

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Legislative Audit Committee
Legislative Audit Division Staff
Legislative Branch Human Resources Manager

FROM: Angus Maciver, Legislative Auditor *AM*

DATE: October 21, 2019

RE: Results of 2019 Legislative Audit Division employee engagement survey

This memo summarizes information relating to our recently-completed employee engagement survey. The survey results are being provided to both the Legislative Audit Committee (LAC) and the staff of the Legislative Audit Division (LAD) to facilitate a better understanding of the views of employees relative to their work environment and professional lives.

Background

Employee engagement surveys are a common means of assessing workplace morale and satisfaction. Although these kinds of surveys should never replace important one-on-one interactions between staff, they can help track and measure trends in engagement over time. This is the second time LAD has completed this kind of survey as part of our Next50 strategic planning process. Measuring employee engagement was identified as part of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) section of our strategic plan.

Survey Design and Administration

Our employee engagement survey is conducted annually in the fall. All LAD staff are invited to participate, although responses are not mandatory. The survey is designed and administered by the Legislative Branch Human Resources (HR) Manager, who retained control over the survey process independent of LAD leadership. All survey responses are provided on an anonymous basis and the HR Manager only reports results in a format that protects employee confidentiality.

The survey consists of 15 positive attribute statements, which staff respond to using a Likert scale (Strongly/Somewhat/Neutral) for both agree (positive) and disagree (negative). The survey questions/statements mirror commonly-used employee engagement survey formats, but were also selected to reflect the LAD mission and vision statements, and organizational values and guiding principles. Supplementary narrative response questions were included to help identify additional positive and negative observations and experiences for employees. Two demographic questions were also included to help differentiate responses by organizational function/team and by tenure of service with LAD.

Response Rate

The survey was distributed to 43 LAD staff during the second half of September 2019. Staff were provided approximately two weeks to complete the survey. The survey was completed by 40 staff, for a response rate of 93%. This is a good response rate in the context of a voluntary survey and supports the survey results as being reliable and representative.

Results

Overall, 70% of responses to all questions were positive i.e. the employee responded on the positive side of the scale. This is down from a 78% positive response in 2018 and still leaves us below our benchmark performance set at 85% positive response. Although specific situations and experiences often affect responses, we need to pay attention to changes in employee engagement. This year's survey shows us we need to do more to listen to our people and address their concerns about the work environment. Our strategic planning process is resulting in significant changes in how we operate. We should expect this to

result in some disruption and dissatisfaction amongst staff, but we also need to remain focused on making long-term improvements.

Although the survey response should still be broadly characterized as positive, there was variation between different questions/statements. The attached chart shows all the questions/statements and ranks them using a weighted average to identify the most positive responses (top of the chart) and the most negative (bottom of the chart). The response scale for each question/statement is shown using colors in the chart. The following discusses selected observations on strengths and areas for improvement we have identified in the survey results.

Strength Areas

- Mission-driven organization; the two most positive questions/statements related to employees understanding of and belief in the LAD mission. This reflects a strong and continuing commitment by employees to the underlying purpose and values driving our work.
- Work-life balance; employees provide a strong endorsement of the success of our efforts to promote balance between work and other life commitments. Encouraging work-life balance is very significant to our staff, so this year the survey included a narrative response question relating to their views on our approach to flexible scheduling. Responses to this question show we can continue to improve and staff provided good insights on where our policies promoting work-life balance can be strengthened and applied more consistently.
- Teamwork and collaboration; nothing we do depends solely on the skills of individual contributors. Working in teams is part of the fabric of life within LAD and staff respond positively to questions/statements on team support and the ability to collaborate and work together. Strong team dynamics continue to be vital to our success.
- External message; the most significant improvement in positive response was for the question regarding our success in communicating our mission to the legislature. We believe this relates specifically to our efforts during and after the legislative session to promote our work more actively and engage the legislature in a dialog on improving our reports. Although we still have more work to do in this area, staff have seen our commitment to making changes and this is likely driving a more positive response.

Areas for Improvement

- Competitive compensation; a significant proportion of staff do not believe they are fairly compensated for the value of their work. This points to a continuing challenge for us that has been the focus of a strategic workforce initiative for the past 18 months. Some of the dissatisfaction likely relates to frustration with the slow pace of change and lack of perceived progress. Some is also attributable to strong competition, particularly from well-resourced state agencies targeting our staff. Regardless, we still have ground to make up and we need to do more to demonstrate to our staff that we are taking this challenge seriously.
- Internal communication; staff responded more negatively to questions about ease of discussing problems, sharing information and making decisions internally. This has been a strategic focus area for us, but progress has been minimal thus far. We have likely not fully recognized some of the entrenched cultural aspects of these communication challenges, which are going to take time and sustained effort to change.
- Time and resources; timely reporting is one of the demands placed on us by government auditing standards and is something that impacts most of our projects. Continuing challenges with recruitment and retention have meant more constraints on our ability to fully staff audits and deliver work according to schedule.

Summary

These survey results reflect both our short-term challenges in a highly competitive employment market and our underlying organizational strengths. We have made incremental progress in some areas, but there are obviously expectations among our staff that have yet to be fully addressed. As some of our more important Next50 strategic initiatives move into the practical implementation phase this fiscal year, we can expect more volatility, but also clear opportunities to make real improvements.

2019 Legislative Audit Division Employee Engagement Survey Results

