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U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

February 17, 2021

Re: FRA File No: FOIA-21-003

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), for "a copy of the most recent Strategic Human Capital Management Plan for the Federal Railroad Administration, developed with the help of Atlas Research LLC.

The attached 63 pages documents obtained from our Human Resources (HR) Office are in accordance with the FOIA.

If you have any questions regarding your FOIA request, you may contact me at FRAFOIA@dot.gov. You may also contact FRA's FOIA Public Liaison, Regina Taylor-Santiago, Government Records Management Specialist at r.taylorsantiago@dot.gov for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request.

Since FRA has no additional records in its possession that are responsive to your request, I am closing your file in this office.

Sincerely,

William R. Brown

William R. Brown
Government Information Specialist

FRA Strategic Human Capital Assessment

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Railroad Administration

RAIL – *Moving America Forward*

2020-2024

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INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE

FRA employees are our most valuable resource. This Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP) for 2020 to 2024, is a collaborative assessment about how we can improve as an agency to attract, retain, and develop our workforce.

To develop the goals and objectives under this SHCP, we assessed FRA's workforce demographics, scores from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and conducted benchmarking analyses with organizations in the transportation industry.

To capture an employee perspective on human capital and workplace issues, approximately 15% of the workforce, including leadership, supervisory employees and non-supervisory employees, provided feedback through focus groups and interviews.

According to workforce demographics and the FEVS our workforce changed in positive ways over the past five years. Employees are more satisfied and engaged, turnover has decreased and the number of disabled employees and veterans has increased.

The feedback from employee focus groups and interviews expressed a need for FRA to build upon the existing strengths of its workforce, while ensuring the workforce has the knowledge, skills and resources to address current conditions and future trends.

Based upon the data gathered and feedback from employees this SHCP sets forth new goals and objectives that build upon the accomplishments and progress made against the human capital goals established for the 2015-2019 SHCP.

This SHCP also recognizes the rapid introduction of new technologies requires the FRA to continuously evaluate workforce development challenges to effectively carry out its' mission. To summarize, this SHCP includes initiatives to:

- Improve communication from HQ to the regions and between the regions.
- Improve the consistency of operations.
- Continue to promote a diverse workforce.
- Develop guidance for successful change management.
- Develop workforce planning guidance
- Refine the Onboarding program.
- Strengthen performance management guidance and training.
- Increase the use and effectiveness of IDPs.
- Improve the recruitment and hiring process.
- Develop strategies for succession planning and knowledge transfer.
- Improve access and use of new rail technologies
- Improve data analysis capabilities.

The goals and objectives developed under this SHCP are guidelines to assist the teams established to implement this SHCP. We want the teams to have the creativity to further define the goals and objectives as they develop solutions.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP) was developed based on a representative employee perspective to uncover organizational challenges and areas for improvement. Approximately 15% of the workforce were engaged through a series of focus groups and interviews. By random sampling, 138 employees, supervisory and non-supervisory, were chosen to participate in 33 focus groups. Leadership was also engaged through interviews regarding organizational challenges. Focus groups were held in-person and via teleconference and included employees in the field and at headquarters in Washington D.C.

The responses from focus groups and interviews were organized and coded based on topic area. The content and frequency of specific comments were also analyzed to identify trends. Employee feedback was compared with FRA workforce data, the results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and benchmarking analyses. This comparison informed our understanding of the strengths and challenges expressed by our workforce. Based upon all the information gathered we identified specific focus areas for our workforce challenges and proposed goals and objectives to address them.

STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN WORK GROUP

Thank you to all our colleagues who shared their views and concerns and the SHCP Work Group members who are executing this initiative. We look forward to an even stronger FRA.

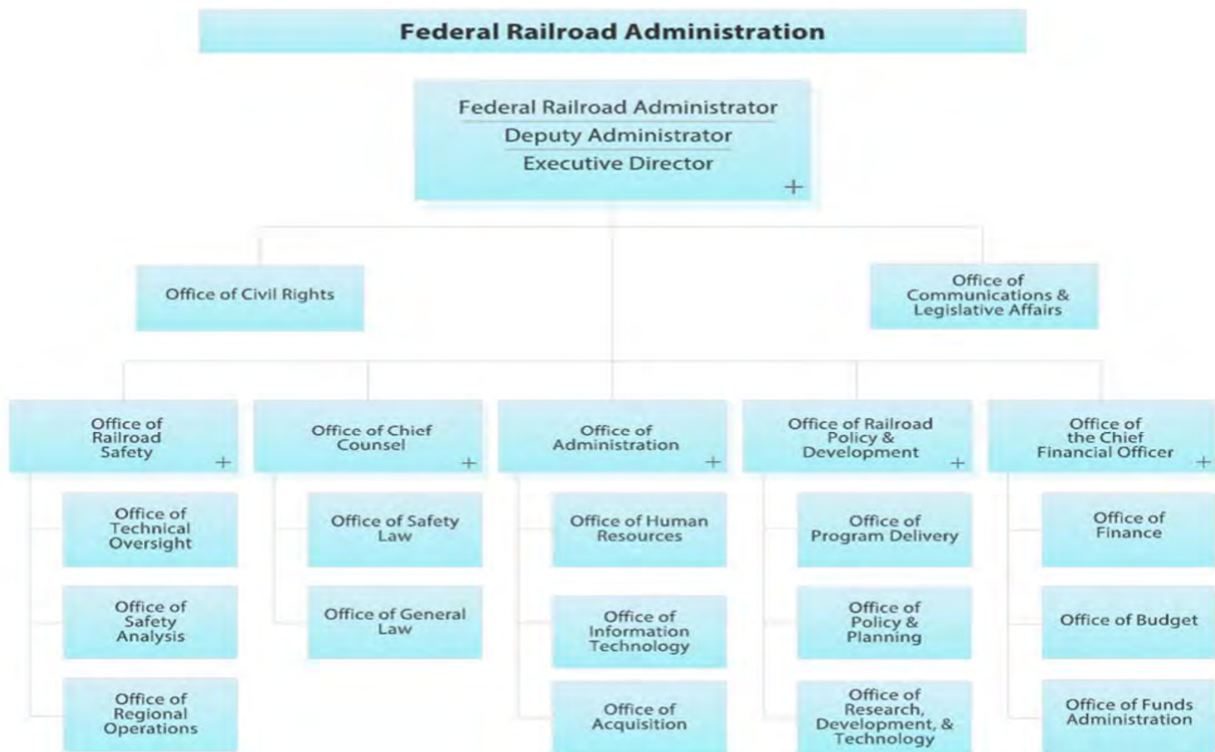
SHCP Work Group Members include:

- Mark Atkisson, *Director, Office of Human Resources (OHR)*
- Rhonda Dews, *Equal Opportunity Specialist, Office of Civil Rights (OCR)*
- Vince Dickens, *Executive Staff Director, Communication and Resource Management, Office of Railroad Safety (RRS),*
- Rachell Horton, *Supervisory Management Analyst, Office of Chief Counsel (RCC)*
- James Jordan, *Regional Administrator, Region 7, Office of Railroad Safety (RRS)*
- Susan Ledford, *Management Analyst, COR, Office of Human Resources (OHR)*
- Jennifer Moody, *Director, Office of Funds Administration, Office of the Chief Financial Officer (RCFO)*
- Edythe Nicholas, *Human Resources Specialist, Office of Human Resources (OHR)*
- Tamela Riggs, *Associate Administrator for Administration*
- Monique Stewart, *General Engineer, Office of Railroad Policy & Development (RPD)*
- Milicent White, *AFGE Representative, HQ*

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

FRA is a sub-cabinet agency of about 915 employees. Approximately 515 are regional employees located amongst eight Regions, with the remaining 400 headquarters employees serving in either Washington, DC or in field locations. Over half (507) of FRA's employees work within the GS-2121 Railroad Safety series. Within this occupational series, there are approximately 380 employees classified as Railroad Safety Inspectors.

FRA Organization Chart



FRA WORKFORCE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Over the past five years, FRA's workforce has changed in several positive ways:

- Employees are more satisfied and more engaged
- Turnover has fallen
- Fewer employees are eligible to retire
- The number of disabled employees and veterans have increased

FRA Workforce Comparisons 2014 vs 2019

Category	2014	2019
Total Workforce	836	916
Average Age	51	49.7
Average years of service	15	13.4
Global Satisfaction	69%	76%
Engagement	71%	76%
Attrition Rate	10.9%	7.4%
Retirement Eligible	25%	15.6%
Male	77%	77%
Female	23%	23%
Minority	24%	25%
Disability	10%	13.3%
Veterans	30%	32.2%

In addition, FRA's employees have a more favorable view of the organization than they did in 2014, based on a comparison of Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores between 2014 and 2019 on selected questions. OPM takes the position that a change of three points from year to year represents a meaningful distinction. The change scores on the following selected questions show a significant increase in percent positive from 2014 to 2019.

FRA FEVS Data 2014-2019

FEVS Question	2014 Percent Positive	2015 Percent Positive	2016 Percent Positive	2017 Percent Positive	2018 Percent Positive	2019 Percent Positive
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills.	44.1	41.6	47.4	52.3	58.1	53.8
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.	62.1	63.9	66.0	76.4	78.7	77.5
My training needs are assessed.	54.4	50.6	52.2	67.03	65.9	68.3
Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals, needed resources).	52.3	54.3	62.7	70.24	75.2	69.8
Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (for example, recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diversity issues, mentoring).	61.4	59.5	57.4	62.7	65.0	66.5
Supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds.	69.0	64.2	66.2	74.4	78.2	79.9
I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done.	39.6	44.9	45.8	56.1	62.8	60.5
The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.	79.1	72.6	71.5	80.0	88.2	88.8
Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals and needed resources).	52.3	54.3	56.3	65.8	69.0	70.9
How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?	53.8	51.5	54.1	65.2	69.0	70.9

In addition, FRA had a higher score on several FEVS questions compared to benchmark agencies, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) (NHTSA scores shown below as DOT, all other organizations) in the 2019 FEVS. Selected questions are highlighted in the table below:

FRA FEVS Data vs Benchmarked Organizations

2019 FEVS Question	FRA	NTSB	DOT, All Other
Managers communicate the goals and priorities of the organization.	69.8	62.2	69.2
Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals, needed resources).	70.9	58.4	60.3
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.	77.5	74.4	72.1
My training needs are assessed.	68.3	56.2	59.0
In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.	52.4	52.1	46.1
My supervisor provides me with constructive suggestions to improve my job performance.	77.0	74.6	71.9
Supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds.	79.9	75.3	72.9
I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done.	60.5	58.2	53.8
The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.	88.8	86.9	84.4

***DOT, All Other =** Federal Transit Administration, **National Highway Transportation Safety Administration**, Office of Inspector General, Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

Despite progress and improvement, challenges remain. The following section summarizes those challenges and highlights positive feedback identified during the focus groups and through additional data analysis, which can be found in the Workforce Analyses in the Appendices.

STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS

A. Rail Technology

Employees expressed concerns about understanding and learning new technologies. Newer technologies will have an impact on safety and employees need to be able to analyze data collected by the railroads using these new technologies. Safety Inspectors in the field work closely with railroads who use new technology, such as drones or data analysis tools. The Inspectors are at a disadvantage when they do not understand how this evolving technology impacts safety.

The rail industry often has access to new technology through its interaction with national and international rail industries. If FRA is reactive in responding to emerging rail technologies, this could negatively impact its ability to maintain and promote safe rail operations. FRA's success in driving the implementation of new technology for positive train control can provide a model for continued response to advancements.

As the rail industry introduces new technology, Safety Inspectors need to understand how these technologies are used to accomplish mission objectives. When new technologies are used by railroads, this may impact railroad operations and safety. Additionally, new technologies impact common organizational work processes at FRA, which requires a plan of action.

FRA must respond to changes in the rail industry. That was true five years ago and is truer today. Current emerging technologies (e.g., sensor technology and the use of drones) in the rail industry will impact FRA in a variety of ways:

- New regulations may have to be written to address any emerging safety issues that older regulations do not adequately address
- Budgets may have to be reallocated
- New programs may have to be developed
- Grant funds may have to be reallocated

In the human capital arena, emerging technologies in the rail industry will impact the entire employment life cycle:

- Emerging technologies will change the workforce planning demand analysis and create skills gaps that need to be closed
- New competencies will impact recruiting efforts to close skill gaps
- Position descriptions may have to be rewritten or developed
- Interview questions may have to be developed to identify candidates who possess the new competencies
- Employee development efforts will need to be adjusted including course content and individual development plans (IDP)
- Onboarding information will have to orient new employees to the changes in the organization
- Organization, work unit and individual performance expectations will have to be adjusted

- And as employees leave, positions may have to reallocated to close skill gaps

First, FRA needs to understand the impact that emerging technologies and changes to the rail industry will have on the organization. An effective approach would include subject matter experts (SMEs) and affected stakeholders to identify change impacts. These impacts would be documented and categorized based on impact to people, work processes, organization, or resources. The change impacts would be prioritized based on the degree of impacts. Then, mitigation strategies would be developed.

A mitigation strategy could be an educational program to help employees learn and understand a new technology. Further assessment is needed to understand current decentralized approaches to teach new technologies in the Regions. As specific technologies are identified, target audiences would also be defined for learning programs. SMEs would need to be engaged to understand specific elements of the technology. Then, appropriate delivery mechanisms would be defined. A curriculum or educational program would be developed as appropriate. The educational offerings would be evaluated for effectiveness to teach the new technology.

B. Communication

Employees shared that they believe in the FRA mission and would like to better understand why organizational decisions are made. There is an opportunity to leverage this support if there is a better understanding of direction and roles in implementing organizational strategy. Employees also noted communication silos from Region to Region, Headquarters to Region, Region to Headquarters or within various Offices or work functions. This can make it more challenging for organizational units to partner and work together to solve problems.

FEVS scores in communications showed a positive trend between 2014 and 2019. As an example, the question "Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals, needed resources) increased by 17.5% percent. Even with this positive trend, there are still opportunities for increased information sharing between organizational units. When there is a lack of information, employees often turn to their immediate supervisor as the source of organizational communications. However, sometimes this information loses meaning in translation or doesn't make it to the employee. Increased direct communication will ensure the correct messages are received.

In some cases, Safety Inspectors need timely and specific information on injuries or accidents to perform job responsibilities. Safety Inspectors feel information comes through the rail industry more quickly than it is disseminated through FRA channels. Additionally, there is a perception that official communications are not distributed effectively on safety incidents. There is an opportunity for FRA to provide consistent and timely information on safety incidents to target audiences.

Effective communication between headquarters, Regions, and individual employees is necessary to implement standards and priorities and take advantage of institutional knowledge. To break down barriers and create collaborative partnerships between organizational units requires regular and consistent communication and a comprehensive approach to organizational communications, i.e., a coordinated communication strategy. This provides a strategic viewpoint for communications and considers communication elements of the different program areas. For instance, regular communication occurs on organizational direction, safety, and workforce management. When the communication is coordinated, the messages can build upon each other and support consistency and a coordinated approach can facilitate effective and efficient delivery of messages, even when there may be multiple communication campaigns or initiatives.

Current communication efforts need to be defined to avoid duplicative efforts that could reduce credibility of messaging. Target audiences should be defined for different communication elements and program communications, then the audience analyzed to understand priorities and communication needs. Then specific objectives are defined to meet the identified communication needs. Once objectives are outlined, define key performance indicators or measures of success. Identify critical touchpoints for communication that already occur, such as town halls or program review meetings. These existing touchpoints may have already been established as a reliable means for employees to receive messages or new communication modes or methods can be identified or developed, based on gaps in the current process.

Establishing forms of two-way communication and feedback loops ensures messaging is received and is effective and that the appropriate communication channels have been chosen given the audience and the messaging. This also serves as another opportunity to engage with employees to meet communication needs.

Determining communication timing or creating a calendar for communications and reviewing across communication streams can alleviate employees feeling overloaded by information. Then, key messages would be developed and validated for different communication work streams. Messaging would be modified based on feedback.

Rail safety is FRA's core mission. Safety Inspectors require information on current safety issues to perform their jobs. These positions have a direct impact on mission achievement. Support for these positions may require specific communication work streams to provide needed and timely information to Safety Inspectors within the Regions. While each Region may have unique communication priorities, it is also critical to consider organization-wide priorities when designing communication objectives.

Employees have consistently voiced their support for the FRA organizational mission. There are opportunities to leverage this support and increase employee engagement by providing updates to the workforce on progress towards FRA goals, initiatives, and priorities. This can also help employees better understand the work that FRA performs daily and see how individual efforts can support the achievement of mission objectives. Clear employee direction on priorities and a discussion on progress towards goals can reinforce the support that employees have for the FRA organizational mission.

Strategy and progress towards goals can be designed as a specific communication work stream. Specific goals and organizational priorities and communications methods to share organizational priorities and progress towards goals should be defined. If there are current methods which are effective locally, these should be leveraged. This information can shape messaging and communication delivery. Defining key performance indicators provides focus for activities. Stakeholders or partners who are responsible for providing communications should be identified. Communicating progress is also an opportunity to reinforce organizational priorities and messaging. The FRA brand or values can be integrated into the messaging. This messaging can then contribute to employee engagement and retention.

Choosing the appropriate communication channels given the audience and the messaging as well as establishing feedback loops ensures message clarity. Communication timing or a calendar for the communications for delivering key messages should be developed and validated for different audiences. Messaging would then be modified based on feedback and delivered.

C. Staffing/Recruiting

Currently, staffing and recruiting are perceived negatively by FRA employees. These essential human capital factors are key to successfully fulfilling FRA's mission. Within staffing and recruiting, two specific challenge areas emerged:

1. Recruiting and Selection Process
2. Staffing Needs

Employees regularly mentioned that the recruiting process takes too long. The time required to post an announcement can seem to take an unnecessary amount of time. Multiple focus groups also expressed concern about the qualifications of people being recruited and the selection process. There is a perception that unqualified candidates sometimes make it further in the recruiting process than candidates that have the proper qualifications to be considered. FRA FEVS data shows that just 53.8% of employees agree with the statement, "my work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills". Ultimately, FRA employees believe that the entire recruiting process needs to be improved.

In addition to recruiting, employees were also concerned about staffing. More than half of all focus groups expressed that FRA does not have the necessary staff required to fully accomplish mission objectives. Employees noted that positions are left vacant for long periods of time. When those positions are not filled quickly, key responsibilities are either not met or other FRA employees need to spread themselves thinner to cover the empty roles. This can negatively impact FRA's ability to succeed in its mission and should therefore be addressed.

Multiple stakeholders play important roles in the current recruiting process: leadership approves filling a vacancy, HR collects the required information and forms needed for the DOT Executive Agent to announce the position, applicant qualifications are evaluated, a referral list is created in accordance with OPM regulations, interviews are scheduled and conducted, a tentative selection is made, background investigations are completed and a starting date is negotiated. It is a complicated and potentially confusing process with many handoffs. It becomes increasingly complicated when the process may differ based on hiring authorities or other position-specific procedures.

USAJobs contains data that can be used to track the amount of time spent in most of these steps. Creating a process map of the entire hiring process from vacancy, through appointment and mapping the data onto the map can identify bottlenecks in the process.

Stakeholder involvement in the process review serves not only to identify handoffs and procedures that could be modified but also serves as an education tool to help those stakeholders understand the entire process and the impact of their individual roles on the process.

Once bottlenecks are identified, these steps can be redesigned to shorten cycle times and improve satisfaction. But this is not a one-time effort. As in any process improvement effort, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the modified process should occur approximately six months after the effective date and consider the number of positions filled in that time. Using a satisfaction survey can serve as an effective means of evaluating the modified process; this serves as a feedback loop and opportunity to make further refinements towards reaching optimal effectiveness and efficiency.

Recruiting is about creating a brand reputation, locating candidates for potential positions, guiding them to current vacancies and designing an effective onboarding process to socialize the new employees to the organization. Recruiting quality talent is fundamentally a buy sell transaction – buy skills and sell the organization. FRA's current recruiting strategy seems more "post and pray" rather than proactively creating awareness about FRA's mission and potential future opportunities and sourcing potential candidates.

Most rail-related position appointments in FRA have been from the rail industry. From a technical knowledge perspective, this recruiting approach makes sense. Historically, the industry has largely consisted of white males. That demographic is changing slowly. Recruiting predominately from the railroad industry will not change the diversity of FRA's workforce in the short-term. Recruiting a more diverse workforce will require a different strategy

NTSB has been recruiting younger talent through a variety of paid and unpaid internships. The most targeted efforts were in its research and engineering positions. Those employees read out the 'black boxes', conduct metallurgical examinations, use electron microscopy and elemental analyses and conduct medical analyses, among their other highly technical skill requirements. As part of the intern program, NTSB saw the benefit of hiring new graduates and younger engineers to attract talent at lower GS levels (9, 11, 12) with the goal of providing a career ladder.

NHTSA's recruitment strategy primarily focuses on positions requiring STEM degrees and other mission critical safety-related jobs. Recruitment efforts are mostly aimed at schools with engineering degree programs[1]. It sends employees to attend in-person engineering career fairs and uses online resources, such as Handshake, to advertise and promote open engineering

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[1] The US Department of Education' College Navigator allows recruiters to identify post-secondary programs with STEM programs. https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

positions. It also attends local career events in the DC area to promote diversity outreach and student internship programs, such as the Summer Transportation Internship Program for Diverse Groups as well as the Secretary's Internship Program.

FRA does some outreach to universities, community colleges and craft training programs, but the effort does not seem to be structured and aggressively proactive. Yet in October 2015, FRA identified all those potential resources and uploaded a consolidated listing on its Internet site[2]. The rail industry has a proactive recruiting program on social media – LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Although FRA does have social media pages, they are primarily to inform the public of safety issues and other program concerns but not directly about careers. There is no evidence that FRA recruiters source applicants in social media and push them to USAJobs announcements. FRA does have a link to its Career page on RailServe[3]. The OPM Human Capital Framework has diagnostic questions the FRA can use to evaluate recruiting efforts[4].

OPM Diagnostic Questions-Recruiting

Diagnostic Questions	Yes	No
The organization has identified recruitment and outreach priorities based on the organization strategic plan, workforce plan and human capital strategies.		
The organization recruits qualified individuals from appropriate sources to achieve a workforce from all segments of society.		
Ongoing relationships are established and maintained with recruiting and outreach sources, such as colleges, universities, outplacement organizations, professional associations, veterans' programs, recruitment fairs and programs supporting individuals with disabilities.		
The organization involves senior leaders and managers in recruitment and outreach planning and implementation (e.g., job analysis, evaluation, job fairs, outreach planning and visits) of strategic recruitment initiatives.		
The organization uses data, such as applicant and new hire demographics, applications per announcement, applicant surveys, new hire surveys, hiring manager surveys and costs and benefits, to evaluate recruiting and hiring processes and develop strategies to improve them.		
The organization engages in continuous improvement in the hiring process, which may include reducing red tape, using plain language, reducing time-to-hire, applying hiring authorities and flexibilities, or engaging hiring managers in the hiring process.		
The organization selects and promotes qualified individuals on the basis of relative knowledge, abilities and skills after fair and open competition that assures all receive equal opportunity.		

[2] Railroad Education Resources -- Universities, Community Colleges and Associations Revised 16 October 2015

[3] https://www.railserve.com/Railroad_Employment_Jobs/

[4] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/human-capitalframework-assessment/shared/Diagnostic_Tool.html

Diagnostic Questions	Yes	No
The organization has documented, for the processes and instruments it uses to make employment decisions (e.g., to appoint, promote and reassign employees) that meet or exceed professional and federal laws and guidelines (e.g., 5 CFR 300.103) and are consistent with merit system principles (5 U.S.C. 2301).		
The recruiting and selection process results in new hires with realistic expectations about their jobs and organization.		
Compensation flexibilities (e.g., referral bonuses, recruiting incentives, relocation bonuses) are used as needed to attract qualified employees with mission-critical competencies for hard-to-fill positions.		
Reasons for declinations of job offers, as well as resignations and separations during the first 1-2 years after appointment, are collected, reviewed and used to improve recruiting and hiring processes.		

Today, social media is often the first point of candidate contact for organizations, taking precedence even before the organization's official website. All platforms must convey a consistent and carefully articulated message, market positioning and employee-centric values to hold the ideal candidate's attention.

Recruiting campaigns, especially those on social media, must begin with a vision or a goal:

- Is it to increase company awareness?
- Is the hiring campaign looking at a long-term business pivot, with accompanying changes in skillsets?
- Is upgrading existing workforce quality a primary concern?
- Are diversity and including objectives motivating factors?

With the current explosion in social media platforms, selection of the best platform to use plays a vital role in reaching the right audience and the right candidate for the job. Frequently, employers use LinkedIn and look no further. However, Facebook could help tap into 40s-and-above segments, while Instagram is ideal for millennials and junior level vacancies.

One way to refine the platform selection is to ask current employees and especially new hires the following questions through a survey:

- What social media platforms do you visit?
- How often?
- For what purpose?
- How much time do you spend looking at the content?
  - Pictures?
  - Videos?
  - Text?

A combination of multiple platforms, complemented by other digital real estate (websites, mailers, job boards, etc.) can detail the strategy. Social media today is primarily a visual platform, with text taking a backseat – or at best, a supporting role. Therefore, incorporating images, banners and videos into social media recruiting plans is crucial.

D. Onboarding

Effective onboarding programs increase employee engagement, understanding of company culture, productivity and retention.

The previous SHCP led FRA to establish a 12-month onboarding program. Focus group perceptions indicate that there are opportunities to improve and refine the process. Feedback around the onboarding process focused on the following challenge areas:

1. Onboarding Structure & Design
2. Receiving Needed Information in Onboarding

In nearly half of all focus groups, employees expressed that there was confusion and disconnect within the onboarding process. Employees were not sure whom they needed to contact for information and resources. Additional focus groups believed that DOT provides an excessive amount of information and that it is too much to be retained quickly. As a solution, some employees suggested that regional administrative staff may be better suited to provide onboarding to new regional employees, instead of having them participated in Headquarters onboarding where they may be rushed to learn and retain information.

New FRA employees participate in a one-day DOT orientation followed by a one-day FRA orientation. Given the small number of biweekly FRA hires and the geographic dispersion across the country, onboarding requires a virtual component that does not seem to fully be available. Several employees in focus groups suggested improvements to the onboarding that included an onboarding process over a longer time and establishing a more consistent virtual process for regional employees.

Disney is well-known for its multi-week immersion onboarding process. On the first day of work, new employees attend Disney Traditions. With a focus on the past, present and future of Disney, Disney Traditions helps new hires recognize and appreciate the connections they have to the Disney story, their daily impact on the quality of the Disney Show, and the role they can play in the company's growth and success. The onboarding process continues much longer past the initial traditional onboarding program.

In the federal sector, NASA is known as having the best onboarding process[5].

- NASA's Employee Onboarding process begins before employees report for duty and extends through their 6th month anniversary. The goal of employee onboarding is to provide employees with the foundation tools, resources and organizational perspective that will allow them to rapidly become an effective, fully contributing member of NASA's workforce.

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[5] https://employeeorientation.nasa.gov

- New, transferring, or detailed employees are assigned a sponsor who will be the employee's NASA "best friend" and is responsible for helping the employee settle into the organization, workplace and the local area. The sponsor's basic role is to be available to answer questions or find someone who can; offer suggestions and advice about the organization and the local area; and be available to help find their way around at work. Typically, the sponsor will assist employees from the time of their offer letter to about a month following entry on duty.
- Supervisors should coordinate with program offices (IT, Human Capital, Security) before the employee's first day.
- Prior to the first day, a Caseworker from the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) will contact the employee to schedule in-processing and benefits counseling.
- On the first day of work, employees are provided an employee badge, map, safety, traffic, parking instructions and directions to the in-processing location. Employees meet their Supervisor, colleagues and perhaps other Senior Managers.
- On the second day, employees arrive at their new workspace. An employee is assigned to assist them in getting oriented to their new workspace.
- That first week, employees work with their supervisor and the training office to identify training and developmental needs. These needs will be documented in the IDP. A new employee will also complete a variety of required training courses and activities that will be documented in NASA's learning management system.
- Employees also attend a Center onboarding event which is usually held once a quarter.

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) designed its ENGAGE onboarding program using the NASA model[6]. This extract from its New Employee Checklist outlines some of DLA's adaptation.

DLA New Employee Checklist

Prior to First Day	Review the New Employee Welcome documents on the DLA Careers Web Page.
	Complete the required paperwork that you were sent.
	Communicate any special needs that you have.
First Day	Arrive early enough to meet your sponsor.
	Bring all the employment paperwork if you did not return them electronically.
	Bring your ID, passport or two forms of ID as advised by HR.
	Proceed to the Visitors Center to check in.
	Go with your sponsor, who will escort you to HR to complete forms.
	Get your Central Access Card and badge.
	Complete the required IT security training and test your computer equipment.

[6]https://www.dla.mil/Portals/104/Documents/Careers/downloads/DLA%20ENGAGE%20Brochure(TFinal).pdf

Second Day	Meet your supervisor and other employees
First Two Weeks	Clarify any questions about your position description and performance expectations with your supervisor.
	Complete the required courses in the Learning Management System
	Receive supervisor's feedback on your performance and ask questions to clarify expectations.
	Create an IDP with your supervisor.
	Provide your suggestions to improve DLA ENGAGE.
First Year	Obtain supervisory feedback on your performance.
	Evaluate your performance, set personal goals and update your IDP.

E. Training & Employee Development

Most FRA employees are satisfied with training and development options and they meet job requirements. The 2019 FEVS score for the question "The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals" received an astounding 88.8% positive response. However, focus groups noted specific needs for improved FRA skills in data analysis, project management, writing and communications, and computer application usage. There is also an opportunity for increased emphasis on career development and employees cited the need for additional guidance on how to apply leadership training in day-to-day management scenarios.

Employees lamented that there is greater training course availability and options within the DC metro area. Employees in the field may have challenges taking advantage of training when travel is necessary. Decreased travel budgets require more flexibility in delivery of training virtually or web based.

Focus groups also noted that rotational assignments and cross training opportunities would be both welcomed and beneficial. While employees recognized that this may create short-term workload challenges while an employee from their office was on a detail assignment, they also stressed that this would bring value in the longer term.

Increase utilization and effectiveness of IDPs

A skilled workforce is needed to meet FRA mission objectives. Training and educational opportunities facilitate improved workforce skills to meet the needs of a changing railroad industry. Safety Inspectors are often geographically dispersed, requiring specialized training delivery to meet learning requirements. A flexible tool used to meet educational needs of the FRA workforce is the IDP. This tool is currently being used in FRA. However, there are opportunities for improved effectiveness.

An IDP is a tool to assist employees in career and personal development. Its primary purpose is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance. An IDP is not a performance evaluation tool or a one-time activity and should be viewed as a partnership between the employee and the supervisor. It involves preparation and continuous feedback.

Individual development planning benefits the organization by aligning employee training and development efforts with its mission, goals, and objectives. When using an IDP, supervisors develop a better understanding of their employees' professional goals, strengths, and development needs resulting in more realistic staff and development plans. Employees take personal responsibility and accountability for their career development, acquiring or enhancing the skills they need to stay current in required skills. Some of the benefits of an IDP are:

- An administrative mechanism for identifying and tracking development needs and plans
- Assistance in planning for the agency's training and development requirements
- Alignment with employee training and development efforts with its mission, goals, and objectives

The IDP process requires communication and interaction between the supervisor and employee. It often involves five phases:

1. **Pre-Planning** - supervisor and employee prepare independently for meeting
2. **Employee/Supervisor Meeting** - discuss employee strengths, areas for improvement, interests, goals, and organizational requirements
3. **Prepare IDP** - employee, in consultation with supervisor, completes plan for individual development
4. **Implement Plan** - employee pursues training and development identified in plan
5. **Evaluate Outcomes** - supervisor/employee evaluate usefulness of training and development experiences

To modify the current FRA IDP process first requires that the current IDP process be reviewed to see how it aligns with FRA career development and career pathing and ensure the appropriate tools are incorporated into the process. Interviewing stakeholders or employees can ensure career development goals and needs within FRA are understood and prioritized. This also provides insight to ensure that the process and tools meet the needs of the workforce and helps identify gaps in the current IDP process.

Once this assessment has been completed, tools and process can be developed or modified as needed. These tools and guides can assist employees in developing goals and following through on actions. Employees are accountable for personal development, so support mechanisms need to be in place to allow individual action for development. In addition, there may be supporting technology resources, such as HRIS or automated system, that can be leveraged. Special tools may need to be developed for Safety Inspectors, since they work remotely. A roll-out strategy would be created with supporting communications.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses a comprehensive IDP form to support creation and tracking of development goals; this form may also be a useful tool for the FRA and can be found in the Reference Documents/Best Practices in the Appendices.

Develop targeted approach to train on new technologies

Employees identified needs for improved FRA skills in data analysis, project management, writing and communications, and computer application usage. As technology and the railroad industry evolves, there is also the continued need to stay educated on new technologies. These needs can also be looked at broadly to develop the skill level of the FRA workforce as organizational requirements change. Questions to ask when considering this topic are detailed in the Partnership for Public Service reskilling framework in the Reference Documents/Best Practices in the Appendice.

An instructional design approach can be leveraged to create training on new and emerging technologies. This approach entails the following steps:

1. Evaluate the current training on new technologies. This training may be leveraged to meet current and future needs.
2. Define stakeholders and SMEs knowledgeable on the new technology.
3. Conduct training needs assessment on new technologies to understand what level of education is needed.
4. Define learning priorities to focus training and education. Identify courses for modification or development.
5. Develop training plan to organize the training options to meet the learning need.
6. Conduct an audience analysis to better define requirements of the learner.
7. Design learning objectives, delivery strategies, and training evaluation plan.
8. Develop training curriculum and learning materials with assistance from SMEs, as needed. Plan and schedule training sessions.
9. Evaluate learning and make improvements on training sessions, as needed.

F. Performance Management

Some employees felt the performance management process was clear and they received appropriate direction. However, others stated they did not understand how the performance evaluation process works. In the 2019 FEVS, 35% of employees disagreed with the statement that “Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs.” This implies that employees do not have full confidence that excellent performance results in rewards. It was expressed that the performance management system is tied largely to the supervisor or Region and the process is not being applied consistently. Employees want expectations to be clearly communicated with opportunities for dialogue on expectations and goals.

There were also concerns expressed about the criteria for evaluation. It was expressed that employees can receive higher evaluation scores when there is a response to a safety incident as opposed to maintaining a safe environment. Employees also have a perception that poor performers are not held accountable for their performance. This feedback indicates there is an opportunity to provide additional guidance on the performance management process to facilitate communication, recognition, and improvement of individual job performance.

A clear performance management process can reinforce organizational objectives and guide employee performance. An effective process will also establish methods to improve job performance. Guidance and support tools, such as training, are essential for an effective performance management process. The inability to address poor performance can put employees in situations where they cannot deliver on mission objectives and this can decrease morale and engagement for high performers. Clear job expectations need to be defined and communicated. Employees are then evaluated on the ability to meet job expectations through the performance management process.

A primary component of performance management is the development of performance elements and standards, from which an employee will be evaluated. These elements need to accurately communicate behaviors and activities that are required for successful job performance. The Office for Personnel Management (OPM) offers guidance for the development of general and specific performance measures and elements.[7]

General measures used to measure employee performance include the following:

- Quality addresses how well the work is performed and/or how accurate or how effective the final product is. Quality refers to accuracy, appearance, usefulness, or effectiveness.
- Quantity addresses how much work is produced. A quantity measure can be expressed as an error rate, such as number or percentage of errors allowable per unit of work, or as a general result to be achieved. When a quality or quantity standard is set, the Fully Successful standard should be high enough to be challenging but not so high that it is not achievable.
- Timeliness addresses how quickly, when or by what date the work is produced. The most common error made in setting timeliness standards is to allow no margin for error. As with other standards, timeliness standards should be set realistically in view of other performance requirements and needs of the organization.
- Cost-Effectiveness addresses dollar savings to the Government or working within a budget. Standards that address cost-effectiveness should be based on specific resource levels (money, personnel, or time) that generally can be documented and measured in agencies' annual fiscal year budgets. Cost-effectiveness standards may include such aspects of performance as maintaining or reducing unit costs, reducing the time it takes to produce a product or service, or reducing waste.

The following questions may help you determine specific measures. For each general measure, ask:

- How could [quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost effectiveness] be measured?
- Is there some number or percent that could be tracked?
- If there is no number, and the element can only be judged, ask:
- Who could judge that the element was done well? What factors would they look for?

[7] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/performance-management-cycle/planning/developing-performance-standards/

The supervisor or manager of an employee would need to fully understand the rationale for the measures and then clearly communicate this to an employee. It is effective for the supervisor to have a dialogue with an employee to explain how a performance measure can be met and offer guidance or support as needed. Consequently, FRA needs to be able to provide support to the supervisor or manager to have these critical conversations.

G. Employee Retention

Employee retention has seen marked improvements since the previous SHCP was released. In FY 2019 FRA saw the attrition rate drop to just 7.4%. In FY 2014 that rate was 10.9%. Many employees are content to be working at FRA and our focus group findings reinforce that idea. FRA employees generally seem happy to be part of a tight-knit working community that unites behind a meaningful mission.

The most common response from focus groups about employee satisfaction lay with the work-life balance that the administration provides. Most focus group participants shared that the flexibility offered by FRA is the best thing about their employment. Flexibility in both telework and scheduling allow employees to feel free to do their work without being micro-managed. Not only does FRA offer flexibility, but employees also noted that they enjoy the cohesiveness of their immediate teams. Employees feel that FRA offers them a sense of community where they can work together to accomplish a mission and grow professionally.

It remains important to continue efforts to improve employee retention. Two key elements emerged when considering challenge areas for attention within this HCA:

1. Employee Satisfaction
2. Change Management

When questioned about retention and morale, employees regularly expressed being understaffed with workload imbalances, which creates more pressure and leads to longer hours and lower employee satisfaction. A focus on strategic workforce planning will ensure that FRA is taking a proactive approach at identifying workforce needs in the future and listening to the pain points identified by FRA employees in Regions and Headquarters alike.

Change creates uncertainty and employees feel frustrated when they receive little or no communication on how their jobs and duties will be impacted. Any successful change management initiative requires a dedicated and concerted effort in planning and communication to alleviate the uncertainty and apprehension employees feel in a time of transition.

Workforce planning requires the organization to identify the human capital required to meet organizational goals, conduct analyses to identify competency and skills gaps, develop strategies to address human capital needs and close competency and skills gaps. OPM use a generic Workforce Planning Model.

Workforce planning begins with a strategic direction, goals and objectives. The second step is to analyze the current workforce and the internal and external environmental factors that influence actions (supply analysis), determine future needs and how the environment might change (demand analysis) and identify skills, technology and business process gaps. The third step, which this report addresses, involves developing action plans.

Two additional steps are: implementation and monitoring and evaluating progress using pre-determined metrics and qualitative techniques; and revising the plan as internal and external forces change the environment. Workforce planning is an ongoing effort, not a process to be solely performed every few years.

Workforce Planning Lifecycle

Step 1: Set Strategic Direction
Has the strategic direction changed or been modified to the extent that meeting that direction requires annual performance/business plans and work activities required to carry out the goals and objectives of the strategic plan (long-term) and performance plan (short-term) be modified?

Step 2: Analyze Workforce, Identify Skill Gaps and Conduct Workforce Analysis
This set involves analyzing recent data to:

- Determine what the current workforce resources are and how they will evolve over time through turnover, etc.
- Develop specifications for the kinds, numbers and location of workers and managers needed to accomplish the agency's strategic requirements.
- Determine what gaps exist between the current and projected workforce needs.

An analysis of past retirements is one example of analyzing the workforce to predict with some degree of certainty the retirement risk. FRA data from 2014 – early 2019, indicate that employees who retired seemed to retire after meeting a personal financial goal: eligibility for full Social Security benefits, 30 years of service. Of the 190 employees who retired under FERS, their average age was 66.5. Eighty-nine (89) retired within 1 year of being eligible for Social Security benefits. The remaining 102 retired within a range of 1.1 – 13 years after eligibility, with an average of 4.4 years after eligibility. Only thirty-six stayed longer than the average.

Step 3: Develop Action Plan
The group should review data on the following topics:

- Recruiting
- Training/retraining
- Restructuring organizations
- Contracting out
- Succession planning
- Technological enhancements, etc.

If the strategic direction or the data analysis indicates that strategies are needed to close gaps, the group should make recommendations to leadership on plans to implement the strategies and measures for assessing strategic progress. If the recommendations are adopted, leadership needs to manage the implementation.

Step 4: Implement Action Plan
This step involves ensuring that:

- Human and fiscal resources are in place
- Roles are understood
- Necessary communication, marketing and coordination is occurring to execute the plan and achieve the strategic objectives
- Design new metrics if needed

Step 5: Monitor, Evaluate and Revise
This step involves:

- Monitoring progress against milestones,
- Assessing for continuous improvement purposes and
- Adjusting the plan to make course corrections and address new workforce issues

OPM has identified some diagnostic questions in its Human Capital Framework that FRA can use to assess its current workforce planning efforts[8].

OPM Diagnostic Questions-Workforce Planning

Diagnostic Questions	Yes	No
The organization has a workforce plan that links directly to its strategic and annual performance plans. The workforce plan identifies current and future human capital needs and competencies needed for the organization to pursue its vision.		
The organization identifies and regularly reviews its mission-critical occupations and competencies.		
The organization regularly scans the environment to understand how external factors will affect its labor supply and workforce.		
The organization regularly conducts a forecasting process to project its workforce supply and demands in the immediate future (e.g., 1-2 years) and in the long term (e.g., 3 or more years), which includes calculation of risks to the organization's strategy.		
The organization develops and implements a talent management plan to close staffing and competency gaps, manage staffing surpluses, maintain the strengths of the existing workforce and mitigate risks.		
The organization thinks broadly about techniques it can use to close staffing and competency gaps, such as job redesign, organizational restructuring, cross-training, job sharing, details, or use of technology.		

[8] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/human-capital framework-assessment/shared/Diagnostic_Tool.html

Recently, Stouten, Rousseau and DeCramer (2018)[9] researched change models and used Google, a literature review and discussions with executives and managers to identify the top seven popular change models used in organizations. After reviewing these seven models, the researchers developed a consolidated change management model[10], consisting of ten steps:

1. Assess the opportunity or issue driving the change
2. Choose and support a guiding coalition for change
3. Devise a clear, convincing vision for change
4. Communicate the vision for change
5. Activate and maintain the energy for change
6. Allow and enable others to act
7. Support, encourage and develop the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for change
8. Recognize and acknowledge short-term wins, using them to support and reinforce the change effort
9. Monitor and reinforce the change effort over time
10. Imbed change in the organization's culture, practices, policies and leadership succession

A Change Management Diagnostic Tool

The OPM Human Capital Framework[11] contains diagnostic questions dealing with change management. The question can be used as an evaluative tool to assess how an organization manages change and can be used as a design tool to craft a change management plan.

OPM Diagnostic Questions-Change Management

Diagnostic Questions	Doing Well	Need Some Work
The organization takes a long-range approach to improving its performance while considering the impact to the entire organization (i.e., takes a systems approach).		
Annual organizational performance plans, budgets and performance reports document plans for and progress toward organizational development.		
Adequate resources are provided to support any change effort.		
The organization's culture supports achievement of its mission and strategic objectives.		
Leaders consider the implications that organizational changes are likely to have on workforce morale and performance.		
The organization regularly delivers understandable communications to all employees on the status of any change effort and how it will affect employees.		

[9] Stouten, J., Rousseau, D. M., & De Cremer, D. (2018). Successful organizational change: Integrating the management practice and scholarly literatures. *Academy of Management Annals, 12*(2), 752-788.

[10] Adapted from Stouten, Rousseau and DeCramer (2018), pp. 757-767.

[11] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/

Diagnostic Questions	Doing Well	Need Some Work
Appraisal, feedback, reward and recognition systems are consistent with and support the direction of desired organizational change.		
The organization uses a variety of channels (e.g., newsletters, intranet, town halls) to communicate the business case and shared vision.		
The organization communicates the advantages of, as well as realistic expectations for the change to employees.		
The organization monitors and evaluates the effects of organizational change management initiatives on its culture and performance to use the evaluations to make improvements.		

H. Succession Planning & Knowledge Management

The last SHCP led FRA to develop an offboarding program and an automated offboarding tool, making strides in the areas of succession planning and knowledge management.

Continued retirement risk within the FRA workforce leave this as an area where dedicated, intentional effort can lead to significant improvement. Two specific challenge areas emerged:

1. Planning for Retirement
2. Offboarding Transition – Knowledge Exchange

Focus groups commonly expressed concern that there are crucial employees at risk of retiring soon without anyone adequately prepared to fill those positions. This risk means that FRA may temporarily lose some ability to function effectively since current employees will have to fill gaps. The heart of the Talent Management process is identifying key roles and mapping out ways to ensure the organization continues to have the right people with the right skills, capabilities and experiences, in the right place at the right time.

Employees also generally expressed concern for knowledge management during the offboarding process. They see people leave the organization and take with them vast knowledge that they were unable to properly pass onto their successor. Without overlap when these key roles are vacated, it can become difficult for institutional knowledge to be maintained. Lastly, employees perceive that FRA hires mid-career professionals without focusing on bringing on board younger professionals. Targeting students straight out of college may allow for smoother and longer knowledge transfers and lead to fewer gaps left by mid-career professionals.

An important component of succession planning is identifying those who may be eligible for retirement or those at the highest risk of leaving the organization. Through this practice, efforts can be intentional and targeted towards those who have the highest likelihood of leaving the organization. Benchmark organization, CSX, uses a practice of partnering HR fueled data on retirement eligibility with supervisors' assessments of retirement risk for every eligible individual. Supervisors qualify each potential retiree in a low, medium or high retirement risk category and report the assessment to their HR department. Any individual rated as a "high" risk of retirement is targeted for proactive conversation.

However, retirees are only one category of employee who may leave the organization and take critical knowledge with them. The use of stay interviews can also be a helpful practice and serve as a good companion to succession planning efforts, to identify those at a highest risk of resigning. Those high-risk staff should not only serve as the target for the purposes of ensuring knowledge capture, but also for identifying opportunities to improve employee satisfaction thus increasing chances for employee retention. Listening to and addressing employee concerns is important for retaining talented staff. FRA has made significant progress in improving scores in the FEVS and ranks better than benchmarking organizations on many questions.

The Department of Commerce conducts stay interviews to help managers understand why employees stay and what might cause them to leave. Most stay interviews take less than half an hour.

Opening the Interview
To open the stay interview, a manager may use the following (or similar) statements:

- I would like to talk with you about the reasons you stay with FRA so I understand what I might be able to do to make this a better place to work.
- I would like to have an informal talk with you to find out how the job is going so I can do my best to support you as your manager, particularly with issues within my control.

Questions
The following are questions typically asked during a stay interview.

- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- What do you like most or least about working here?
- What keeps you working here?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What talents are not being used in your current role?
- What would you like to learn here?
- What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- What can I do to best support you?
- What can I do more of or less of as your manager?
- What might tempt you to leave?

Closing the Interview
After the interview, it is important to summarize the key reasons the employee gave for staying or potentially leaving the organization.

Developing Succession Planning

Once the FRA has gained a solid understanding of turnover risk, the organization should place priority on organized efforts to ensure continuity of operations throughout employment transitions through intentional development of employees.

Benchmark organization, NHTSA, encourages supervisors to think about succession planning. They use a Succession Planning Worksheet to guide work units on how to effectively plan for having the "right people in the right place at the right time" and protect the organization from vulnerabilities. The NHTSA worksheet is located in the appendices.

Knowledge management is simply the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization (Girard & Girard, 2015, p. 14)[12]. It is a key part of a workforce planning effort, since organizations cannot afford to lose the knowledge that employees who leave the organzation take with them (See Gibson, Wallace and Kreis,2018[13]; Haddal et al., 2017 [14]; and, Liebowitz, 2008[15]).

While there is a certain level of knowledge that can be gained through reading manuals and understanding standard operations, what those often cannot transfer is the tacit knowledge, or the "know how" that experienced employees possess.

What was most striking about employees' comments coming from the focus groups was the importance they placed on the ability to exchange information with each other about their work. They indicated that information sharing and more importantly knowledge sharing was limited by budget restrictions and access to information. They discussed the problems they had accessing information on the FRA Net or being unaware of recent accidents. Limitations to travel budgets hinder them from attending courses and limited their ability to have face-to-face discussions about their work experiences, though they did talk about their ability to talk to each other by phone. A highpoint that emerged during the focus groups was the desire for the opportunity to have a new employee matched with a more experienced employee to help them understand how things are done. This could include learning how to find information on the agency's internet, but it could also include information on how an inspector thought through a complicated problem where the solution was not found in a manual.

FRA should consider two questions to address knowledge management to meet workforce planning needs.

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[12] Girard, J. P., & Girard, J. L. (2015). Defining knowledge management: Toward an applied compendium. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management, 3*(1), 1-20.

[13] Gibson, B., Wallace, C. Y., & Kreis, S. D. (2018). *Developing knowledge management strategies*. Retreived from doi:https://doi.org/10.13023/ktc.rr.2018.07

[14] Haddal, R., Jones, R., Bersell, B., Frazar, S., Burbank, R., Stevens, R., . . . Morell, S. (2017). Safeguards Knowledge Management & Retention at US National Laboratories. *Sandia National Laboratory Report, SAND2017-10508*.

[15] Liebowitz, J. (2008). *Knowledge retention: strategies and solutions*. Baton Rouge, FL: Auerbach Publications.

1. How does it deal with ensuring that its employees develop and maintain their technical expertise?
2. How does it ensure that its employees share the knowledge employees gained throughout the course of doing their jobs?

Since FRA is able to recruit experienced personnel from the railway industry, the first question may not be so pressing. The second questions, involving know-how may be of greater priority. As a result, below are strategies for tapping into the know-how of the organization.

- **After Action Reviews**. An After-Action Review (AAR), is a structured review or de-brief process for analyzing *what* happened, *why* it happened and *how* it can be done better by the participants and those responsible for the project or event (Parry & Darling, 2001[16]). The Army has developed after-action reviews in the formal sense. Formal AARs are used by all US military services and by many other non-US organizations (Sullivan & Harper, 1996)[17]. Their use has extended to business as a way to transfer knowledge.
- **Case Study Reviews**. This process brings together a group of people in the same occupation and adapts a process seen in action learning (O'Neil & Marsick, 2007[18]) where an individual will share a problem with a small group. The case review process group usually consists of three to six individuals who volunteer to meet every four to eight weeks for 60 minutes. In FRA, a group of inspectors could agree to meet/talk once a month to discuss an issue that is concerning them. It could involve a problem with a past inspection or a current one. After presenting the problem, the participants would first ask the problem-holder clarifying questions. The problem-holder would listen to other participants discuss the problem with each other, tapping into similar situations that they had faced. After this discussion, the entire group would discuss solutions. The person bringing the problem would take notes and share them with the entire group. The case review group would then be asked to do a summary report or presentation that they could share during larger organizational meetings.
- **Mentoring.** This technique involves bringing together a less experienced employee with a more experienced employee. While it is often used for onboarding, an organization can use it to help an employee faced with new job assignments or when transitioning to a new part of the organization. Its purpose is not only to share information, but to develop relationships across the organization, Liebowitz (2008)[19] has discussed its use in the Department of Defense and NASA.

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[16] Parry, C. S., & Darling, M. J. (2001). Emergent learning in action: The after action review. *The systems thinker, 12*(8), 1-5.
[17] Sullivan, G. R., & Harper, M. (1996). *Hope is not a method: What business leaders can learn from the American Army*. New York, NY: Broadway Books
[18] O'Neil, J. A., & Marsick, V. J. (2007). *Understanding action learning*. New York: AMACOM.
Sullivan, G. R., & Harper, M. (1996). *Hope is not a method: What business leaders can learn from the American Army*. New York, NY: Broadway Books
[19] Liebowitz, J. (2008). *Knowledge retention: strategies and solutions*. Baton Rouge, FL: Auerbach Publications.

- **Yellow Pages**. At its simplest level, yellow pages are a list of experts in the organization who are willing to share their expertise with others in the organization. The organization places this list on the intranet (Gibson et al., 2018)[20]. Liebowitz (2008) described using yellow pages focused critical occupations that concerned a federal Inspector General Office. The process involved interviews to collect data about essential projects with contact information for subject matter experts who would be available to discuss what occurred. This approach requires more than setting up a database but would need resources to ensure that the information is current.

Gibson, Wallace and Kreis (2018) in their discussion of knowledge management strategies in state railroads discuss leveraging exit interviews, communities of practice, storytelling and videotaping as successful mediums for capturing knowledge and sharing throughout an organization.

Effective knowledge management practices require a culture that promotes employees to share the knowledge they have gained. Simultaneously, it also is one where employees know what mediums are available for them to benefit from the knowledge of others. This push (employees sharing knowledge) – pull (employees seeking knowledge) model builds strength through continual mutual-reinforcement.

I. Diversity & Inclusion

As a significant portion of FRA employees are recruited from the rail industry, a diverse workforce is hard to create. Although the industry is changing, it remains predominantly white and male. Though still lagging the rest of the Federal government, FRA has become slightly more diverse since the last SHCP was created, with minority representation increasing from 24% in FY 2014, to 25% in FY 2019.

FRA employees expressed positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion in both the focus groups and in FEVS. Multiple focus groups voiced that FRA tries to celebrate diversity in the workplace and that people often receive communications from leadership about events around diversity topics. In the 2019 FEVS, 79.9% of employees responded positively to the statement that, “supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds” and 66.5% agreed that, “policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (e.g., recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diversity issues, mentoring).

Even with these positive trends, focus groups still reported that more should be done to encourage diversity and inclusion within the FRA workforce. Addressing the challenge of promoting a diverse workforce serves as a key area of focus within the HCA.

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[20] Gibson, B., Wallace, C. Y., & Kreis, S. D. (2018). *Developing knowledge management strategies*. In. doi:https://doi.org/10.13023/ktc.rr.2018.07

The Railroad industry has historically consisted largely of a population of white males. Comparing data between 2014 and 2019 shows an increase in the percent of the FRA population identified in minority, disability and veterans' groups (male to female ratios remained the same). Progress against other goals in this HCA will also aid the FRA in welcoming an increasing level of diversity to the organization.

With a changing workforce comes an ever-increasing need to ensure a diverse and inclusive environment is promoted within the FRA. Diversity education serves an important role in promoting understanding and inclusion of all employees in the workplace. A diverse workforce can lead to more creative problem solving and varied ideas to meet mission objectives.

The primary desired outcome of these goals is to promote greater diversity and inclusion, including diversity of thought, in FRA planning and implementation thus ensuring decisions and actions represent the entire workforce. However, successful diversity and inclusion efforts have a ripple effect across the organization and impact employee job satisfaction, retention and efforts in the short-term can have a lasting effect on the ability to recruit and sustain an increasingly diverse population.

While from 2005, a GAO report on diversity management, "Expert-Identified Leading Practices and Examples"[21] provides a relevant and helpful resource in thinking about best practices for fostering an inclusive workforce even today.

A Diversity and Inclusion Council can serve the function of identifying, assessing, coordinating and hosting opportunities for FRA to cultivate a robust diversity and inclusion program. Benchmark organization, CSX, is placing higher priority on diversity and inclusion initiatives within their workforce. Their efforts have received national recognition; the Diversity and Inclusion Council may identify benefits to emulating similar programming at FRA. CSX has a working group who partners with both the diversity and communications offices to build and communicate an annual calendar of diversity initiatives and drive diversity strategy. They have also created inclusion groups for specific protected classes (ex, Disabled inclusion group). In addition, they take pride in promoting a military friendly environment where they have targeted military recruiting efforts and partner with the military organizations to host community events. These serve as just a few examples of activities a Diversity and Inclusion Council may consider in FRA's approach to promote a diverse workforce.

J. Work Processes & Tools

Broadly, employees in focus groups feel that they have the tools and equipment necessary to do their jobs. They emphasized that promoting safety is paramount and that FRA excels in promoting safe rail operations. Additionally, Positive Train Control and other initiatives are making impactful safety improvements. FEVS scores support the focus group sentiments; they

[21] https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-05-90

show a more than 20% increase in percent positive between 2014 and 2019 on the question "I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done." Similarly, there was nearly a 10% increase in percent positive in response to "The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals."

One area where employees indicated additional resources could be utilized is around data analysis. They indicated that there is plenty of data available but more opportunity is needed to acquire the skills and tools to analyze and apply this data in a meaningful way. Appropriate tools and data are necessary to perform mission activities. Based on feedback, data is becoming more integral to decision-making for Safety Inspectors and leadership. Incomplete or faulty conclusions based on data could hinder the ability of FRA to complete mission activities.

Actions in support of this area will require a needs analysis. This will first include coordinating closely with the data analytics team to identify current internal data analysis resources and capabilities, such as:

- Data sources
- Standard and custom reporting
- System/software capabilities and deficiencies
- System integration
- Use and utilization of data
- Data integrity
- How data analysis drives decision making

This FCW article on "Creating a data-first culture at federal agencies"[22] shares best practices for promoting a culture of analytics and may serve as a helpful tool in defining the larger goals that are driving efforts to improve data analytics within the FRA.

Once a baseline understanding of the as-is for data analysis resources and capabilities is established, data analysis goals should be outlined. Similar to any skills or competency assessment, an exercise should be conducted to determine capability levels of the broader FRA workforce and identify skill gaps that can be addressed through targeted training.

For the purposes of the goal set forth in the HCA, the primary role is to identify current staff data analysis competencies and develop, organize and promote training opportunities to increase data analysis skill levels. This process may also help uncover any deficits in the bandwidth of existing FRA data analysis systems that hinder the accomplishment of those goals.

K. Consistency

Discussion with focus groups revealed the challenges around a lack of consistent implementation of processes, policies or regulations particularly between regions. They also said the structuring and wording of regulations are too vague in some areas resulting in inconsistent application.

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[22] https://fcw.com/articles/2019/03/07/comment-data-first-culture-tableau.aspx

Delivery on mission objectives could be jeopardized by inconsistent application of policy or regulations.

During the focus groups, staff frequently provided the feedback that every work unit, whether Region or Office, seems to do things their own way. They also noted that it often feels like processes change frequently, that communications get stuck and that they do not know or understand the steps to reach the desired outcome. These comments encompassed a variety of different topics, including organizational communications, recruiting, onboarding for new employees and coordinating with external stakeholders or industry counterparts. It was communicated that from Region to Region or Office to Office practices may vary widely and policies may be enforced differently.

There are opportunities to bridge these gaps by examining existing workforce processes and procedures with a goal of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, removing redundancies or obstacles and promoting consistent application. This standardization will help alleviate inconsistencies, serve as a quality control function and clarify expectations.

There is specific workforce owned processes, such as recruitment and selection, onboarding, knowledge transfer and succession planning and rewards programs, where the entire organization will benefit from an established and communicated process. Once specific processes are identified, gain an understanding of:

- What is the current workflow?
- What opportunities are there for process improvement?

The first of those questions can often be answered through conducting staff interviews. Given the feedback from focus groups that practices may vary widely, it may be beneficial to see how several work functions are executing the same process.

Once workflows are mapped out, new or updated SOPs should be developed to outline the step-by-step process, including:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Offices or functions involved
- Expectations or requirements

In addition, a useful SOP also often includes:

- Estimated timelines
- Process maps or flow charts
- Links to relevant forms or reference documents
- Citations for applicable policies or regulations

The U.S. Agency for International Development uses “Mission Orders” for their overseas posts when additional post-specific procedures are necessary to implement policy and thus serve as a procedural guide. While these Mission Orders serve a slightly different purpose than what might be required of a FRA HR standard operating procedure, the Guidance for Preparing Mission

Orders[23] is a useful tool for review. This tool demonstrates how SOPs can effectively be organized and what information to include, citing relevant and applicable policy and serving an important role in ensuring document filing and archiving standards are upheld.

[23] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/527sab.pdf

Appendix A – FRA Strategic Human Capital Plan Goals

Focus Area – Rail Technology

The FRA workforce recognizes that new technologies used by the railroad industry affect the safety of railroad operations and the way the FRA accomplishes its mission. There is a need to assess how the emergence of new technologies in the rail industry will affect FRA's human capital management and to develop a plan of action to address any competency gaps.

The use of new technologies in the rail industry will likely require current staff to develop new competencies, change the competencies required of applicants and require changes to job descriptions, vacancy announcements, recruitment efforts and workforce planning.

Technical training will need to be provided for Safety inspectors. Training may also need to be provided to staff, such as staffing/classification specialists and attorneys, that would benefit from an understanding of these technologies in accomplishing their work.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) will need to be consulted in determining how new technologies used by the railroad industry affect the safety of railroad operations and the mission of the FRA. SMEs will also need to be consulted in identifying the employees affected and in determining the effectiveness of training to address competency gaps.

Goal 1. Employees are provided with the resources to become knowledgeable regarding new rail technologies.

Suggested Activities

- Determine how new technologies used by the rail industry affect the way FRA accomplishes its mission.
- Identify the employees affected by the use of new technologies in the railroad industry.
- Identify changes in the competencies needed by employees because of the introduction of new rail technologies.
- Identify training needs of employees affected by the use of new technologies in the railroad industry.

Focus Area – Communication

FRA Employees believe in the mission of the organization. Employees expressed a desire to better understand why organizational decisions are made. Employees noted communication silos between headquarters and the regions, from region to region and within offices/functions.

Employees often turn to their immediate supervisor as the source of organizational information. Employees noted; however, sometimes organizational information does not reach them. Further, even when clear communication processes are established, they are not always followed.

Inadequate, isolated and inconsistent communication between headquarters and the regions, from region to region and within offices/functions can make it more challenging for employees to work together, problem solve and support the mission of the organization.

Communicating information to employees about how FRA's current priorities guide their work to affect safe transportation will help employees better understand how their individual efforts support the achievement of mission objectives.

Developing an efficient/effective communication strategy should take into consideration the types of information employees find most relevant; their preferred means of receiving that information and an appropriate schedule for consistently delivering that information.

Goal 2. Critical information is consistently communicated between headquarters and the regions, from region to region and within offices/functions.

Suggested Activities

- Identify the types of information relevant to employees to work together, problem solve and support the mission of the organization.
- Identify platforms to communicate critical information efficiently/effectively between headquarters and the regions, from region to region and within offices/functions.
- Determine the schedule to communicate critical information consistently between headquarters and the regions, from region to region and within offices/functions.

Focus Area – Staffing/Recruiting

Feedback from focus groups and interviews indicate the staffing and recruiting processes are perceived negatively. Employees expressed concerns about the length of the recruiting process, the qualifications of people being recruited, and the selection process.

Employees commented positions are left unfilled for long periods of time. When those positions are not filled quickly, key responsibilities are either not met or other FRA employees need to spread themselves thinner to cover the unfilled positions.

Managing the hiring process efficiently and effectively is challenging. The hiring process encompasses a wide range of activities and stakeholders within and outside the Office of Human Resources. Furthermore, the activities utilize a variety of manual and electronic processes.

To improve the hiring process, we need to identify the activities, stakeholders, timeframes and technology involved in each step in the hiring process. Then we can identify inefficiencies in the process, the causes of these inefficiencies and develop a corrective action plan.

To maintain an efficient and effective hiring process we need to develop a strategy to routinely assess the timeliness of the steps in the hiring process and a strategy to routinely assess customer satisfaction with the quality of candidates.

Goal 3. Vacant positions are filled with qualified candidates in a timely manner.

Suggested Activities

- Identify the activities, stakeholders, timeframes and technology involved in each step in the hiring process.
- Identify inefficiencies in each step in the hiring process, the causes of these inefficiencies and develop a corrective action plan.
- Develop a strategy to routinely measure the timeliness of the hiring process.
- Develop a strategy to measure customer satisfaction with the quality of candidates.

Focus Area – Onboarding

Effective orientation programs foster a positive experience, help new employees verify that they have made the right choice, orient new employees to the organization's mission, provide new employees with accurate and concise onboarding information, provide new employees with on-going support and an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the success of the program.

Further, if the onboarding process is implemented and managed correctly, it can create a favorable first impression of the organization and its' employees. This in turn, will help to lay the foundation for a mutually rewarding relationship that lasts for many years. Conversely, if there are gaps in the process, it could result in a less-than-optimal work experience for all.

New FRA employees participate in a one-day DOT orientation followed by a one-day FRA orientation. Given the small number of biweekly FRA hires and their geographic dispersion across the country, orientation is provided in person for new hires in the headquarters region and virtually for new hires in the regions.

Feedback from the focus groups and interviews indicate there is a need to improve the orientation program. Specifically, newly hired employees commented they did not know who to contact for information and resources. They also commented the information they are provided with during orientation is excessive and they are not able to retain it.

Several employees suggested improvements to the orientation program that included an orientation process over a longer period and establishing a more consistent virtual process for field employees. Some employees suggested field administrative staff may be better suited to provide orientation to new field employees.

Goal 4. The onboarding program provides new hires with the information and resources they need to successfully transition into the FRA.

Suggested Activities

- Obtain feedback from the instructors on the effectiveness of the program.
- Obtain feedback from new employees on the effectiveness of the program.
- Revise the content and adjust the timelines of the orientation program to provide new employees with sufficient information in a reasonable timeframe.

Focus Area – Training and Employee Development

FRA employees are satisfied with training and development opportunities. They commented that specific training is needed to improve employee skills in data analysis, project management, writing, communications and computer applications. As technology and the railroad industry evolves, there is also a need for training on new technologies. Some employees cited the need for additional guidance on how to apply leadership training in daily management scenarios.

Employees noted rotational assignments and cross training opportunities are beneficial even if they create short-term workload challenges while an employee from their office was on a detail assignment because they bring value in the long-term.

Employees noted there are greater opportunities for training courses within the Washington, D.C. metro area. Due to limited travel budgets, more options for web based training is beneficial for employees in the field that may have challenges taking advantage of training that requires travel.

IDPs are a useful tool to assist employees in career development. IDPs offer employees an opportunity to collaborate with their supervisors and design a strategy for career growth. IDPs allow employees to document short-range, mid-range, and long-range career goals, as well as training and development activities to reach each goal. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are required for all FRA employees. The FRA does not track compliance with this requirement.

Goal 5. Employees are provided with opportunities for training and professional development in identified areas.

Suggested Activities

- Research training opportunities in employee-identified areas.
- Consult with subject matter experts to determine the best training for employees.
- Develop an approach to track employee compliance with the requirement to use IDPs.

Focus Area – Performance Management

Feedback from employees regarding performance management is mixed. Some employees feel the performance management process is clear and they received appropriate direction. Others stated they did not understand how the performance evaluation process works. They also felt the process is not applied consistently. Employees want expectations to be clearly communicated with opportunities for dialogue on expectations and goals.

Employees also expressed concerns about the criteria for evaluation. For instance, some expressed that higher evaluation scores are granted when there is a response to a safety incident as opposed to maintaining a safe environment. Employees also have a perception that poor performers are not held accountable for their performance.

Feedback from employees indicates employees would benefit from performance management training and resources posted on the intranet that employees could refer to during the performance rating cycle. Regarding individual performance plans, supervisors need to be able to write clear performance standards, make meaningful distinctions between different levels of performance and provide specific examples of successful performance at each level.

Goal 6. The performance management process is clearly communicated to employees.

Suggested Activities

- Provide comprehensive performance management training to supervisors.
- Provide performance management resources for all employee on the FRANET.

Focus Area – Employee Retention

Employee retention has improved since 2014. Focus group participants identified the flexibility in work schedules offered by FRA as the best thing about their employment. Employees expressed the FRA offers them a sense of community where they can work together to accomplish a mission and grow professionally.

Employees noted understaffing creates workload imbalances. This in turn, creates more pressure, which leads to longer work hours and decreases employee satisfaction with their employment. Employees also noted they feel frustrated when they receive little or no communication on how their jobs will be affected by change.

Focus group feedback indicates employees value flexible work schedules and a cooperative work environment. Employees also indicated workload imbalances and lack of communication regarding change are stress factor in their employment.

It is reasonable to presume informing employees in a timely manner regarding changes affecting their employment and balancing employees' workloads will lead to greater employee satisfaction and longer employee retention with the FRA.

Goal 7. Employees are well informed regarding changes that affect their employment.

Suggested Activities

- Develop guidelines for successful change management.

Goal 8. Employees' workloads are well balanced.

Suggested Activities

- Develop a guiding strategy for long-term workforce planning.
- Develop a process to gather feedback from management/employees regarding the causes of workload imbalances.
- Develop a strategy to address the feedback gathered from employees.

Focus Area –Succession Planning and Knowledge Management

Focus groups commonly expressed concern that employees in key positions are at risk of retiring soon and the organization is not adequately prepared to fill those positions or retain/transfer their knowledge before leaving the organization. Employees noted people left the organization and took with them vast knowledge they were unable to properly pass onto their successors.

Employees place importance on the ability to exchange information about their work. They indicated information and knowledge sharing is limited by budget restrictions that keep them from attending courses and/or having discussions about their work experiences. Employees noted the FRA hires mid-career professionals rather than younger professionals.

Employees expressed a desire for the opportunity to have a new employee matched with a more experienced employee to help them understand how things are done. This could include learning how to find information on the agency's internet, or information on how an inspector thought through a complicated problem where the solution was not found in a manual.

Succession planning requires identifying employees eligible for retirement or at risk of leaving the FRA. Supervisors can then discuss with these employees how best to capture the knowledge to be transferred. Developing a program for succession planning and knowledge transfer can lead to better coverage of functional areas and better workload balance for the employees remaining.

Goal 9. Key leadership and hard to fill positions are filled in a timely manner.

Suggested Activities

- Identify key leadership and hard to fill positions.
- Develop a method to predict future vacancies.
- Identify barriers to filling key leadership and hard to fill positions.
- Develop a strategy to overcome barriers to filling key and hard to fill positions.

Goal 10. Knowledge is retained prior to employees transitioning out of FRA.

Suggested Activities

- Develop a template for assessing the information/knowledge that needs to be retained.
- Explore IT options for transferring information/knowledge.

Focus Area – Diversity and Inclusion

FRA workforce demographics and the 2019 scores on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) indicate our workforce has changed in positive ways over the past five years. The FRA has become slightly more diverse since the 2014 SHCP. Minority representation increased from 24% in 2014 to 25% in 2019. The number of disabled employees increased from 10% in 2014 to 13.3% in 2019. The number of veterans increased from 30% in 2014 to 32.2% in 2019.

Positive scores on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) also increased. Employee responses to the question "Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (for example, recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diversity issues, mentoring)" increased from 61.4% in 2014 to 66.5% in 2019. Employee responses to the question "Supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds" increase from 69% in 2014 to 79.9% in 2019.

Multiple focus groups voiced the FRA tries to celebrate diversity in the workplace and employees often receive communication from leadership about events around diversity topics. Even with these positive trends, focus groups still reported more should be done to encourage diversity and inclusion within the FRA workforce.

A diverse federal workforce is a challenge to create. A significant portion of FRA employees are recruited from the rail industry. The rail industry is changing; however, it remains predominantly white and male. A Diversity and Inclusion Council can serve the function of developing recruitment and inclusion strategies to cultivate a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Goal 11. The workforce and work environment is diverse and inclusive.

Suggested Activities

- Create a Diversity and Inclusion Council
- Develop a recruitment strategy to provide greater diversity employment opportunities.
- Develop a strategy to cultivate an inclusive work environment.

Focus Area – Work Processes and Tools

Generally, employees in focus groups feel they have the tools and equipment necessary to do their jobs. Employees indicated additional resources are necessary to acquire the skills and tools to analyze and apply data in meaningful ways. Data analysis is raised under the focus area for Training and Employee Development. It has been presented as a separate focus area because it is a significant topic that will likely require coordinating closely with the data analytics team to identify the current internal data analysis capabilities and the additional resources needed.

Goal 12. Employees have sufficient data analysis capabilities.

Suggested Activities

- Assess current internal data analysis capabilities and the additional resources needed.

Focus Area – Consistency

The issues of inconsistency and lack of standardization appear to be common threads that negatively affect operations across the organization. In focus groups, employees raised the issues of inconsistency and lack of standardization in several areas including processes, policies, regulations, organizational communications, recruiting, orientation for new employees, and coordinating with external stakeholders or industry counterparts.

Staff frequently said every work unit, in the field and at headquarters, seems to do things its own way. Employees shared that the structuring and wording of regulations can be too vague in some areas and they would like to see more consistency in the application of regulations across the organization. They also said processes seem to change frequently, communications get stuck and they do not know or understand the steps to reach the desired outcome.

Incorporating greater consistency and standardization into agency operations enables employees to provide services more efficiently/effectively and produce higher quality work products. It will also make it easier to measure performance, conduct benchmarking analysis and implement best practices. Overall, incorporating greater consistency and standardization into agency operations will creates a more organized and less stressful work environment.

Goal 13. Operations across FRA are consistent and standardized where it is relevant and necessary to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness of the mission.

Suggested Activities

- Develop a process to gather feedback from employees regarding the specific work processes/products that need greater consistency and/or standardization.
- Develop a strategy to address the feedback gathered from employees

Appendix B – Reference Documents/Best Practices

Exhibit 1: EPA Individual Development Plan

Name:		Position		Plan Date:	
Division:		Mail Code:		Office Phone:	
Series/Grade/Career Ladder:				Email Address:	

Supervisor's Name:		Supervisor's Title:	
Date Met to Discuss:		Date Plan Executed:	
Follow Up Meeting:		Follow Up Meeting:	
Follow Up Meeting:		Follow Up Meeting:	

Competencies to be addressed or shared: http://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/hrtraining/training/competency.htm

Competency	
Competency	
Competency	
Describe Competency and desired outcome	

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT EVENTS AND TIMELINE

Technical Training:

Any training directly related to the "hands on" work you perform every day, i.e., scientific, enforcement, computer, project management, etc.

		Associated Cost			*Date*	
Development Activity	***Source***	***Tuition***	***Travel***	***Hours***	***Planned***	***Completed***
	Totals:					

Cross-Functional Skills Training:

These are the critical skills all employees need to enhance in order to perform tasks in a collaborative work environment. Examples include communications, conflict management, diversity, leadership, team work, etc.

		Associated Cost			*Date*	
Development Activity	***Source***	***Tuition***	***Travel***	***Hours***	***Planned***	***Completed***

	Totals:					

Other Development Activities:

Examples of other activities would include: book reviews, mentoring, coaching, on-line learning, etc.

		Associated Cost			***Date***	
Development Activity	***Source***	***Tuition***	***Travel***	***Hours***	***Planned***	***Completed***

Totals:			

Internal Training workshops and programs can be found at: http://intranet.epa.gov/hrtraining/

Developmental Assignment(s)

When appropriate, a detail to another position may be added as a development activity. The detail must be agreed upon by the sending supervisor, receiving supervisor and the employee. The amount of time dedicated to the detail is also negotiable and can be either extended or cancelled at any time:

Developmental assignment				
Duration:	#	days, beginning	and ending	
Organization:		Department/Office:		
Sending Supervisor's Name			Supervisor's Contact Information:	
Receiving Supervisor Name			Supervisor's Contact Information:	

a. Specific skills and competencies that will be addressed include:

b. Specific projects that will be undertaken include:

c. How will you measure success

Optional Assignment(s):

(Example…IPA, SES Candidate Development Programs, Capital Hill experiences, etc.)

Assignment/Rotation:		months, beginning		and ending	
Agency:			Department/Office:		
Supervisor's Name *(if different then above)*:			Supervisor's Title:		

a. Specific skills and competencies that will be addressed include:

b. Specific projects that will be undertaken include:

SIGNATURES

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is not a fixed document but one that you can enhance or modify over the course of the employee's career. You discuss any changes to this document with your supervisor and training officer/coordinator to ensure resources (people/time/money) are available to support your ongoing development need.

Initial Plan Approval:

Name of Employee	Signature of Employee	Date

Name of Supervisor	Signature of Supervisor	Date
Name of Training Officer/Coordinator	Signature of Training Officer/Coordinator	Date
Name of Mentor *(optional)*	Signature of Mentor	Date

First Year Review:

Name of Employee	Signature of Employee	Date
Name of Supervisor	Signature of Supervisor	Date
Name of Training Officer/Coordinator	Signature of Training Officer/Coordinator	Date
Name of Mentor *(optional)*	Signature of Mentor	Date

Second Year Completion:

Name of Employee	Signature of Employee	Date
Name of Supervisor	Signature of Supervisor	Date
Name of Training Officer/Coordinator	Signature of Training Officer/Coordinator	Date

Name of Mentor *(optional)*	Signature of Mentor	Date

Describe measurable results from your engagement in your investment into training and development activities:

Activity:

Competency Covered:

Measurable increase in skill or change in behavior due:

Overall personal and professional outcome:

Activity:

Competency Covered:

Measurable increase in skill or change in behavior due:

Overall personal and professional outcome:

Activity:

Competency Covered:

Measurable increase in skill or change in behavior due:

Overall personal and professional outcome:

Exhibit 2: Office of Personnel Management – Reskilling Framework

Reskilling Framework

Predict how work will transform

- How is your agency's mission likely to change in the future?
- How will new technologies change jobs?
- What skills and capabilities are likely to be needed?

Assess employee skills

- How can your agency assess the skills of its current workforce?
- What methods will you use to keep inventories up to date?
- How do the current skills of the workforce compare to the projected needs of the future?

Get workforce buy-in

- What strategies can your agency use to encourage employees to take advantage of reskilling and upskilling opportunities?
- How can agencies communicate the career benefits of acquiring new skills?

Find the right candidates

- How will the employees who are interested and capable of mastering new skills be identified as candidates for reskilling and upskilling?

Be prepared

- What infrastructure and resources does the agency need so that employees who acquire new skills can put them in to practice quickly?

Exhibit 3: NHTSA Succession Planning Worksheet

Succession Planning Worksheet

What is succession planning?

A planning process that allows NHTSA to identify whether we have the people in place with the skills to potentially cover key positions today and into the future, if existing staff leave or our organization grows.

Why do succession planning?

It allows you to develop a plan to have the 'right people in the right place at the right time.' If you don't have a succession plan, then NHTSA can be vulnerable if key people leave or our organization grows.

Who should do succession planning?

All managers involved in the operations of NHTSA should be responsible for succession planning within their office/division. All office/division succession plans will eventually feed into an agency-wide succession plan. It is important that the person doing this has direct involvement with staff and is familiar with the day-to-day operations and requirements of the job(s).

How to complete the Succession Planning Worksheet

Step 1: Using the attached form, fill in the employee information box, current person and the number of people in this role/position. Do this for each of your employees, starting with the most key employee(s).

Step 2: Fill in the potential internal candidate(s) that could fill the position. This may require consultation with other senior staff to get their input concerning potential candidates. The attached form also includes an Issues/Notes column where you can record issues about these internal candidates (e.g., skill development that may be required for the position, qualifications, experience, mentoring, etc…). It is important to fill out the Issues/Notes column as you go through the worksheet.

Step 3: If there is no potential internal candidate for the position then you can record your comments for potential external recruitment to fill positions in the External Recruitment column. When filling in the External Recruitment column, it is important to note the potential positions to be filled, the time frame, and any other relevant issues. More detail is always better than less.

When the Succession Planning Worksheet is completed you will have a list of potential internal candidates to fill positions and the potential professional development activities and support they may need. You will also have a list of the potential external hires you may need and the timeframe for engagement—this will assist with ongoing and future planning.

Succession Planning Worksheet

Position (e.g., Director, Division Chief, Team Leader)	Current Employee Name	Number of Employees in this Position	Potential Internal Candidate Names	Number of Potential Internal Candidates	Issues/Notes (e.g., developmental activities needed for each candidate)	External Recruitment (e.g., Timeframe to Hire, other Relevant Info.)

Appendix C - Workforce Analyses

Diversity

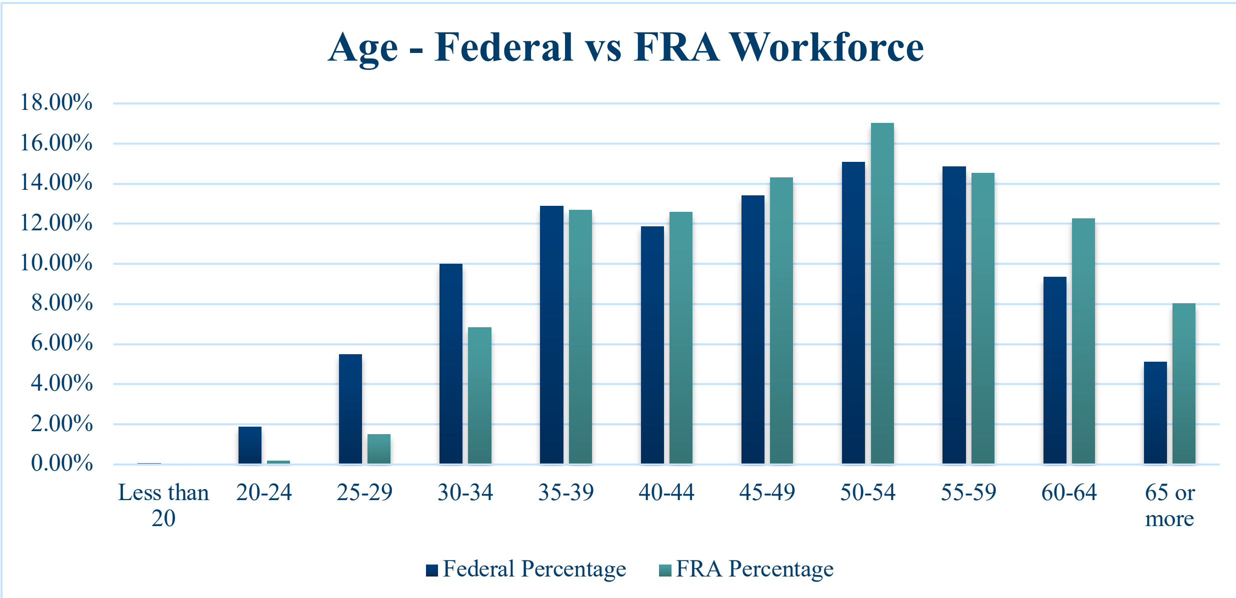
Recruiting from the rail industry especially for field MCOs has impeded significant progress in creating a more diverse workforce that mirrors the federal workforce.

Ethnicity	Federal %	FRA %	FRA % (HQ)	FRA % (Field)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	**1.6%**	0.8%	0.5%	0.97%
Asian	**5.9%**	3.4%	6.8%	0.78%
Black/African American	**18.2%**	15.4%	23.2%	9.50%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	**0.5%**	0.1%	0.0%	0.19%
More Than One Race	**1.7%**	0.2%	0.5%	0.00%
Hispanic/Latino (H/L)	**9.0%**	5.2%	4.3%	5.81%
White	**61.3%**	74.8%	64.7%	82.56%

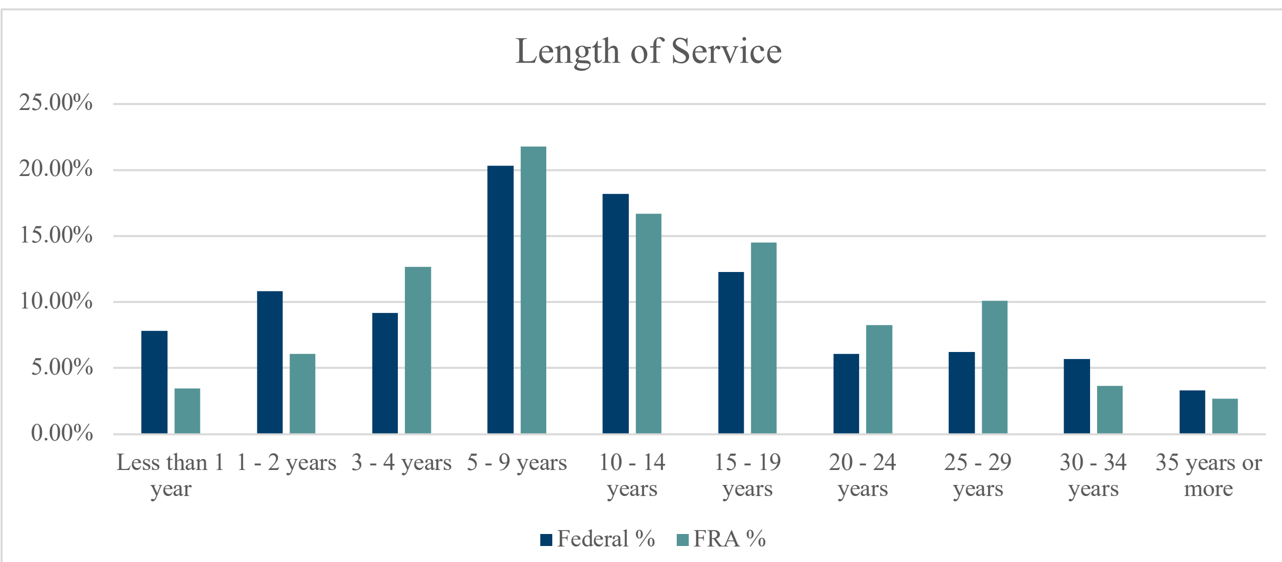
Green = FRA’s workforce is more diverse than the overall federal workforce (by 5% or more)
Yellow = FRA’s workforce is slightly less diverse than the federal workforce (between 1% and 5%)
Red = FRA’s workforce is significantly less diverse than the federal workforce (by 5% or more)

Age Breakdown

Although FRA has a slightly older workforce than the overall federal workforce, the differences are not significant.

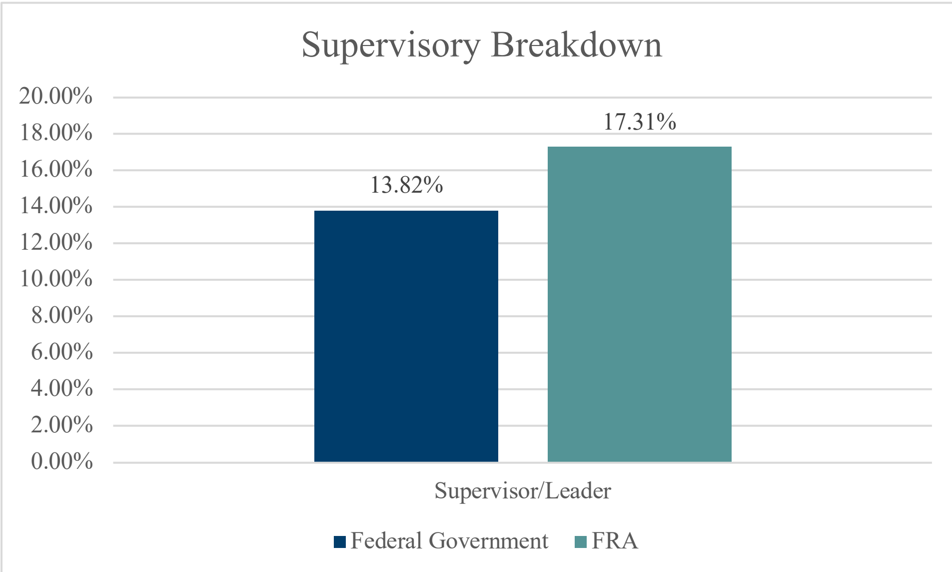


Length of Service



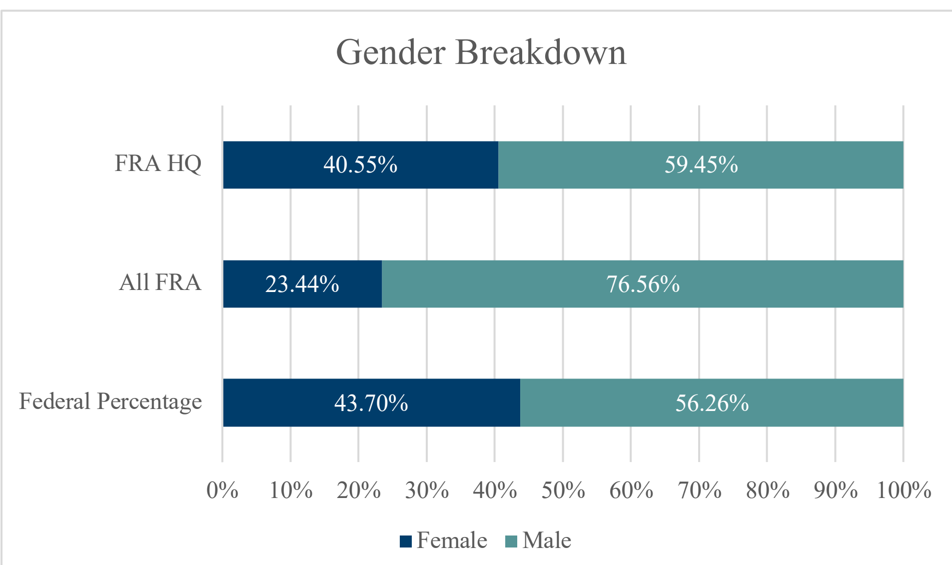
Supervisory Status

FRA's geographically dispersed workforce and the highly skilled rail specializations in the Regions probably accounts for the higher supervisory ratio.



Gender Breakdown (HQ vs Field vs Federal)

The rail industry which is predominately male is the primary source of candidates for field MCOs.



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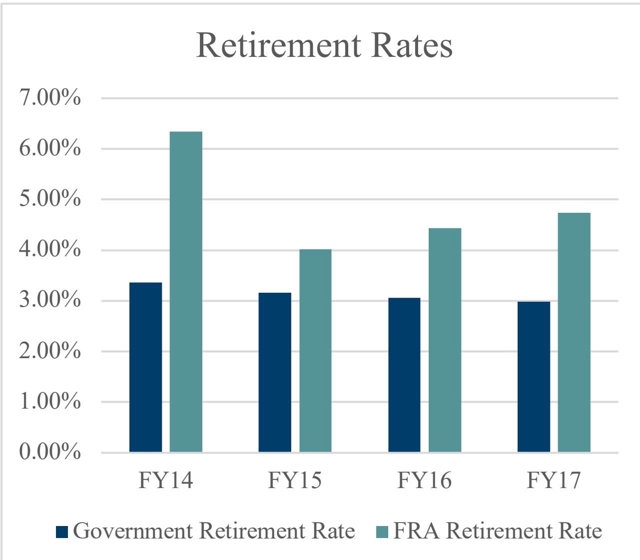
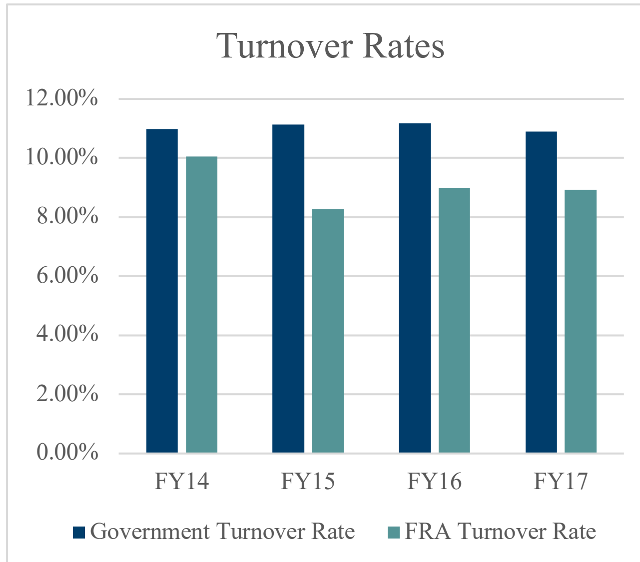
Attrition (FY 14-FY 17)

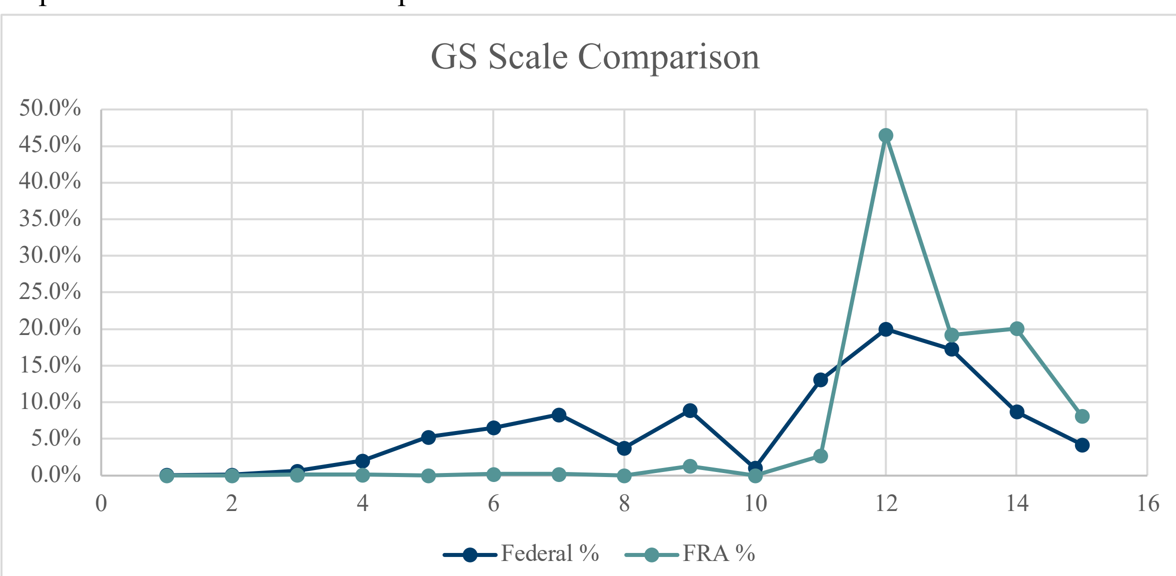
Although the retirement rate in FRA since 2014 have been higher the federal workforce, FRA's overall turnover rate is less than the federal workforce.





GS Scale Comparison

The highly technical nature of Rail Safety MCO positions accounts for the higher number of GS-12 positions in FRA when compared to the federal workforce



Appendix D - Benchmarking

To support a holistic approach to this effort, agencies and organizations with a recognized set of proven practices were benchmarked to capture and collect workforce trends, effective human capital strategies and lessons learned. The goal of benchmarking was to understand how similar organizations plan for future workforce needs through an open discussion on key human capital initiatives, norms and trends that also may affect the FRA workforce. This Appendix highlights the key takeaways and best practices gleaned from each of the benchmarked organizations, including:

- DOT National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- National Transportation Safety Board
- CSX Transportation

The benchmarking document is in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. To view the interim deliverables, right click on the PowerPoint slide below and select “Presentation Object” and then Show to see the PowerPoint presentation.

Benchmarking Organizations

Organization	Size	Regional Presence	Budget	2018 FEVS Best Places to Work Ranking	POC	Date
FRA	903 Employees (2017)	✓ (8 main regions)	$854 Million (FY19)	79.3% (37th of agency subcomponents)	N/A	N/A
DOT National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	540 Employees (2017)	✓ (10 main regions)	$899 Million (FY17)	57.9% (311th of agency subcomponents)	Patricia Ellison-Potter Director of HR Patricia.Ellison-Potter@dot.gov 202-366-7921	10/29/19
National Transportation Safety Board	390 Employees (2017)	✓ (4 offices + response team)	$110 Million (FY19)	77.8% (6th of small agencies)	Paul Sledzik Deputy Managing Director 202-314-6134 paul.sledzik@ntsb.gov	11/5/19
CSX Transportation*	24,006 Employees (2017)	✓	$12.25 Billion (2018) *Revenue	N/A	Stephanie Noel VP HR and Chief Diversity Officer 904 359-1288 Stephanie_noel@csx.com	1/9/20

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Appendix E - Interim Deliverables

The step-by-step approach to the development of this HUMAN CAPITAL ASSESSMENT is detailed in the earlier section on Plan Development. Throughout the course of this effort, interim deliverables were drafted by the Atlas Research Team and shared with the Strategic Human Capital Plan Working Group and form this Appendix, including:

- Information and Analysis Brief
- Information Collection Tool
- Solutions and Benchmarking Deliverable
- Senior Leadership Brief

The interim deliverables are in the form of PowerPoint presentations. To view the interim deliverables, right click on the PowerPoint slide below and select "Presentation Object" and then Show to see the PowerPoint presentation.