

2017 Research Symposium

VTrans Employee Retention Study and Knowledge Management Pilot

& STIC Annual Meeting

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE

VTrans Employee Retention Study and Knowledge Management Pilot

STUDYTIMELINE

October 2016 – September 2018

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Glenn McRae, UVM, Carol Vallett & Jennifer Jewiss

VTRANS CONTACT(S)

Dr. Emily Parkany, P.E., Scott Rogers, Colleen Montague, Heidi Dimick, Christine Hetzel, Michele Boomhower, Lori Valburn, Wayne Gammell, Wanda Minnoli, Sommer Bucossi

MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet was prepared for the 2017 VTrans Research Symposium & STIC Annual Meeting held on **September 28, 2017** at National Life in Montpelier, VT. 8:00 am– 12:00 pm.

Fact sheets can be found for additional projects featured at the 2017 Symposium at <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/2017symposium>

Additional information about the **VTrans Research Program** can be found at <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research>

Additional information about the **VTrans STIC Program** can be found at <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/boards-councils/stic>

Significance of the Project

Employee retention is a critical issue for organizations of all types, and public sector groups such as VTrans are no exception. Not only can the costs of recruitment, training and orientation be costly, but work disruption and loss of organizational memory can impact organization performance. In a 2015 focus group VTrans leaders expressed concern about a variety of human resource related issues including recruitment, supervision, knowledge management, and succession planning. Retention was an underlying thread to much of this conversation including the relationship of retention to good supervision and career path development. Workforce retention and Knowledge Management (KM) does not follow a “one size fits all” approach and there is no magic formula for eliminating employee turnover. Too often, organizational leaders identify and attempt to fix what is perceived to be the retention problem, without a solid base of understanding. An individualized organizational approach, based on systematic and evidence-based methods can best determine the real state of retention and KM at VTrans. This understanding, along with VTrans leadership involvement, can then lead to the development of specific action steps that can be put in place at VTrans in order to impact the broader aspects of both talent and knowledge management. KM practices in turn will help proactively manage workforce transitions.

Methodology

1. Turnover data analysis (FY 2016)
2. Initial focus groups (TAC members; MOB supervisors; MOB employees; Rail, IT & Lab supervisors) n=32 participants
3. Employee focus groups by Age and Years of Service (age: 19 to 25, 26 to 35 years; Years of Service: less than 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 8 years) n=25 participants
4. KM Litmus test, n=45 respondents (managers)
5. KM In-depth Assessment (Technical Services, Structures, DMV (selected individuals)) n=61 respondents
6. Benchmarking data calls with six other state DOTs
7. KM annotated bibliography
8. VTrans employee exit questionnaire designed (under review)

Next Steps

Preliminary findings reveal a VTrans employee turnover rate similar to other state DOTs (11% in FY 16, 5.4% voluntary excluding retirements) with some areas and groups having higher turnover. Reasons for staying employed at VTrans include benefits, job security and potential for advancement. Supervisory issues and pay are primary reasons for leaving VTrans. VTrans has some initial steps towards KM but much of the information is not organized in an easily retrievable manner. Tacit knowledge seems to be at risk of being lost as employees leave the organization.

Next steps are to implement a short-term KM pilot project. An outline for a KM Community of Practice has been developed and will be discussed with the TAC in early September. Pending endorsement by the TAC, this will move ahead during October 2017 – April 2018 . Exit questionnaire will be implemented in the same time frame.

Potential Impacts

Findings from this project will help inform employee retention at VTrans and help establish a model for knowledge capture that minimizes the impact of employee turnover.