

Maintaining a qualified transportation workforce



Image courtesy of Minnesota DOT

Minnesota DOT has developed a diverse set of strategies to attract and retain workers, such as internships and work-study programs geared toward students and others new to the workforce, as well as career development opportunities to engage existing staff.

SCAN FOCUS

Workforce management is one of the most important issues currently affecting state departments of transportation (DOTs), according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). With Domestic Scan 19-02, the scan team sought to identify and disseminate the successful strategies that public and private organizations have found to attract, develop, engage, and retain qualified and skilled workers. The results can help agencies build and sustain a healthy workforce to meet today's transportation needs and prepare for the demands of tomorrow.

PERSON-TO-PERSON RESEARCH

The scan team met with representatives from 12 state transportation agencies and three private sector companies during a series of in-person and virtual meetings in 2019 and 2020. Through these events, the scan team listened as participants described their organization's workforce-related activities, challenges, achievements and innovative solutions. To help other states implement similar strategies quickly, the team focused on practices that could be adopted with minimal investment.

NEXT STEPS Put It into Practice

EXPLORE NEW IDEAS

The strategies that have worked well for other public and private organizations may suit your agency's needs as well.

GET INVOLVED

Help problem-solve with AASHTO's Committee on Human Resources and Subcommittee on Transportation Workforce Management at [humanresources.transportation.org](https://www.humanresources.transportation.org).

READ MORE

The full report on Scan 19-02 is available at domesticscan.org/19-02.

SUGGEST FUTURE SCANS

What topic do you have for an NCHRP Domestic Scan? See domesticscan.org/.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Investigating the participating organizations' programs and practices, the scan team discovered several common themes. Workforce management activities that integrate recruitment, cultivation and retention into a holistic plan tend to be more effective than standalone efforts in any of these areas. Additionally, recognizing the value of a workforce and maintaining it like other critical investment can help agencies appreciate and support its workers. Finally, upper-management leadership and technology are essential elements of successful workforce management strategies.



Vermont AOT's Women Can Do program introduces highschoolers to careers in transportation through networking and hands-on demonstrations.

Image courtesy of Vermont AOT

PUTTING IT TO WORK

Recommendations to guide states' workforce management efforts include:

- Align workforce plans with the agency's mission and goals.
- Consult resources from other states and national organizations.
- Prioritize staff like other assets, and develop a risk-based management strategy to weather workforce changes over the long term.
- Identify who in the agency bears responsibility for managing and championing workforce-related strategies.
- Look to AASHTO to publish guidance states can use for developing their own strategic workforce management plans.

SHARING THE RESULTS

The scan team's findings will be presented at a variety of state, local and national gatherings of transportation professionals. The team is also pursuing opportunities for additional peer exchanges and workshops. A "Quick Take" video discussing the project's results is available at domesticscan.org/19-02.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM: The NCHRP U.S. Domestic Scan Program (NCHRP Project 20-68, domesticscan.org) recognizes the value of firsthand sharing of new technologies and practices. Launched in 2006, the program typically sponsors two or three scans per year, putting state and federal DOT practitioners who need solutions in touch with innovative peers around the country, speeding the transfer of technology and know-how. During the intense experience of the scan (typically one to two weeks), participants see how a new technology or practice works in the real world. They also develop close professional relationships that remain readily available to them years later.

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