

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PEOPLE AND CULTURE

PROCESS

Meetings

The People and Culture Working Group met seven times from September 14 to November 7, 2007. The individuals listed below were invited to various work group meetings to provide their expertise to the group:

- DOT Commissioner Ralph Carpenter
- DOT Human Resource Administrator Vicki Arpin
- Former DOT Commissioner Emil Frankel
- Federal Highway Administrator Bradley Keazer

Leaders of the unions representing the employees of DOT were invited to attend a meeting with the group to discuss the results of the employee survey. Those who participated in the discussion were:

- Paul Krell, Jr. - President, Administrative and Residual Employees Union
- Ronald McLellan - President, Connecticut Employees Union Independent
- Carla Boland - American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
- Christina Burkert - Vice President, Protective Services Employees Coalition

Activities

- Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS)- administered to all employees at DOT. Sixty-three percent of all employees completed this survey.
- Contractor/Consultant Survey - All contractors and consultants on the DOT prequalified list were sent surveys. Twenty-five percent participated.

Other data collected and reviewed by the group included:

- DOT Employee Retirement Eligibility by Bureau
- Employment vs. Funding Charts
- ASHTO Oasis Consulting Report, NCHRP Project 20-24(42) "Guidelines for State DOT Quality Management Systems," June 2006.

FINDINGS

The findings listed below were developed through the testimony, discussions, surveys and data compiled by the Working Group.

I. Culture

- A. OAS Survey exhibits that the ConnDOT has strong human resource fundamentals. Pay and benefits, the amount of work, the standing of the organization in comparison to other places to work, the help and guidance received from supervisors and each other, the skills and knowledge of the workforce, the ability to balance work and life responsibilities are areas perceived by employees and management alike as strengths of the organization.
- B. OAS Survey shows that there is pessimism about strategic planning and the use of performance measures in the organization. The Contractor survey shows that this belief is held by vendors and other stakeholders as well.
- C. Testimony and surveys show that there is not an effective system of communication of the essential mission of ConnDOT and the expectations for the employees or managers. As a result, employees appear to be aligned with their Bureaus and not with an overall mission of the Department.
- D. The opinion of those responding to the Contractor/Consultant Survey was that risk taking and innovation are not respected, rewarded or recognized.
- E. Employees, managers, and vendors responding to the surveys feel that red tape and centralized decision making are the rule resulting in lack of accountability and inefficiency.
- F. All sources reported that employees and managers are afraid to make decisions or take risks to be more efficient.
- G. All sources reported that neither employees nor managers are recognized or rewarded for providing high quality products or services.
- H. The OAS Survey shows that employees feel that ConnDOT is an organization where there isn't much receptivity for change or continuous improvement. Management responses showed they seem more pessimistic about this than staff.
- I. The OAS Survey shows while there seems to be a high commitment to staying with the organization, a higher percentage of managers have more thoughts about leaving than bargaining unit members.
- J. The OAS Survey shows that employees feel that decisions made regarding disciplinary actions and distribution of work are unfair.

II. People

- A. Testimony and data revealed that many experienced staff accepted the Early Retirement Program offered in 2003. This resulted in many promotions of inexperienced staff into supervisory and management positions without the appropriate training or knowledge.
- B. Testimony and data shows that the employment base of DOT is aging rapidly. Retirement eligibility data for the DOT workforce shows that:
 - 12.8% are eligible to retire now
 - 20.9% are eligible in two years
 - 34.5% are eligible in five years

Within the Engineer I Positions:

- 16.7% are eligible now
- 22.5% are eligible in two years
- 31.4% in five years

These findings indicate that a large exodus may occur in the near future, particularly in 2017 when State retirement benefits are renegotiated.

- C. Over the last two years the Governor has recommended and the General Assembly has approved the largest investment in the State's transportation system in more than two decades. While there has been authorization for more employees to be hired in the DOT, there does not appear to be an overall plan of the skills and needs of the work force. In particular, hiring and recruitment of Engineers is challenging and should be a clear focus of DAS and ConnDOT.

Recommendations

1. There needs to be an infusion of talent at the top management level of ConnDOT who can help the Commissioner lead change in the DOT. Further, the Commissioner needs to combine this talent with “Champions” (for change) who are internal candidates that have a deep knowledge of ConnDOT. Establish Leadership Council.
2. Once the Leadership Council is formed, the Commissioner with input of important stakeholders, should develop a clear vision of the strategic priorities of what is important to the organization that all employees can understand and work toward.
 - a. Develop metrics of how ConnDOT will measure itself.
 - b. Empower managers and employees to make decisions and hold them accountable for the achievement of the metrics.
 - c. Transfer appropriate decision making authority and accountability from headquarters to the field.
 - d. Develop a strong Communication Plan to include communication directly with employees regarding strategic priorities.
 - e. Establish a long range plan for skills and needs of the work force. Focus in particular on succession planning.
 - f. Improve brand of ConnDOT by publishing metrics to all stakeholders (daily dashboard on ConnDOT website and Quarterly report) Focus on finite goals and celebrate successes.
3. Implement a system of continuous improvement.
(33 other DOT’s use Baldrige, NQI or NPHQ)
 - a. Develop a program of recognition and “reward” for employees for efficiency and innovation.
 - b. Promote practice of senior managers to benchmark against other DOTs and State Departments.
 - c. Develop structured feed back loops in which input from employees and other stakeholders are carefully considered.
 - d. Take follow-up surveys of employees at 18 month intervals. Develop action plan around one or two major issues that are easily understood by all. Evaluate managers on whether employees feel that these issues have been heard and acted upon.
 - e. In addition to 2f. the progress of the strategic plan, development of the metrics, and the results of the system of continuous improvement should be reported to the Leadership Council on a regular basis.
4. Commit the appropriate resources and responsibilities to training and knowledge capture of the workforce.
 - a. Focus on management skills training. (For example, reestablish the executive management program and/ or explore the use of the Connecticut Quality Council for worthy programs that could be utilized.)

- b. Establish a knowledge management program to capture and preserve knowledge of the most experienced employees and managers.
 - c. Establish an Executive leadership program to develop ConnDOT rising stars.
 - d. Increase the training staff from two people to the appropriate level.
 - e. Train a significant number of managers and line employees in the adopted method of continuous quality improvement.
5. Make the values of ConnDOT crystal clear.
- a. Communicate the ethics requirements extensively and frequently.
 - b. Train employees on structure and enforcement of compliance. (See ombudsman above, hot line etc.)
 - c. Staff internal audit appropriately.