



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, March 6, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS

FROM: KATHLEEN M. McGETTIGAN, ACTING DIRECTOR

Subject: Federal Work-Life Survey Results

I am pleased to present the key findings of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Federal Work-Life Survey administered January 25 to March 10, 2017. This memorandum highlights the Federal workforce's use and impact of work-life programs and provides guidance for agencies. OPM's analysis indicates a significant relationship between participation in work-life programs and optimal organizational performance, retention, and job satisfaction. These outcomes emphasize the value of work-life programs as strategic tools that support organizational effectiveness. At the same time, there are opportunities for improvement through expanding support and reducing barriers to utilizing these programs.

BACKGROUND

In early 2017, OPM administered the first Governmentwide Federal Work-Life Survey. The survey serves as a comprehensive and systematic tool in support of OPM's commitment to improve performance by evaluating program effectiveness, as prescribed by the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010, and to assist in developing and sustaining an engaged, innovative and productive workforce. This memo highlights:

- Intended program outcomes that benefit both agencies and employees
- Employee participation and satisfaction with programs
- Current and future needs of agencies and employees
- Barriers that restrict the use of work-life programs

The work-life programs evaluated in the report are grouped into five broad program areas: Telework, Work Schedule Flexibilities, Employee Assistance Programs, Family and Dependent Care Programs, and Worksite Health and Wellness Programs.

OPM provided Chief Human Capital Officers individual agency reports. The full Governmentwide report is available below (508-compliant PDF attached below) and on opm.gov/worklifesurvey.

RESULTS

The online survey was sent to 196,489 employees. A total of 64,474 Federal employees participated in the survey, for a response rate of 37 percent. Key findings include:

Work-Life Programs have a Positive Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Performance

Federal employees that use workplace flexibilities and participate in health and wellness programs are more likely to exceed performance standards and to positively impact other organizational needs: Employees who telework (70 percent) or participate in agency wellness programs (68 percent) were significantly more likely to report ratings that indicate exceeding the standards on their last performance appraisal. Additionally, those who engaged in telework, work schedule flexibilities, or health and wellness programs were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (75 to 79 percent) and expressed greater intentions to remain at their agencies (66 to 68 percent).

Employee satisfaction with the use of workplace flexibilities is high: Employees are satisfied with their use of work schedule flexibilities (80 percent), telework (76 percent), and employee assistance programs (60 percent), but considerably less satisfied with health and wellness programs (38 percent), and family and dependent care programs (30 percent).

Employee Have Current and Future Work-Life Needs

Work-life conflict is a reality for employees: Most employees (83 percent) reported that their professional and personal and/or family life needs to some degree interfere with each other. Also, approximately 1 out of every 3 employees reports having little to no flexibility to manage his or her work schedule, use an alternative work schedule, or take time off to manage personal and family responsibilities.

Employees desire work-life supports to manage professional and personal responsibilities: Multiple survey items asked employees whether they desired to use a variety of work-life programs, if they were available. Across all of the items, nearly all Federal employees (96 percent) expressed the desire to use one or more work-life programs, highlighting the importance of 1) offering a variety of work-life programs, and 2) understanding the specific needs of employees.

Rates of adult dependent care needs are significantly rising: The number of employees with adult dependent care responsibilities (i.e., elders, adult dependents) is expected to double over the next five years (from 14 percent to 31 percent), while the number of employees with child care responsibilities is expected to remain relatively constant (from 36 percent to 33 percent).

Leadership is Critical to Reducing Barriers to Work-Life Program Participation

Supervisors are supportive of employee needs, but not work-life programs: The majority of employees (82 percent) perceive their immediate supervisor as responsive to and understanding of employees' personal needs. However, only about half of employees (47 percent) indicate they experience positive supervisory support for the use of work-life programs.

Lack of program awareness is the primary barrier to the successful use of programs: Lack of awareness of program availability among all employees is a primary barrier to program participation. The lack of perceived supervisory support for programs may be a contributing factor. Increased program awareness and a greater understanding on how to strategically use programs to support organizational and employee needs may help overcome this barrier.

Managers recognize the benefits of telework, but indicate they lack the competencies to effectively manage the performance of teleworkers: The majority of teleworkers in the Federal workforce report their participation in telework improved their performance (75 percent are non-supervisors and 63 percent are supervisors). Likewise, both non-supervisors and supervisors identify "minimizing distractions" and "maximizing productivity" as the most important reasons they telework. However, only half (53 percent) of supervisors agree that telework supports their employees' ability to perform work. This may be due to the fact only 48 percent of supervisors reported being able to manage and assess the performance of teleworkers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results indicate agencies offer a variety of work-life programs and workplace flexibilities, employees are using them, and there is a desire to be able to use more of them. Leadership support is critical to integrating work and personal demands, and the results highlight the need for increased awareness and managerial training.

NEXT STEPS

OPM is committed to helping agencies further advance the various flexibilities to cultivate positive work-life integration, to improve recruitment and retention of talented employees, and to create a high-performance culture. OPM intends to:

1. Create a toolkit for Federal supervisors and leaders.
2. Develop information for work-life coordinators on how to develop, implement, and evaluate their programs using metrics (e.g., track program use and analyze the cost-benefit of programs).
3. Continue to highlight and share agency work-life best practices.
4. Develop a guide highlighting work-life promising practices.

OPM recommends agencies use the results of this survey and evaluate their workplace flexibilities policies and revise as necessary so that policies are effectively providing the maximum work-life balance and meeting the needs of the contemporary workforce. In addition, OPM urges agencies to:

1. Consider ways to improve culture and organizational support for the expanded application of work-life programs.
2. Identify leadership advocates who can assist with strategic planning around work-life programs and link program application to agency mission.
3. Consider various ways to increase awareness, assess employee needs, collect and evaluate data on work-life programs to form the foundation of effective action planning.

If you have any questions regarding the Federal Work-Life Survey, please contact Julie Brill (Julie.Brill@opm.gov) or Corey Adams (Corey.Adams@opm.gov).