

Strategies

While strategies to strengthen an organizational culture of engagement within each agency will vary, there are several key actions that agencies should undertake, as described below.

1. Planning

Many of the key elements of an effective planning process are specified in the People and Culture CAP goal; those required actions are noted with an asterisk (*) below:

- ***Leaders set clear goals**** – Engagement starts from the top. If the secretary, director, commissioner, administrator, etc. is the role model of the right behaviors and is engaged and engaging, the culture will permeate throughout the agency. As part of regular organizational and individual performance planning, agency heads, component heads, senior executives, managers, and supervisors will set goals each year to strengthen their organization's culture of employee engagement and other workforce issues. Strengthening an organizational culture of engagement should be included in human capital and local labor management forum goals, and where possible, in the performance objectives established by agency and component level strategic plans.
- ***SES members and managers will be held accountable for fostering engagement through the performance management process**** – SES members and senior managers are the key to an engaged workforce and developing an inclusive culture. SES and managers also need to receive training investment to continue growing as leaders. As they do, they will engage staff and help them learn, grow and develop. Fostering employee engagement and creating inclusive work environments are specific parts of annual performance plans and appraisals for SES members and managers, cascading to mid-level managers and supervisors. Considering SES mobility may make it difficult to map individual actions to results; agencies are given wide flexibility in how to define these requirements, which may include the use of specific EVS question(s) or indices as possible indicators or markers of engagement.
- ***Agencies will take steps to underscore the importance of designing, aligning, and communicating workforce development and management programs that support individual development*** – Being engaged starts with the individual employee feeling empowered to contribute to organizational priorities in such a way that leads to mission accomplishment and employee satisfaction. Performance management plans, individual development plans, rotational assignments, innovation projects, and effective communications are just some of the ways that employees can actively contribute to workforce programs.
- ***Agencies will partner with their labor unions at the national and local level on engagement topics*** – Front-line employees are in the best position to report what will improve their morale and increase engagement. Large-scale efforts require broad buy-in sustained for several years before they become the cultural norm and embedded in how

the agency accomplishes its mission. Labor representatives can provide insight and assist with gaining employee commitment and are expected to be partners in developing plans that achieve results.

- ***Agencies' components and offices will develop local strategies and approaches*** – While building an organizational culture of employee engagement and performance is grounded in leadership support and organizational values/mission, implementation is an inherently local function that often requires changes in practices at the manager and supervisor level. Components and offices should develop strategies to address specific concerns revealed by the review of EVS and HRStat data, as well as pertinent data derived from other sources such as sick leave usage, new hire turnover rates, focus groups, interviews, and pulse surveys. Using the available tools, agencies may identify the organizational units that require the most assistance and then adopt action plans for these units based on their analysis of results.
- ***Agencies will ensure data results are disseminated to the lowest level possible**** – OPM has already issued more than 21,000 EVS reports at the agency, component, and office levels. Agency CHCOs and other senior officials should facilitate and ensure distribution of these reports to all executives, supervisors/managers, and employees at the component and office level, where the data are actionable, within three months of the survey completion date. Local labor management forums are encouraged to use this information as they identify areas for improvement as well. At a minimum, local labor management forums should have access to the Agency Management Reports (AMRs) that summarize the EVS results.
- ***Leaders will ensure agency-wide collaboration and accountability in building a culture of engagement*** – While each component is responsible for determining which EVS items to address, the agency leadership needs to regularly monitor progress, ensure all components are actively incorporating engagement activities and spot trends across the components that may require a more global effort. Union leadership can partner with management by encouraging employee participation in engagement efforts, including taking the EVS and sharing examples of best practices.
- ***Leaders will link employee engagement to agencies' Strategic Planning*** – One of the most critical inputs in the effective execution of organizational strategy is whether you have the people engaged in the ways you need them to be to meet mission objectives. For example, if an organization's strategy is to build a more collaborative, empowered work environment at all levels, organizations should assess empowerment and collaboration metrics to assess risks and to derive action plans. Each agency can include these metrics as a measure of success in the ways that are most relevant to specific mission strategies.

2. Implementing Engagement Actions

- ***Identifying areas in need of attention*** – The EVS data can also identify organizations where leadership, manager, or supervisor issues need to be addressed. While EVS results

are never the final answer, they offer an important place to begin the conversation with managers and employees in trying to identify root-cause issues that may impact morale and organizational performance. Members of the SES and managers should analyze the annual EVS scores for their respective organizations and plan and implement actions they deem appropriate to improve their organizations as reflected among their designated indicators. The planned and implemented actions should be contained within an action plan that is revisited annually based on the subsequent year's EVS results. Although the goal is to improve each organization's EVS and employee engagement scores, it is recognized that variables outside the control of agency leaders can greatly affect an agency's scores.

- ***Identifying successful practices*** – The expansion of EVS breakouts provides most organizations with an ability to identify organizations and even work units that are employing successful practices that lead to a more engaged workforce, many of which can be adapted to other similar organizations. Often these items have no cost and are already being performed by managers within the agency, but have not risen to the agency's attention. These successful practices should be shared and the managers recognized to help spread the good ideas. SES members can go through a basic training on engagement developed internally or from OPM or private vendors. These courses can become part of new supervisor training and a part of the SES performance plans to ensure they are trained on best practices in engaging employees and how to create effective action plans.
- ***Implementing key actions*** – Agencies should look at and implement engagement actions that address component and office-level concerns in addition to actions that cut across the agency. Education needs to occur at all levels of the agency to increase agility and capability, maximizing the potential to create a positive impact that is measurable. The Community of Practice section in UnlockTalent.gov contains research and guidance on successful practices; OPM will update this section based on input from agencies, unions and other contributors.
- ***Sustaining successful approaches*** – Employee engagement is not a one-time project, but an ongoing effort effecting organizational change that results in better organizational performance. As soon as practicable, agencies should develop human capital policies that support their engagement strategies and establish strong outcome metrics for agency mission performance that are driven by engagement and other organizational performance indicators.

3. Reviewing Progress and Feedback

- ***Analyzing EVS and other data*** – Agencies will review EVS results and other human capital data through a variety of management reviews (e.g., Deputy Secretary quarterly reviews, HRStat, SES/manager performance reviews) while labor unions may work with their membership in an effort to understand where the organization's culture of engagement and performance are lagging and why that might be the case.

- ***Communicating and sharing best practice*** – Agency leaders should make every effort to communicate what is working within their agencies and work with OPM to share the results across government when OPM convenes community of practice meetings.
- ***Collecting return on investment data*** – The linkage between investing in employee engagement and mission results will help agencies measure success. Reviewing and making connections between the investment and subsequent results will demonstrate the value of changing the culture. For example, as engagement improves, do customer service measures indicate more satisfied employees or are agencies seeing a decrease in error rates and injuries? These types of measures can be quantified and translated into savings and other mission-related metrics.