because they don't have tools that can give meaningful insights with such small turnover numbers. Many don't have HR or recruitment staff with the skills to analyze data and contract with central HR small agency services for support. Small agencies that rely on central HR services also don't use the Online Recruiting System (OLRS) directly, which further limits their ability to make data-informed recruitment decisions.
 - Streamlined technology integration would help agencies standardize data collection, track outcomes in real time, and enhance efficiency and transparency.
- **Shift away from a one-size-fits-all recruitment approach**
 - The distinction in job category clustering reported by agencies' FY 2025 recruitment efforts suggests that a one-size-fits-all recruitment approach may not be equally effective.
 - Larger agencies can benefit from streamlining approvals and classification processes for specialized roles, while small agencies can utilize simplified, flexible recruitment frameworks and template-based tools to reduce administrative burden and accelerate hiring processes.

Emerging Themes

- **Recruitment outcomes are sensitive to external changes** — The reported FY 2025 recruitment outcomes showed both job fills reliability (146 job classes reported filled positions) and process instability (30 job classes reported positions put on hold or cancelled). This suggests that recruitment success is achievable but also sensitive to environmental changes such as new recruitment initiatives, budget deficit, or hiring freeze.
- **Data and analytics are seen as both a gap and a gateway** — There is growing recognition across agencies that data-driven insights are key to equitable and efficient hiring. However, the current analytical capacity clearly lags demands. Agencies see data analytics as a “gateway” capability for strategic workforce planning and equity tracking, yet cite lack of tools, training, and staffing as persistent barriers. This signals a need for statewide investments in analytics capability-building.
- **Recruitment innovation emerging during fiscal constraints** — Despite hiring freezes and budget reduction, agencies are innovating within constraints by streamlining processes, improving candidate experience, and focusing on long-term planning. This indicates a shift from reactive to strategic recruitment thinking, with process improvement and workforce forecasting becoming key survival tools during resource limitations.
- **Expanding equity through data transparency and collaboration** — Agencies increasingly recognize that achieving true equity requires visibility into hiring data and active collaboration across HR, DEIBA, and operational teams. There is a growing appetite for metrics, benchmarking tools, and ethical guidance for demographic data use. This represents a shift from compliance-based equity efforts to data-driven, evidence-based inclusion strategies.
- **Budget deficit influences hiring and collective bargaining** — The current budget deficit and associated hiring freeze, initiated in December 2024, are constraining enterprise workforce planning and may impact the upcoming collective bargaining cycle. State HR has tightened criteria for supporting class plan changes, focusing on mission-critical roles, low-retention issues, or inequities concerns, which have resulted in fewer proposals being submitted by agencies for the upcoming bargaining cycle.

Recommendations

Policy and process

- **Enhance internal competency-based hiring guidelines** — Utilize statewide guidance and resources. Since the end of the reporting period (June 30) additional guidance has been provided in the OFM [Executive Order 24-04 Toolkit](#) around two equity competencies that can support this work as well.
- **Incorporate important candidate “soft” skills** — Include skills such as “People and Community Engagement” and “Leadership and Strategy” into job descriptions and postings.
- **Enhance technology integration, data analysis, and data reporting guidance:**
 - Streamline hiring processes and use consistent metrics to improve outcomes and enable clear, standardized reporting across the enterprise.
 - Leverage the [Online Recruiting System](#) (OLRS) Analytics and Reporting dashboard available to HR staff upon request from Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to support recruitment process evaluation at each hiring step (i.e., Application, Eligible, Referred, Interviewed, Offered, and Hired).
- **Establish standard practice for assessing candidates:**
 - Align business processes and practices for compliance and to ensure consistent and equitable practices. Examples include not disqualifying candidates for residence location or not prioritizing degrees over experience when the role does not legally require a degree.
 - Audit candidate assessment, hiring process, and qualification requirements for unnecessary barriers.

- **Develop tailored strategy based on recruitment capacity:**

- Large agencies can enhance technology integration (e.g., applicant tracking systems, analytics dashboards) to better manage high-volume and specialized recruitments.
- Small agencies can leverage strategic hiring, workforce planning, and outreach to strengthen capacity where resources are limited.
- Streamlining internal approvals and business processes that create bottlenecks.

Technology and data

- **Review of Online Recruiting System (OLRS) analytics and reporting data** to identify areas for improvement in the recruitment cycle.

Leadership and training

- **Provide trainings for hiring managers on competency-based hiring** to include removing degrees guidance and recruitment data analysis.
- **Targeted training in strategic hiring, workforce planning, and outreach** to strengthen capacity where resources are limited.
- **Formalize leadership and HR development programs** to reinforce consistency and data-informed decision-making.

Enterprise collaboration and practice

- **Create case studies of agency success and comparative analysis** of other states implementing a form of competency-based hiring.

The background of the slide features a faded, teal-tinted image of the Washington State Capitol building, a large domed structure with classical architectural details, set against a backdrop of a dense forest of evergreen trees.

Retention Strategies and Workforce Stability

Retention Strategies and Workforce Stability

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

In FY 2025, most employees who left state service did so because of pay and limited advancement opportunities, followed by retirement and career changes. While pay is still the top reason people leave, agencies say flexible work options — like telework or flex schedules — have helped them keep employees, showing these strategies are effective for retention.

Turnover has led to higher workloads, loss of institutional knowledge, and sometimes delays in service delivery. This highlights the need for stronger retention strategies, succession planning, and knowledge transfer to protect service quality and operational stability. Workforce stability is strengthened when agencies support work-life balance, strong organizational culture, and open communication. Larger agencies benefit from formal onboarding and professional development; smaller agencies focus more on job security and adaptability.

By combining statewide exit survey results with agency-level insights, agencies can develop more targeted retention strategies. Addressing data gaps — especially in smaller agencies — and making sure leaders use this feedback will help promote equitable retention, improve stability, and support consistent service delivery.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Use Exit Data to Guide Action:** Exit survey data can help shape policy updates, supervisor training, job redesign, and retention strategies to better use human resources.
- **Structured Onboarding Supports Stability:** Larger agencies' onboarding and development programs help preserve institutional knowledge and reduce inefficiencies caused by turnover.
- **Better Data Improves Planning:** Using both statewide surveys and agency-level interviews provides stronger insights, but small agency data gaps limit full enterprise understanding.
- **Plan for Continuity:** Embedding succession planning and knowledge transfer into leadership practices reduces disruptions and strengthens operational stability.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Turnover Impacts Service Delivery:** Staff departures increase workloads and sometimes delay services, showing the direct connection between workforce stability and customer service.
- **Retention Strategies Help Maintain Service Quality:** Flexible work and work-life balance support employee retention, helping agencies sustain reliable service delivery.
- **Equity and Consistency Matter:** Closing data gaps — especially in smaller agencies — helps ensure fair and effective retention across the enterprise, supporting equitable service to all communities.
- **Culture and Communication Build Stability:** Strong organizational culture and transparent communication help keep staff engaged, leading to more consistent and effective delivery service.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

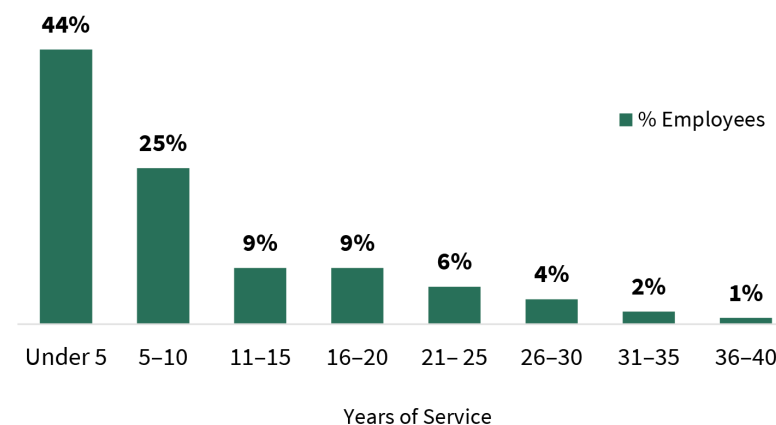
Agencies were asked to provide feedback on employee retention, including the top three reasons employees leave their organizations. They shared information on programs or practices implemented to address these key retention challenges and discussed how turnover has affected their ability to meet service delivery timelines and maintain the quality of services provided. Agencies also provided insights into the factors that have most influenced workforce stability within their operations. In addition, feedback covered the sources of employee exit information, including how this data is gathered and analyzed, to better understand turnover trends and inform strategies for improving retention. Collectively, this input helps highlight both the challenges and effective practices related to sustaining a stable, capable, and high-performing workforce.

Drivers

- **Flexible scheduling and well-being initiatives** — Flexible scheduling, work-life balance initiatives, and well-being programs are among the most consistently cited retention enablers. These measures directly address emotional and lifestyle-related attrition, improve employee satisfaction, and sustain workforce continuity across all agency sizes.
- **Positive organizational culture and transparent communication** — These were reported by half of the agencies as two strong contributors to stability. A culture of trust, engagement, and transparency make a difference in workforce retention and strengthen the impact of other retention strategies to foster long-term career commitment.
- **Strategic compensation and development programs** — Agencies are increasingly aware of compensation challenges and are adopting limited pay-based strategies, professional development, and promotional pathways to attract and retain talent. Medium and large agencies, with greater budget flexibility, are more likely to deploy these approaches effectively. By combining incentives with clear advancement opportunities, agencies can counter perceptions of limited career mobility and strengthen workforce stability.

Executive Branch Employees' Length of Service (FY 2025)

- 56% of the Executive Branch permanent and seasonal workforce has 5 or more years of service.
- Typically, state employees with 5 years of service have met the minimum number of years required (vested) to be eligible for pension benefits.



Data source: HR Management System ([Retention - Office of Financial Management](#) page). Data includes permanent or intent to become permanent and seasonal employees only (not include non-permanent employees).

- **Effective onboarding and training for knowledge retention** — Effective onboarding and continuous training programs, particularly in larger agencies, help mitigate the operational disruptions caused by turnover. They preserve institutional knowledge, ensure service continuity, and reduce performance gaps despite workforce changes.
- **Data-driven retention for continuous learning** — Agencies are leveraging multi-source data collection models, such as statewide Exit

Surveys, interviews, and focus groups, to understand turnover drivers and guide retention actions. Larger agencies lead in universal use of the statewide Exit Survey for comparability and visibility with statewide results, while smaller agencies face data blind spots due to employee data privacy protections that limit insight coverage. When exit and engagement data are regularly integrated into leadership routines, agencies demonstrate stronger responsiveness, improved policy adjustments, and sustained workforce equity.

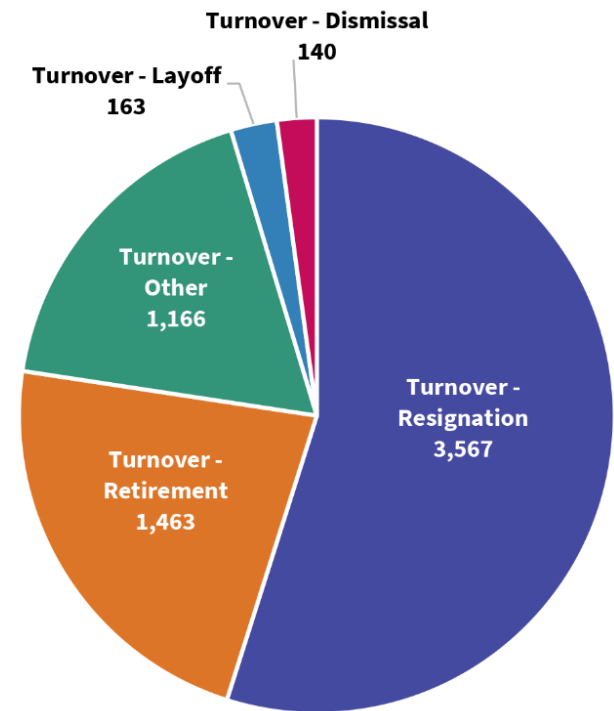
Constraints

- **Budgetary and compensation limitations** — Budgetary constraints remain the most pervasive retention barrier reported by agencies. While close to half of agencies recognize that pay is a primary driver of turnover, many also lack pay flexibility to offer compensation incentives. This forces greater reliance on non-monetary strategies, such as flexible scheduling.
- **Limited career advancement opportunities** — Career advancement opportunities serve as key retention driver for state government workforce. Reported as the top job satisfaction improvement factor by 12% of employees from the 2024 [State Employee Engagement Survey](#) and the primary attrition reason in FY 2025 reported by 13% of employees from the [State Employee Exit Survey](#). One-third of agencies also indicated that the lack of promotional opportunities or clear career pathways continues to drive employee departures. When employees leave for advancement elsewhere, it signals that structural limitations such as flat hierarchies or limited mobility restrict internal growth even when agencies provide development programs.
- **Structural and inherent turnover** — Certain workforce characteristics, such as reliance on nonpermanent positions or retirement-prone demographics, create turnover that is largely unavoidable. Temporary or limited-term roles in large agencies and retirements in smaller agencies contribute to attrition levels that standard retention programs cannot meaningfully reduce.
- **Operational strain due to staffing shortages** — Persistent staffing shortages undermine service delivery, increase workloads, and heighten burnout among remaining employees. The resulting cycle of stress and reduced efficiency makes it difficult to sustain quality standards. Smaller agencies are particularly affected, as they have less capacity to redistribute tasks or absorb workload fluctuations.
- **Knowledge loss and continuity challenges** — Half of the agencies reported that “loss of institutional knowledge or expertise” directly impacted their ability to meet service delivery timeline and quality. Agencies without robust knowledge-transfer mechanisms face prolonged productivity gaps. Loss of experienced staff also limits service continuity and slows performance recovery.

Opportunities

- **Strengthen low-cost engagement and retention frameworks** — Agencies can build structured, repeatable retention frameworks that don't rely on large budgets. Formalizing stay interviews, peer recognition, and mentorship programs can reinforce connection, morale, and belonging at minimal cost. Standardizing these approaches across agencies can also ensure consistent employee experience and supports statewide workforce resilience.
- **Build talent pipelines and succession planning systems** — High-attribution roles due to market competition or mature workforce call for forward-looking workforce strategies. Agencies can strengthen succession planning through mentorship and proactive recruitment partnerships, such as internships or education pipelines. These measures preserve institutional knowledge and ensure continuity in critical functions.
- **Improve knowledge retention and workload management** — Knowledge loss and workload imbalances can be mitigated by cross-training employees, creating shared resource pools, and documenting key processes. Streamlining workflows and reallocating tasks across teams ensures capacity balance and improves efficiency and resilience, particularly during periods of turnover.
- **Conduct ongoing process evaluation to improve efficiency and resilience** — There is a strong opportunity to use turnover and engagement data not just to understand attrition but to evaluate and refine operational processes. By analyzing how turnover affects service delivery, workload balance, and performance, agencies can identify process inefficiencies and redesign workflows to enhance resilience. Integrating workforce analytics with process improvement, such as Lean or continuous improvement frameworks, can help agencies modernize operations while reducing stress on remaining employees. This creates a continuous feedback loop between people data and process design, improving both workforce and service efficiency.

FY 2025 Executive Branch Turnover



Data note: “Other” turnover includes miscellaneous separations such as end of appointments, voluntary/involuntary disability separations, reversions, death, conditions not met, and abandonment of positions.

Emerging Themes

- **Flexibility is the new stability** — Flexible work arrangements that include hybrid schedules, flexible hours, and alternative workweeks have become the most universally effective retention lever across agency size and demographic groups.
- **Organizational size shapes adaptability** — Turnover impacts all agencies across the enterprise, but scale determines how well organizations absorb disruption. Larger agencies benefit from formalized training and onboarding programs to navigate increased workload and knowledge loss, while smaller agencies face higher operational and continuity strain from individual departures.
- **Culture and communication as retention anchors** — A transparent, supportive culture and effective communication emerge as key differentiators in sustaining morale, mitigating turnover, and enhancing employee engagement.
- **Data-driven exit practices are expanding, but not equally** — Agencies are increasingly integrating exit data into decision-making, though collection and usage vary widely by size. Larger agencies standardize exit practice to inform actions, while smaller agencies face gaps or rely on ad hoc methods.

Recommendations

Policy and process

- **Strengthen workforce retention through structured, low-cost engagement**
 - Agencies can significantly improve morale and connection without major budget impact by institutionalizing low-cost engagement tools such as stay interviews, peer recognition programs, and mentorship opportunities. These approaches identify emerging concerns early, strengthen interpersonal connection, and foster belonging.
- **Leverage onboarding trainings and job security messaging**
 - Strengthen onboarding processes to connect new hires to agency culture and equip them for success.
 - Emphasize the stability and job security of public service as a competitive advantage in talent markets.
- **Build talent pipelines and succession plans for workforce sustainability**
 - Develop proactive recruitment and knowledge-transfer strategies, especially for high-stress or high-turnover roles.
 - Partnerships with educational institutions and internship programs can cultivate future talent while structured mentorship supports succession and retirement transitions.

Technology and data

- **Standardize and modernize turnover and exit data infrastructure**
 - Adopt a minimum statewide exit-data standard for all agencies, supplemented with local qualitative add-ons, such as interview templates or short pulse follow-ups.
 - Create a synchronized guide with a set of standards to align agency internal tools with statewide turnover metrics for process evaluation and identify efficiency improvements and strengthen workforce resilience.
 - Provide targeted support for small agencies by creating shared resources and collaboration networks to improve capacity in retention tracking and mitigate turnover impacts.

Leadership and training

- **Develop visible and equitable career pathways and internal mobility**
 - Employees seek professional growth, not necessarily promotion to management. Not everyone wants to manage people; they do however want to grow deeper in knowledge and broader in experience.
 - Agencies should build visible and equitable career progression maps; define and communicate career development paths; offer cross-functional projects, mentorship, and job shadowing; and provide access to training and certifications that broaden experience.

- **Empower managers as retention leaders**

- Equip managers and people leaders with tools to manage engagement, wellbeing, and burnout — not just performance. Provide coaching on early warning signs of disengagement and burnout and empower supervisors to take proactive retention actions.
- Train HR teams and people leaders to convert exit themes into targeted retention practices (e.g., supervisor coaching, workload balancing, career pathways).

Workforce culture and well-being

- **Foster a culture of wellbeing, belonging, and transparent communication**
 - Build and sustain a culture that prioritizes employee wellbeing, inclusion, and open communication by investing in wellness initiatives, peer support networks (e.g., agency internal Employee Resource Groups and statewide Business Resource Groups), and psychological safety training.
 - Strengthen trust and engagement through consistent, two-way communication channels that give employees a voice, reinforce organizational values, and connect daily work to the agency's mission and purpose.

The background of the slide is a dark green, semi-transparent image of the Washington State Capitol building, which is a large, domed structure with a central tower, situated on a hillside surrounded by a dense forest of evergreen trees. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Succession Planning for Sustainable Leadership

Succession Planning for Sustainable Leadership

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Succession planning is essential for keeping agencies stable and prepared when key employees leave due to retirement, resignation, or unexpected events. It involves identifying and developing future leaders so agencies can quickly and smoothly fill critical roles. This protects operations, preserves institutional knowledge, and reduces disruption.

When done well, succession planning supports long-term workforce readiness, aligns with strategic goals, and helps agencies stay resilient. It also improves morale and retention because employees see opportunities to grow, develop, and advance into leadership roles.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Supports Continuity:** Succession planning helps agencies keep operations running smoothly when key roles become vacant.
- **Protects Institutional Knowledge:** Agencies with formal plans are better at retaining knowledge and maintaining productivity.
- **Aligns to Strategy:** Strong succession planning supports long-term workforce sustainability by aligning leadership development with agency goals.
- **Barriers to Progress Efficiency:** Budget limits, lack of shared frameworks, limited internal candidate pipelines, and insufficient leadership development slow progress.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Stable Leadership Sustains Service:** When leadership transitions are smooth, customer service remains consistent and reliable.
- **Leadership Development Boosts Morale and Capability:** Training, coaching, and mentorship help employees grow and improve service quality.
- **Early Career Engagement Builds Future Leaders:** Encouraging leadership development early builds confidence and long-term commitment.
- **Clear Career Pathways Improve Retention:** Structured development pathways help retain top talent and maintain service continuity.
- **Culture of Growth Builds Trust:** Agencies that invest in leadership development build a motivated, adaptable workforce that supports strong service and public trust.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on their succession planning and knowledge transfer methodologies, including how these approaches are being used to prepare for leadership transitions and ensure organizational continuity. Agencies shared insights into whether their current succession planning strategies have had a measurable impact on organizational performance and the continuity of service delivery. Feedback also highlighted the biggest challenges agencies face in preparing for leadership changes, as well as the strategies they believe would be most effective in strengthening succession planning efforts. Collectively, this input provides a detailed view of current practices, obstacles, and opportunities for enhancing leadership readiness and sustaining a high-performing workforce across the state.

Drivers

Mentorship and coaching initiatives

- Highly selected across most agency types, especially small agencies, large agencies and governmental operations agencies.
- Suggests recognition of the value of personal guidance and institutional knowledge transfer as a key driver.

Leadership development programs

- Strong interest in expanding programs in both large and medium agencies and across human services and governmental operations agencies.
- Reflects a drive to build structured skills pipelines for future leaders.

Formal career pathways

- Selected by small agencies, governmental operations agencies, and natural resources/recreation agencies.
- Indicates motivation to provide clarity and predictability in advancement opportunities.

Early career engagement

- Moderate interest, particularly in large agencies and governmental operations agencies.
- Shows a driver to cultivate leadership interest and experience from the beginning of employees' careers.

Technology for knowledge management

- Lower adoption but recognized in small agencies, large agencies, and governmental operations agencies.
- Demonstrates a driver to retain institutional knowledge and support leadership continuity through systems.

7.1%

Managers as share of workforce (FY 2025)
 ↓ from 8.8% fifteen years ago
 Even as total staffing increased

51

Median age of managers
 6 years older than non-managers
Experienced, but aging leadership

9.5 yrs

Average employee tenure
 6.2 yrs median
Deep institutional knowledge to sustain

Constraints

Resource limitations

- Smaller agencies struggle to expand formal programs due to budget constraints.
- Technology adoption is low in many agencies, reflecting possible funding or infrastructure limitations.

Workforce size and capacity

- Medium agencies and education agencies show lower engagement in early career programs and technology use, suggesting limited capacity and resources to implement comprehensive ongoing strategies.

Cultural or structural barriers

- Agencies with fewer selections for “early career engagement” or “formal career pathways” may face internal barriers, such as limited internal mobility or hierarchical rigidity.

Uneven strategy adoption

- Some strategies, such as technology for knowledge management, are not widely embraced, highlighting potential resistance to new methods.

Opportunities

High leverage areas

- **Mentorship and coaching:** Universal appeal across agency types; can be expanded quickly with relatively low cost.
- **Leadership development programs:** High potential in large agencies and human services agencies to create structured growth pipelines.
- **Formal career pathways:** Opportunity to improve transparency and retention in agencies that currently lack structured progression.

Early career engagement

- Medium-to-large agencies can leverage this to grow future leadership capacity, particularly in governmental operations and human services.
- Identify and develop skills and competencies to prepare employees for advancement into leadership roles in which traditional education requirements have been reduced or removed.

Technology-enabled knowledge management

- Untapped opportunity, especially in smaller agencies and human services agencies, to capture institutional knowledge and support continuity planning.

Cross-agency best practices

- Agencies can share successful mentorship, career pathways, and leadership program approaches, especially where smaller agencies show high interest but limited resources.

FY 2025 Improvement

65.85%

of agencies now have at least some form of succession planning, up from 41.5% in FY 2024.

Emerging Themes

The overarching executive branch theme is **building a structured, scalable, and sustainable succession ecosystem** that balances proactive planning, knowledge retention, and leadership engagement while efficiently leveraging shared resources.

Succession planning is critical to maintaining the state's core work, as leadership continuity underpins organizational stability, service quality, and employee engagement. A strong focus on leadership development ensures that as seasoned managers retire or transition, agencies are prepared with capable successors who can carry forward the mission, values, and operational excellence of state government.

Recommendations

Effective succession planning builds strong leadership pipelines, develops internal talent, and preserves institutional knowledge. Implementing key strategies helps agencies manage workforce transitions and prepare the next generation of leaders efficiently.

- **Promote the OFM succession planning toolkit** — Utilize the Office of Financial Management’s [Succession Planning Toolkit](#) that offers resources for succession planning, including a toolkit, templates, and case examples. The toolkit guides organizations through identifying critical positions, assessing future needs, and developing talent internally.
- **Support smaller agencies with accessible tools**
 - Provide simplified templates and practical strategies to streamline succession planning efforts.
 - Tailor resources to fit agencies with limited capacity or budget.
- **Identify critical roles beyond leadership**
 - Pinpoint essential positions and specific organizational needs, not solely leadership roles.
 - Assess potential talent for these critical functions to ensure continuity.
- **Formalize informal practices**
 - Standardize knowledge transfer, mentorship, and job shadowing programs.
 - Capture and share institutional knowledge to accelerate skill development and succession readiness.
 - Structured programs provide targeted growth opportunities for high-potential employees.
- **Facilitate resource sharing across agencies**
 - Encourage cross-agency partnerships to share leadership development and training resources.
 - Expand access to professional development while reducing costs, particularly benefiting smaller agencies.
- **Develop potential successors using assessment tools**
 - Leverage 360-degree feedback, performance appraisals, and leadership assessments.
 - Create individualized development plans to nurture high-potential employees.
- **Secure leadership commitment**
 - Ensure agency leaders provide strong buy-in and ongoing support.
 - Leadership engagement is critical to successfully implementing and sustaining succession plans, especially where resources are limited.



Employee Engagement and Its Role in Government Performance

Employee Engagement and Its Role in Government Performance

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Engagement priorities are similar across agencies of all sizes. Communication and visible leadership are the top focus areas, followed closely by growth opportunities, flexibility, and inclusion. Larger agencies tend to rely on structured change management frameworks, while smaller agencies focus on having the right time, tools, and resources to sustain engagement efforts.

Clear, consistent communication and visible leadership are the strongest drivers of engagement. When agencies provide predictable communication, practical tools, and steady executive attention, engagement becomes an ongoing cycle of connection, action, and measurable progress.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Structured Frameworks Boost Consistency:** Agencies using models like [Prosci ADKAR](#) or Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) report more predictable progress and better alignment, reducing duplication of effort.
- **Leadership Visibility Helps Coordination:** Regular, transparent updates from leaders keep staff focused and reduce confusion.
- **Tools and Templates Make Execution Easier:** Standardized resources allow agencies, especially smaller ones, to act efficiently without reinventing processes.
- **Accountability Keeps Momentum:** Regular check-ins and progress tracking reinforce continuous improvement and prevent engagement initiatives from stalling.
- **Resource Gaps Remain a Challenge:** Limited staff capacity and uneven access to enterprise tools make consistent implementation harder across agencies.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Transparency Builds Trust:** Agencies with clear internal communication can better deliver reliable and trustworthy information to the public.
- **Feedback Loops Improve Responsiveness:** Using “You said / We did” approaches strengthen credibility and mirrors good customer service practices.
- **Manager Communication Supports Service Reliability:** Supervisors who translate enterprise messages into actionable team guidance ensure consistent public service.
- **Hybrid Work Clarity Helps Continuity:** Balancing flexibility with clear expectations improves both employee engagement and service availability.
- **Shared Learning Enhances Consistency:** A statewide engagement toolkit and regular check-ins could help standardize communication and service quality across agencies.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on their employee engagement efforts, including the specific areas their organization has focused on to strengthen engagement. Agencies shared the actions they have already taken, or are planning to take, based on insights from their 2024 Employee Engagement Survey results. In addition, agencies provided information on the change management methodologies they have adopted and found effective in driving successful outcomes, as well as the resources that would be most helpful to support ongoing change management initiatives. This feedback offers a comprehensive perspective on how agencies are fostering engagement, implementing meaningful changes, and leveraging strategies and resources to support continuous improvement and workforce development.

It should be noted that while the Employee Engagement Survey referenced in this report was conducted in October 2024, the survey timeframe falls within Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025).

Drivers

Agency feedback identifies clear drivers of successful engagement efforts, centered on communication, visible leadership, and structured follow-up. The strongest performing agencies combine consistent communication practices, defined change management frameworks, and accessible tools to translate survey results into sustained action.

Communication and leadership visibility

- Transparent and regular communication from leaders improves trust, connection, and alignment with agency goals.
- Transparency builds trust with regular, candid communication from executives fostering credibility and psychological safety.
- Empowering HR or engagement leads within divisions helps maintain consistent actions.

Structured accountability and follow-through

- Agencies that formalize engagement action plans with clear owners and timelines show stronger sustainability.

- Recurring and regular action reviews keep engagement visible and prevent survey fatigue.
- Documented action tracking builds institutional visibility and reinforces leadership accountability.

Defined change management frameworks

- Formal change management processes help agencies sustain improvements and align engagement with strategic goals.
- Structured framework adoption such as [Prosci ADKAR](#) or [PDCA Cycle \(Plan-Do-Check-Act\)](#) enables agencies to integrate engagement with operational and strategic goals to enhance predictability and repeatability of improvement cycles.

Toolkit-based enablement and resource accessibility

- Practical toolkits and templates enable quick action and consistent implementation across teams.
- Turn-key toolkits help small agencies overcome staff capacity limitations. Agencies with access to templates reporting act faster on survey results.
- Standard templates speed implementation and simplify cross-agency comparisons.

Constraints

Across enterprise and agency sizes, agencies cited the same concerns over competing priorities, limited time, and insufficient tools to sustain engagement momentum.

Limited staff capacity and competing priorities

- Across agencies, engagement efforts compete with day-to-day operational demands, leaving limited time for follow-through.
- Staff capacity limits the ability to conduct post-survey planning or implement improvements.

Absence of standardized tools and templates

- Agencies reported rebuilding materials rather than using shared, consistent resources.
- Lack of shared toolkits increases duplication of effort and delays action.
- For smaller agencies, inconsistent resources also limit comparability and equity across agencies.

Lack of defined accountability and ownership

- Engagement plans lack defined accountability and clear ownership, making follow-through inconsistent.
- Engagement success depends on individual initiative rather than systemized processes.
- Large agencies face complexity across divisions, making standardized engagement processes and accountability structures difficult to sustain.

Inconsistent use of change management frameworks

- Formal change management frameworks such as Prosci ADKAR or Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) are used inconsistently across divisions and agency sizes.

Smaller size agencies face limited change management expertise and insufficient tools for structured follow-through.

- Lack of standardized methods reduces continuity and alignment both within the organization and across the enterprise.

Leadership transition disrupts continuity

- Engagement actions often depend on informal leadership efforts rather than documented processes.
- Leadership transitions are commonly cited as a factor disrupting continuity of engagement priorities, especially by large agencies.
- New leadership often resets engagement priorities that impact consistent communication and follow-through.

Limited access to employee engagement survey (EES) results for small agencies

- Small agencies encounter data barriers with too few survey responses to receive agency-specific results (because of data protections against identifying individual responders).
- Without agency-specific results, small agencies are forced to focus on more fundamental engagement strategies instead of taking a comprehensive engagement approach.

Opportunities

Across the enterprise, opportunities concentrate on practical enablement: reusable toolkits, visible progress tracking, and concise training that translates immediately into action.

Develop and deploy an enterprise engagement action toolkit

- As a high-demand, quick win across all agency sizes, pre-built templates can shorten start-up time, reduce duplicated efforts, and help maintain engagement focus.
- Create shared templates for communication, action planning, and progress tracking (e.g., emails, FAQs, manager 1:1s).
- Standardizing communication and reporting help agencies sustain engagement momentum.

Expand training in project and change management frameworks (e.g., [Prosci ADKAR](#), [Plan-Do-Check-Act \[PDCA\]](#))

- Offer practical, applicable learning opportunities to strengthen project management and change management disciplines.
- Provide practical examples and case studies tied to engagement use cases in the government contexts.

Create a quarterly engagement check-in and accountability model

- Agencies instituting quarterly reviews maintain better engagement continuity.
- Establish consistent routines such as simple action logs to document owners, timelines, and barrier reporting to monitor and sustain engagement progress.

Establish a communication best-practices library

- Centralize proven communication strategies and resources provide a high-value, quick win to help enterprise leaders and managers sustain engagement momentum.

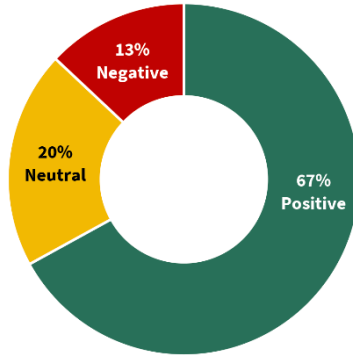
- Publish sample scripts, messaging cadences, and guidance for feedback loops.

Provide a small-agency engagement starter pack

- Provide small agencies with quick access to simple toolkits and plug-and-play resources.
- Develop two-to-three-page starter kits with simplified templates and sample engagement actions.
- Focus on minimal-time, high-impact activities that can be executed without large teams.

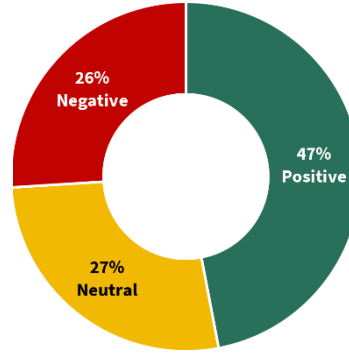
Engagement dimension ratings from 2024 [State Employee Engagement Survey](#) (data collected in October 2024 – first quarter FY2025)

Engagement



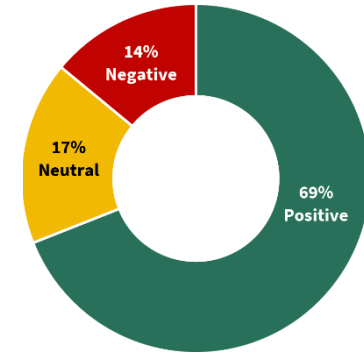
The four item Engagement index measures the extent to which employees are motivated to work hard and care about their work. This is the most important factor to improving the performance of our workforce.

Change Management



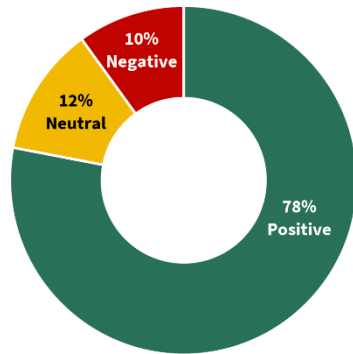
The Change Management index measures the extent to which an agency/ institution effectively makes and adapts to changes within their organization.

Communication



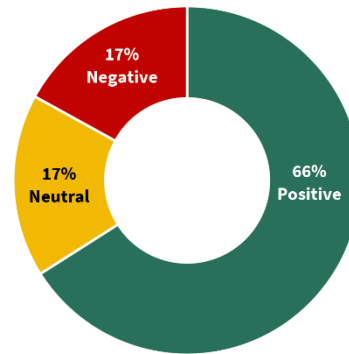
The Communication index measures the overall openness of the communication environment and effectiveness of employee to management communication and management to employee communication.

Manager Effectiveness



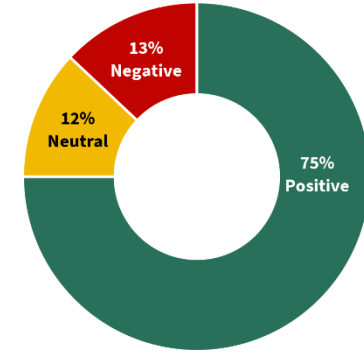
The Manager Effective index measures employees' overall assessment of managerial effectiveness, both task and people oriented.

Involvement & Belonging



The Involvement & Belonging index provides important feedback on how employees feel about their level of input on decisions that affect their work, psychological safety, and feelings of belonging.

Work-Life Balance



The Work-Life Balance index measures the ability to manage and effectively resolve conflicts between work and non-work/life responsibilities.

Emerging Themes

Clarity, consistency, and visibility are the strongest levers for sustaining engagement. When agencies have predictable communication, practical tools, and steady executive attention, engagement becomes a continuous cycle of connection, action, and measurable progress.

- **Communication clarity and focus** — Agencies value transparency but seek simpler, more focused messaging.
- **Leadership visibility** — Direct and authentic executive presence remains the strongest engagement driver.

- **Manager enablement** — Supervisors need practical guides to facilitate engagement discussions and follow-through.
- **Hybrid work integration** — Flexibility and trust-based management positively correlate with engagement scores.
- **Peer collaboration** — Agencies want expanded forums to share effective practices and tools.

Recommendations

Policy and process

- Develop an Enterprise Engagement Toolkit with templates and action guides.
- Set a quarterly review cadence aligned to strategic planning.
- Designate a named Engagement Lead in each agency to own progress updates.

Technology and data

- Launch an Engagement Dashboard to visualize actions and outcomes.
- Provide a self-service data hub for peer comparison and progress tracking.

Leadership and training

- Offer manager micro-training on feedback and recognition.
- Deliver project management and change management (PDCA, Prosci ADKAR, Bridges Transition Model, etc.) mini courses for agency engagement leads.
- Integrate engagement continuity modules into leadership onboarding.

Enterprise collaboration

- Expand Communities of Practice to share resources and success stories.

The background of the slide features a faded, teal-tinted image of the Washington State Capitol building, which is a large, domed structure with classical architectural elements, situated on a hillside surrounded by a dense forest of evergreen trees.

Labor Relations Collaboration and Support

Labor Relations Collaboration and Support

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

The OFM Labor Relations and Compensation Policy Section (LR&CP) plays a key role in helping agencies manage labor relations, especially for the 46 agencies with union-represented employees. Strong labor relationships support collaboration, agency success, and government efficiency. Agencies rely on LR&CP for guidance on contract administration, collective bargaining, compensation data, and union communication. They also want more access to toolkits, training, and updates on labor law, arbitration, and Public Employee Relations Committee activities.

Challenges include limited understanding of labor processes, successor bargaining, and Memo of Understanding administration, along with the need for better communication with union representatives.

Opportunities exist to improve transparency and efficiency by making resources easier to access and continuing training, outreach, and Labor Relations Roundtables. One-on-one consultation and targeted support in grievances, mediation, and arbitration also strengthen agencies' ability to manage labor relations effectively.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Centralized Expertise Improves Operations:** OFM LR&CP leadership in contracts, bargaining, and grievance handling helps reduce errors and streamline agency processes.
- **Structured Guidance and Tools Help Consistency:** Toolkits, templates, training, and updates enable agencies to apply labor practices efficiently and uniformly.
- **Proactive Support Prevents Problems:** One-on-one guidance and Roundtables help agencies manage complex issues before they escalate, improving operational stability.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Consistent labor relations information supports informed leadership decisions and alignment across agencies.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Stable Workforce Supports Services:** Effective labor relations reduce conflict and turnover, helping agencies maintain staffing for reliable service delivery.
- **Collaboration Boosts Responsiveness:** Strong union relationships enable agencies to address workforce and service challenges more effectively.
- **Transparency Builds Trust:** Clear guidance and accessible resources help ensure consistency and improve service delivery.
- **Equitable Practices Support Customers:** Standardized support and training promote fair treatment of employees, which indirectly supports equitable and consistent public services.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on their labor relations activities, including how frequently they engage in processes such as demands to bargain, Union-Management Communication Committee (UMCC) or Labor-Management Communication Committee (LMCC) meetings, grievances, and union information requests. Agencies also shared the labor relations activities for which they most often require assistance and identified the top five areas in which they feel additional guidance would be most beneficial. In addition, agencies provided input on the formats or approaches that would be most helpful for receiving labor relations support. This feedback provides a comprehensive view of current labor relations practices, challenges, and support needs, helping to inform strategies for more effective and accessible guidance across the state workforce.

In the state agency federated environment, agencies work with labor unions in consultation and collaboration with the OFM Labor Relations and Compensation Policy (OFM LR&CP) team, which provides statewide labor relations oversight. OFM LR&CP is responsible for the negotiation and administration of over 30 unique collective bargaining agreements and two health care agreements on behalf of the governor with union-represented employees and nonstate employees. These agreements determine the compensation and terms and conditions of employment for approximately 60,000+ state employees and 50,000+ publicly funded service providers (Adult Family Home providers, Child Care Providers, Language Access Providers) and determine health care funding for approximately 100,000 state employees and 130,000 school district employees. Also, this section creates fiscal projections used during collective bargaining and is responsible for developing equitable interpretations and applications of compensation and benefit components of labor agreements.

Drivers

- **Core labor relations support**
 - Agencies rely on OFM State HR Labor Relations and Compensation Policy (LR&CP) for contract administration, successor collective bargaining preparation and participation, handling demands to bargain, compensation data support, and supporting other labor-related activities.
 - The level of support requested varies based on the size of the agency and the volume and complexity of issues affecting the employees represented.
- **Guidance and communication** — Continued guidance is needed on communicating with union representatives, providing notice on mandatory bargaining subjects, and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) interpretation to ensure consistency and compliance.
- **Capacity building and resources** — Agencies seek toolkits, templates, training, and reference materials to strengthen internal labor relations capacity and standardize practices.
- **Information sharing and collaboration** — Agencies value ongoing updates on Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) activities and processes, labor law changes, and arbitration decisions delivered through one-on-one consultations and Labor Relations Roundtable meetings.

29

Labor Unions Representing
State Employees

32

Collective Bargaining
Agreements (CBAs)

59,533

Represented Executive Branch
Employees Covered in CBAs

Constraints

- **Internal expertise in labor relations processes** — Agencies report gaps in understanding Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), contract administration, and successor collective agreement preparation and participation.
- **Management training on labor relations matters** — Agencies consistently expressed interest in managers and supervisors training and receiving updates and communication on labor relations matters.
- **Communication and relationship building** — Agencies responded with a need for assistance in improving communication and relationships with union representatives.

Opportunities

- **Enhance communication and resource visibility** — Improve communication regarding the accessibility of existing labor relations resources, including the OFM public-facing website and Human Resource Professional Portal.
- **Expand training and outreach** — Labor relations communication can be enhanced through training, information sharing, and outreach, with the goal of promoting greater transparency and collaboration.
- **Support application of labor relations best practices** — Improvements in communications and collaboration will support agencies in applying labor relations concepts more effectively and efficiently.

Emerging Themes

- **Differentiated support needs between large and small agencies** — Large agencies tend to operate independently, seeking role-based or strategic consultation, while smaller agencies rely heavily on Department of Enterprise Services – Small Agency Services or OFM LR&CP for direct support. This highlights the need for a two-tier support model: strategic consultation for large agencies and hands-on guidance for smaller ones.
- **Strong preference for practical, actionable resources** — Agencies value toolkits, templates, and one-on-one consultation over general workshops, emphasizing a need for resources that provide immediate, tangible application rather than broad concept learning. This indicates that actionable guidance offered by ready-to-use tools and topic-focused consultations address individual agencies' needs more directly than group learning sessions.
- **Desire for greater transparency, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across agencies** — Agencies seek more visibility into negotiation and decision-making processes and greater opportunities for peer learning. This underscores a statewide interest in two-way communication, shared learning, and consistent labor relations practices across agencies.

Recommendations

- **Ongoing collaborative support in labor relations** — Continue to support and collaborate with the agencies on labor relations matters, including one-on-one consultation, representation related to demands to bargain, grievances, mediation, arbitration, and PERC actions, etc.
- **Strengthen labor relations capacity through updated training and toolkits** — Review existing OFM labor relations training materials and toolkits to improve the accessibility of existing labor relations resources.
- **Foster collaboration and alignment through shared forums and communication** — Continue with the Labor Relations Roundtable sessions to provide best practices and standardize enterprise practices.

The background of the slide features a faded, teal-tinted image of the Washington State Capitol building, a large domed structure with classical architectural details, set against a backdrop of a dense forest of evergreen trees.

Legislative and Policy Impacts on Workforce Efficiency

Legislative and Policy Impacts on Workforce Efficiency

Topic Summary

Summary of Agency Feedback

Statewide policy implementation could be stronger with shared tools, consistent communication, and collaborative learning. Right now, uneven engagement, limited evaluation capacity, and fragmented implementation are slowing enterprise progress. Resource limits and competing priorities make it harder for all agencies to move forward consistently.

Centralized support, structured evaluation, and shared learning can help agencies build capacity, stay aligned, and improve the overall effectiveness of policy implementation.

Government Efficiency, Customer Service, and Workforce Experience Insights

Government Efficiency Insights

- **Centralized Support Strengthens Operations:** Shared tools, structured evaluation, and coordinated learning help agencies implement policies more efficiently.
- **Data Drives Better Decisions:** Tracking policy impacts and monitoring outcomes helps improve compliance and workforce planning.
- **Clear Leadership and Coordination:** Clear messaging, accountability, and alignment with legislative intent ensure consistent policy application across agencies.
- **Operational Stability Matters:** Early implementation, proactive engagement, and larger agencies' capacity advantages support steady, enterprise-wide progress.
- **Addressing Constraints Accelerates Results:** Tackling uneven engagement, resource gaps, and fragmented approaches improves adoption and statewide efficiency.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience Insights

- **Consistency Supports Service Delivery:** Uniform application of policies ensures fair and predictable outcomes for the public.
- **Collaboration Improves Responsiveness:** Sharing knowledge across agencies helps streamline processes and enhances service reliability.
- **Continuous Improvement Builds Effectiveness:** Learning from early adopters and using feedback loops improves how policies meet workforce and operational needs.
- **Capacity Building Benefits Public Service:** Targeted support and shared learning help agencies execute policies effectively, which indirectly improves service quality for constituents.

Analysis of Drivers, Constraints, and Opportunities

Agencies were asked to provide feedback on the implementation of recent legislative and policy changes that have a direct impact on the state workforce. These changes influence how agencies manage, support, and plan for their employees across a range of HR functions. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) serves as the primary legal authority guiding these policies and underpins many of the state's human resource management practices and workforce strategic priorities. By gathering agency perspectives for the executive branch, we can better understand the operational effects of these mandates and ensure alignment between policy intent and practical application across the enterprise.

Feedback requested for:

- [ESSB 5793](#) Relating to Paid Sick Leave (2024 Session)
- [ESSB 5424](#) Concerning Flexible Work for General and Limited Authority Washington Peace Officers (2023 Session)
- [E2SHB 1213](#) Paid Family and Medical Leave (2025 Session)
- [SHB 1308](#) Access to Personnel Records (2025 Session)

Drivers

Proactive engagement and awareness

- Agencies are actively assessing impacts on policies, processes, and operations.
- Internal policy updates, strengthened communication, and targeted training demonstrate broad engagement with legislative and operational changes.
- Leadership involvement, legal consultation, and planning guidance reflect accountability and alignment with compliance requirements.

Stability and continuity in operations

- Minimal reported disruptions in leave usage or operational outcomes indicate stable management practices.
- Slight improvements in employee satisfaction or flexibility suggest the intended benefits of policies are beginning to materialize.

Capacity and infrastructure advantages

- Larger agencies, and those with robust HR coordination, are better positioned to pilot initiatives, implement training, and modernize processes.
- Collaboration with Public Records Officers and assigned Attorney General and HR teams supports compliance, equity, and operational efficiency.

Early implementation actions

- Widespread assessment activity and early communication or training investments signal readiness for implementation.
- Some sectors are modernizing systems (e.g. electronic file storage, retrieval updates) to support operational efficiency and legal compliance.

Alignment with legislative intent and workforce needs

- Policies aimed at flexibility, morale, and retention provide motivation for agency adoption.
- Awareness of potential operational impacts encourages proactive management of changes across enterprise agencies.

Constraints

Uneven engagement and implementation

- Many small agencies demonstrate inconsistent participation in workforce legislation or policy initiatives due to lack of staff capacity and knowledge to implement changes.
- Many have completed initial assessments but have not progressed to concrete implementation steps (e.g., training, communication, or leadership direction).
- Experimental or fragmented approaches indicate a lack of standardized enterprise-wide strategies.

Limited evaluation and data capacity

- Smaller agencies, particularly in Education functional group, show limited HR analytics capacity and lack of ability to track or evaluate outcomes.
- Minimal or inconsistent data reporting hinders reliable trend analysis and impact assessment.
- Complex data environments further constrain meaningful interpretation of results.

Resource and capacity constraints

- Smaller agencies and those with high operational demands face limitations in administrative capacity, competing priorities, and staffing coverage.
- Resource disparities result in slower or uneven implementation across the enterprise.

Early or delayed implementation

- Many agencies have not yet begun preparations; some report it is “too early to tell” regarding impacts.
- Minimal observed effects on morale, retention, or policy changes reflect limited or delayed adoption.

Gaps in guidance and enterprise support

- Few agencies have issued formal directives or provided training, suggesting limited enterprise guidance.
- Low engagement in areas like privacy, security, or policy alignment may create compliance and operational risks.

Opportunities

- **Potential to strengthen statewide policy implementation** — Through development of centralized support, shared tools, and coordinated learning.
- **Clear leadership messaging and accountability** — Coupled with promotion of effective practices from early adopters, can reinforce alignment and accelerate adoption.
- **Collaborative learning networks and peer support mechanisms** — Communities of Practice can facilitate cross-agency knowledge sharing, while integrated collaboration among HR, IT, legal counsel, and Public Records Officers can streamline processes and enhance compliance.
- **Structured evaluation and data-driven monitoring** — Critical to assess readiness, track policy impacts, and inform workforce planning, ensuring that stability reflects genuine implementation rather than underreporting.
- **Targeted support** — Tailored to agency size, function, and capacity with feedback loops and continuous refinement of policies and practices, can maximize effectiveness, promote consistent compliance, and enable statewide adoption of best practices.

Emerging Themes

Agency feedback highlights six major themes shaping successful implementation of recent workforce legislation and policy changes:

- **Awareness and readiness** — Agencies broadly understand new requirements but need structured implementation plans with clear timelines and accountability to move from awareness to action.
- **Implementation and consistency** — Efforts remain uneven due to ad hoc approaches. Enterprise-level guidance, templates, and model practices are needed to ensure consistent and efficient compliance.
- **Capacity and resource disparities** — Smaller agencies and certain sectors lack sufficient staffing or technical capacity. Targeted support through shared services, partnerships, or centralized assistance is essential.
- **Communication, training, and support** — Limited enterprise communication and training mechanisms hinder alignment. Coordinated communication and accessible, enterprise-wide learning resources are needed.
- **Governance, privacy, and security** — Inconsistent attention to data protection and oversight increases risk. Strengthened governance and clarified accountability structures are required.
- **Evaluation and continuous improvement** — Few agencies have monitoring systems in place. Enterprise evaluation and feedback mechanisms are necessary to track progress and guide continuous improvement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations address the most common barriers, such as limited time, inconsistent frameworks, and lack of ready-to-use tools, while reinforcing leadership visibility and measurable accountability.

Policy and process

- Develop enterprise-level guidance, templates, training modules, and procedural checklists.
- Provide tailored toolkits or peer mentoring for smaller or resource-limited agencies.
- Standardized communication and workforce preparation frameworks to reduce duplication and confusion.
- Use shared evaluation findings to inform model policies and guidance.
- Surface emerging patterns through feedback loops to identify risks and opportunities.

Technology and data

- Promote cross-functional collaboration for integrated solutions.
- Enhance HR analytics capacity to track policy impacts and workforce outcomes.
- Integrate data into planning and decision-making.
- Enterprise tools such as a content management system for personnel files to ensure standard management, sustainability, efficient management, and user support.

Leadership and training

- Reinforce leadership direction and accountability to drive compliance and consistency.
- Enterprise-level guidance — including standardized communication templates, training modules, and procedural checklists — can help agencies of all sizes build capacity, reduce duplication, and improve consistency.

The background of the slide features a photograph of the Washington State Capitol building, a large neoclassical structure with a prominent dome, set against a backdrop of a dense evergreen forest. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green filter.

Executive Branch Workforce Management Landscape

FY 2025 Executive Branch Workforce Management Landscape

Washington’s executive branch workforce management landscape continues to evolve toward a more adaptive, data-informed, and people-centered public sector.

It must be noted that agencies and the enterprise must continually adapt to internal and external changes to meet business needs. As demonstrated by the history of the past 25 years, cycles of resource contraction and expansion, state and federal legislative changes, technological advancements, workforce management innovations, core mission changes, and generational workforce shifts have driven ongoing adjustments to workforce management to ensure the continued delivery of mission-critical services to Washington residents.

Below are just some examples of significant external impacts over the last 25 years that inform how we got to where we are today:

Major External Impacts on the Workforce 2000–2025 (July 2025)

Period / Year	Event	Impact Type	Workforce Impact
2001–2002	Mild recession	Economic downturn	Washington froze hiring; reduced revenue led to cuts in education, infrastructure, and administrative jobs.
2007–2009	Great Recession	Global financial crisis	Widespread state layoffs and hiring freezes, furloughs, pay raise freezes.
2009–2010	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)	Federal stimulus	Temporarily funded jobs in infrastructure, health, education, and unemployment programs; helped state and local governments avoid deeper cuts.
2013	Federal sequestration / “fiscal cliff”	Budget constraint	Automatic federal spending cuts impacted defense, science, and some agency staff; trickle-down effects on states with federally funded programs.
2020–2022	COVID-19 pandemic	Global health crisis	Public health systems overwhelmed; remote work exploded; surge in unemployment services, IT, contact tracers; long-term shift to hybrid work.
2020–2021	Federal and state hiring freezes	Emergency budget response	Washington froze most hiring under Directive 20-05.
2021–2022	“Great Resignation”	Labor market shift	Millions voluntarily left jobs due to burnout, caregiving, and remote work preferences; hardest-hit sectors: health care, education, hospitality, government.
2022–2023	Post-COVID inflation and tight labor market	Economic stressor	Hiring challenges in public service especially IT, corrections, health care.
2024–2025	State and local budget tightening	Fiscal contraction	Forecasted budget deficits lead to renewed hiring freezes, spending curbs, and prioritization of mission-critical roles.

Workforce Maturity Assessment Model

This report introduces a Workforce Maturity Assessment Model to show how the Executive Branch is progressing across key workforce areas. The model balances strong agency-level practices with the need for enterprise-wide consistency. It supports shared benchmarks and common practices across agencies and helps identify priorities and next steps.

The Workforce Maturity Assessment chart on the next page reflects the initial model used for this report. It was developed using a structured, industry-based approach that draws on established workforce frameworks, organizational priorities, and day-to-day operating realities. The model is intended to evolve and will be adjusted over time as enterprise needs and conditions change.

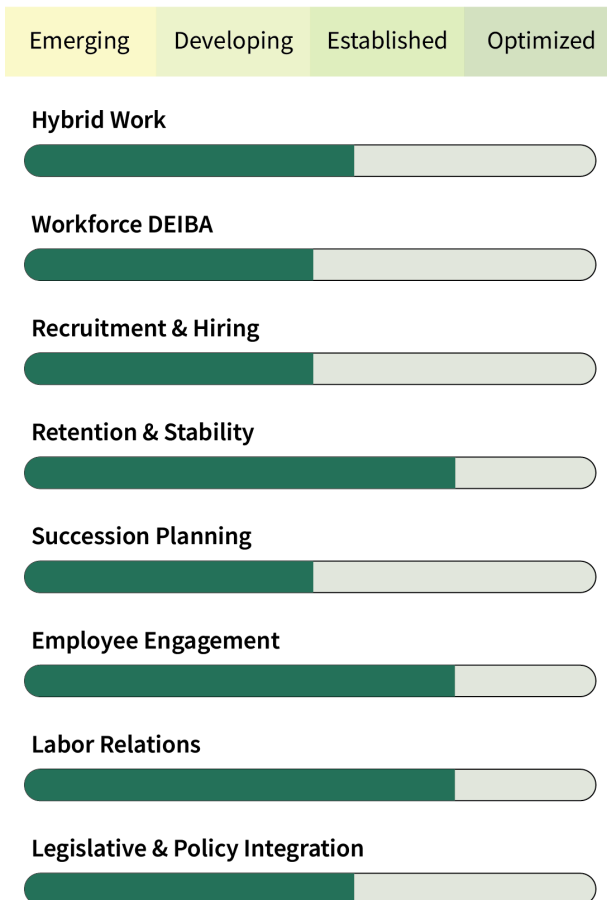
Because the Executive Branch delivers a wide range of services and has a highly diverse workforce in terms of demographics, skills, and experience, this assessment is intentionally high level. It is designed to provide a broad, enterprise-wide view rather than a detailed evaluation of individual agencies or functions.

Topic Area	Emerging	Developing	Established	Optimized
Hybrid Work	Hybrid work is adopted reactively with minimal structure or tracking. Limited tools or guidance for staff.	Hybrid policies and tools in place but inconsistently applied; some performance and engagement measures tracked.	Hybrid model integrated into workforce strategy, measurable benefits in productivity and adaptability.	Fully embedded in organizational culture; data-driven optimization of hybrid models supports agility, inclusion, and resilience.
Workforce DEIBA	Basic awareness and policy statements in place; limited data collection or accountability.	DEIBA initiatives active but siloed, limited connection to performance or policy outcomes.	DEIBA goals are embedded in workforce plans, supported by data and inclusive practices.	DEIBA is fully integrated across systems and culture, continuous improvement through transparency, metrics, and employee voice.
Recruitment and Hiring Efficiency	Hiring processes are manual, lengthy, and inconsistent, limited outreach or DEI focus.	Some digital tools and streamlined processes; moderate responsiveness to hiring needs.	Data-informed recruitment, leveraging workforce analytics and diverse pipelines.	Predictive analytics and agile hiring models support rapid, inclusive, and skill-aligned hiring.
Retention and Workforce Stability	High turnover with no systematic analysis; retention addressed case by case.	Data collection on turnover and retention trends underway; basic strategies in use.	Retention strategies tailored to workforce segments; integrated with engagement and development efforts.	Predictive retention modeling and adaptive policies sustain workforce stability and service continuity.
Succession Planning	No formal succession planning; reliance on ad hoc replacements.	Emergency or role-specific planning in place; limited leadership pipeline development.	Agency-wide succession framework implemented; leadership development embedded.	Continuous succession planning is integrated with workforce analytics, learning, and strategic forecasting.
Employee Engagement and Government Performance	Engagement measured inconsistently, limited connection to organizational outcomes.	Regular surveys and pulse checks; improvement actions identified but unevenly executed.	Engagement initiatives linked to performance, innovation, and retention outcomes.	Engagement embedded in continuous improvement, culture of collaboration and feedback drives performance excellence.
Labor Relations Collaboration and Support	Reactive engagement with labor partners; minimal consultation or shared problem-solving.	Regular engagement but limited consistency or documentation; guidance occasionally sought.	Proactive collaboration with unions; established protocols for communication and issue resolution.	Strategic labor-management partnerships drive innovation, trust, and shared workforce priorities.
Legislative and Policy Impacts on Workforce Efficiency	Reactive compliance with limited monitoring; policy impacts understood after implementation.	Compliance processes structured, early awareness of major legislative changes.	Proactive policy review and alignment; participation in legislative feedback loops.	Anticipatory governance model: predictive assessment of workforce and policy impacts enhances agility and efficiency.

Workforce Maturity Overview

The feedback received from agencies for this report was assessed in relation to the maturity model. For FY25, the findings are Washington’s executive branch agencies are strengthening workforce agility, inclusion, and governance. Established areas such as **Labor Relations**, **Retention**, and **Employee Engagement** show consistent collaboration, structured practices, and measurable links to operational outcomes. Developing areas including **Hybrid Work**, **Recruitment**, **Succession Planning**, and **Legislative and Policy Integration** are advancing but remain uneven across agencies. **DEIBA** progress reflects strong intent but requires standardized metrics and enterprise accountability for sustainable impact.

FY 2025 Workforce Maturity Snapshot



Examples of Strategic Levers to Move the Workforce Forward

Enterprise: Leverage data and analytics to advance equity, strengthen accountability. Align policy, workforce development, performance and retention through data-informed collaborations.

Hybrid Work: Integrate hybrid data into enterprise workforce and inclusion planning.

Workforce DEIBA: Strengthen shared metrics and structural accountability for equity outcomes.

Recruitment and Hiring: Standardize competency-based processes and expand data-driven outreach.

Retention and Stability: Use analytics to tailor retention strategies across workforce segments.

Succession Planning: build structured leadership development pipelines and institutional knowledge transfer.

Employee Engagement: Link engagement metrics to organizational performance and innovation.

Labor Relations: Expand transparency and collaborative frameworks to reach optimized partnership.

Legislative and Policy Integration: Institutionalize proactive workforce impact reviews and predictive policy analysis.

Summary:

Washington’s workforce systems show maturity in employee engagement, retention, and labor collaboration, while recruitment, succession, and policy integration are areas for enterprise investment. Continued focus on cross-agency analytics and leadership pipelines will accelerate progress toward an optimized, equitable workforce model.

Alignment with Governor's Workforce Priorities

Washington's executive branch workforce maturity aligns closely with the governor's enterprise priorities of **Government Efficiency** and **Customer Service and Workforce Experience**. Established systems sustain operational stability, while developing areas, particularly hybrid work and succession planning, represent high-impact opportunities for system-wide advancement.

Workforce Alignment with Enterprise Priorities

Government Efficiency

Core Enablers	Maturity Level	Strategic Impact
Labor Relations	Established	Data-informed collaboration and structured engagement improve efficiency and workforce stability.
Legislative and Policy Integration	Developing → Established	Shared frameworks enhance policy consistency and anticipatory governance.
Succession Planning	Developing	Building leadership pipelines supports long-term continuity and readiness.
Recruitment and Hiring	Developing	Competency-based hiring improves role alignment and response time to workforce needs.

Customer Service and Workforce Experience

Core Enablers	Maturity Level	Strategic Impact
DEIBA	Developing	Equity-centered practices strengthen workplace culture and constituent trust.
Employee Engagement	Established	Structured engagement drives morale, trust, and service responsiveness.
Hybrid Work	Developing → Established	Flexible models sustain continuity; improved analytics can optimize performance and inclusion.
Retention and Stability	Established	Strong retention supports consistent service delivery and workforce reliability.

Overall Workforce Landscape Outlook

Washington's workforce management landscape is progressing from *Developing* to *Established* maturity. Collaboration, engagement, and retention are clear strengths; enterprise-wide consistency and data infrastructure remain developmental priorities.

Sustained leadership attention and strategic investment in shared analytics, inclusive leadership development, and equity accountability will move Washington toward a fully optimized, agile, and equitable workforce, one that enhances both government efficiency and public service quality.

[Hybrid Work](#)

[DEIBA](#)

[Recruitment](#)

[Retention](#)

[Succession](#)

[Engagement](#)

[Labor Relations](#)

[Legislation](#)

[Landscape](#)

Questions?

If you have any questions or need assistance,
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