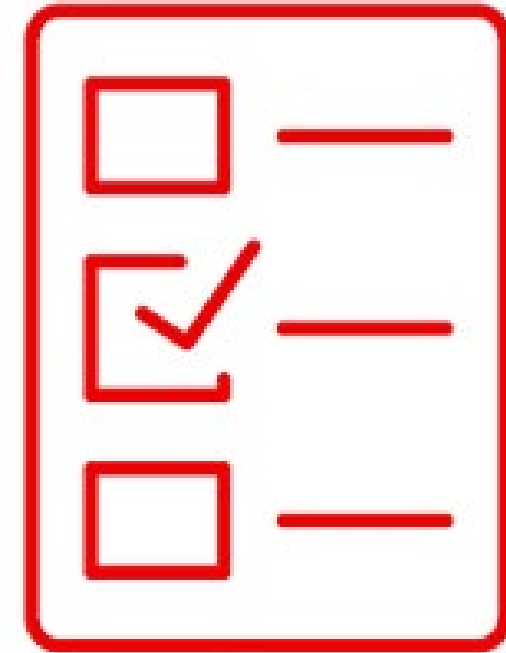


2023 Veterans Affairs Permanent Housing Conference

Staff Hiring and Retention: Building and Supporting Teams in the New Normal

Agenda

- Employment Market Data
- Staff Hiring and Recruitment: Common Feedback from the Field
- Inclusive Hiring: Focusing on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Staff Retention Strategies:
 - Establishing Clear Communication Channels
 - How to Value Frontline Staff
- Next Steps + Conclusion
- Questions



Who is in the room?

- **SSVF Staff**
- **HUD-VASH Staff**
- **VA leadership**

Staff Hiring & Recruitment: Common Feedback from the Field

Considerations in Staff Hiring

As a hiring or recruitment specialist you might notice increased emphasis on:

- Remote or hybrid work schedules.
- Flexible scheduling, i.e. compressed tours.
- Focus on diversity and inclusion in the hiring process.
- Shift toward skills-based hiring rather than solely focusing on qualifications, acknowledging this may look differently across employment settings (non-profits versus federal positions).
- A streamlined and transparent hiring process.
- Hiring candidates with lived expertise and experience.
- Health and wellness supports for employees in the human services field.

Staff Hiring: Practical Approaches

Practical approaches to respond to these patterns include:

- Cultivate and market a positive and supportive work environment that fosters growth, collaboration and work-life balance.
- Offer flexible work arrangements such as hybrid schedules or compressed hours to attract candidates seeking work-life integration
 - Share the intended career path for each role
 - Offer wellness programs or other initiatives that promote health and well-being
 - Provide mentorship and coaching
 - Showcase company culture and values in recruitment materials
- Develop a strategic plan to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, when building teams.

Staff Hiring: Practical Approaches

Practical approaches to respond to hiring patterns include (continued):

- Avoid using the same case manager job description for all positions. The needs and expectations of a housing case manager, housing navigator, healthcare navigator, and project manager are all distinct and require unique job descriptions.
- Review job descriptions to focus on highlighting specific and qualified statements about the requirements for the position.
 - Instead of using generic or vague language, use precise and detailed statements that clearly outline the necessary qualifications and skills needed for the job.
 - The way you write a job description has a direct effect on who applies and is ultimately hired for the position.

Staff Hiring: Practical Approaches

Practical applications to respond to hiring patterns include (continued):

- Utilize targeted job posting on industry specific job boards and social media platforms to reach qualified candidates.
- Improve candidate experience during the hiring process:
 - Streamlined application process
 - Technical and skills assessments
 - Timely feedback
 - Provide details and information ahead of each interview step
- Revamp perks and benefits to include medical, behavioral health and wellness supports.

Staff Hiring: What are you seeing locally? Discuss

- Please break off into groups of 5-6 people.
- What patterns are you seeing locally?
- What adjustments have you made in your hiring process to adapt to those trends?
- What's working? What's not?
- As an employee, what are some things that would help encourage you to continue working in this field?
- Task one group member with a brief report out.

Inclusive Hiring: Focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Building Resilient and Diverse Teams

- Building a diverse and resilient team is crucial to build a thriving work environment.
- Diversity allows teammates to bring unique perspectives to the work, while resilient teams share a common mental model of teamwork and are able to improvise, trust, and feel safe with one another.
- Before building resilient and diverse teams, employers must identify, address and work to eliminate any bias from your organizations.
- Organizations must take a hard look at their organizational chart, leadership style, leadership structure to determine where there are opportunities to increase diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Importance of Diverse Staff in Service Delivery

- Enhances cultural responsiveness.
- Improves communication and connection with those we serve.
- Increases empathy and understanding.
- Promotes tailored and relevant services.
- Reduces barriers to access.
- Enhances trust and rapport with those we serve.
- Promotes social justice and equity.
- Increases innovation and creativity.



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Recruitment Strategies

- Implement inclusive language and job descriptions that appeal to a diverse range of candidates and avoid biased language.
- Actively seek out diverse talent by utilizing diverse job boards, professional networks, and community organizations.
- Establish partnerships with diversity-focused organizations and attend career fairs and events specifically targeting underrepresented groups.
- Be intentional in efforts to recruit Veterans with lived experience and expertise of homelessness.
- Train hiring managers and interviewers on unconscious bias and provide them with tools to ensure fair and equitable hiring practices.
- Create diverse interview panels that include individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives to ensure a fair evaluation of candidates.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Recruitment Strategies

- Offer diversity and inclusion training programs for all employees to foster a welcoming and inclusive work environment.
- Develop mentorship or sponsorship programs to support the growth and advancement of underrepresented employees within the organization.
- Conduct regular diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) audits to assess the effectiveness of recruitment strategies and identify areas for improvement.
- Establish employee resource groups or affinity groups to provide a sense of belonging and support for diverse employees.
- Regularly review and update diversity metrics and goals to track progress and hold the organization accountable for diversity and inclusion efforts.

Inclusive Hiring: Local Strategies: Discussion

- Does your agency focus on hiring Veterans with lived expertise? How do you effectively recruit for this?
- Have you established partnerships with diversity-focused organizations to target underrepresented groups?
- What ways does your organization work to identify and eliminate bias in the interview and hiring process?
- Are there other strategies that your organization has developed to ensure inclusive hiring practices?

Staff Retention: Establishing Clear Communication Channels

Establishing Clear Communication Channels

Is your team aware of the organization's communication channels?

Yes! All team members are briefed on the organization's communication channels, informal and formal.

Maybe? HR, team leads, upper-level management or someone else is tasked with this responsibility

Not really (or no)...this is not commonly discussed or communicated.

Establishing Clear Communication Channels

Communication is central to all meaningful collaboration and teamwork and keeps the whole organization moving forward.



Different communication channels include but are not limited to:

- Face-to-face discussions
- Video conferencing/Audio conferencing
- Written letters/decision memos
 - annual reports
 - agreements/contracts
 - publications
 - policies and procedures
 - training
- Chats and messaging
- Blogs
- Formal written documentation
- Spreadsheets

Gathering & Listening to Staff Input

How can homeless service organizations make sure that staff feels valued in their daily work?

- Leadership is the place to start when ensuring staff feels valued.
- Implementing inclusivity in the structure and decisions of the agency – with all staff – is critical to staff feeling valued.
- When it comes to implementing new policies and procedures, it is crucial to have viewpoints from every perspective. This should lead to creating a brave and open space where staff can come together and share ideas that bring about change in their organization.

Adapted from: <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/how-to-value-frontline-staff/>

Gathering & Listening to Staff Input (continued)

- There are several ways that organization leaders can gather staff input, and in turn, ensure that employees feel supported.
- Employee satisfaction surveys are key to understanding the inner workings of the workplace.

Employee Satisfaction Survey Checklist:



Staff Retention: How to Value Frontline Staff (and Show It)

Valuing & Retaining Frontline Staff

- Provide competitive and fair compensation to staff. Staff retention has a direct impact on quality of services, and high quality services should be compensated as such.
- Explore ways to build capacity to support staff through increased responsibilities and an increasingly challenging work environment.
- Ensure that new staff have the skills and supports to serve communities with increased vulnerabilities, i.e. mental health and wellness supports, training and tools to effectively carry out daily duties.
- Proactively and transparently respond to staff turnover by involving staff in discussions about opportunities for improvement.

Valuing & Retaining Frontline Staff

- Upskilling and reskilling – provide opportunities to gain or enhance skills and knowledge through continuous learning opportunities. Example: Staff participation in Veteran Leadership groups, Continuum of Care meetings and other community efforts as a way to foster leadership and elevate presence outside of direct care work.
- Quality consultation + supervision plays a crucial role in supporting staff by providing them with guidance, feedback, advocacy and professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and effectiveness in serving Veterans.
- Promote (and model) self-care and well-being and ensure staff have the necessary support and resources to prioritize self-care, manage stress, and maintain their overall well-being, ultimately preventing burnout and

Valuing & Retaining Frontline Staff

- Establish a Policies & Procedures Committee: Convening a group of staff members, usually at least one from every department, who come together and discuss the policies and procedures of an agency, with an aim towards change if needed. Staff should also apply a race equity lens to the review of these policies.
- Establish a Work Culture Committee: Assembling a group of staff members that come up with various ways to show staff appreciation and recognition both in and outside of the workplace.
- Plan a staff outing: Selecting a “majority rules” activity, chosen from a list of ideas provided by all staff, that takes place on a day most convenient for all staff. Board members work within the agency for the duration of the event so all staff can attend.

Source: <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/how-to-value-frontline-staff/>

Valuing & Retaining Frontline Staff

- Implement Annual Agency Awards: Creating a ballot vote with various categories; each category will have a winner. Staff will get to vote for the employee who they believe is most deserving to win in each category (each employee anonymously votes). A ceremony is held, with potluck dinner served, a host, and awards given out.
- Implement a Quarterly Peer Recognition Award: Awarding physical trophies or plaques for staff to celebrate each other, presented at all-staff meetings with the current staff winner selecting the next winner of a different department.

Source: <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/how-to-value-frontline-staff/>

Staff Retention: What is working locally?

- Are there other strategies you are using locally that are improving staff retention?
- What has been most effective?
- Can you give examples of how you've supported staff through upskilling and re-skilling?
- How to you promote and model collaboration between leadership and program staff at your agency?

Next Steps & Closing

Next Steps – What can we start now?

- Establish and implement a thorough approach to attracting and retaining top talent and diverse teams.
- Develop a robust local recruitment process.
- Offer competitive compensation and benefits packages to attract and retain high-performing employees – can anything be improved? Are there opportunities for retention bonuses?
- Schedule ongoing professional development and training opportunities.
- Implement effective performance management systems to recognize and reward employee achievements.

Next Steps – What can we start now?

- Enhance employee engagement initiatives to foster a sense of belonging and loyalty.
- Implement flexible work arrangements to support employee well-being.
- Conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys and share results transparently.
- Continuously review and improve HR policies and practices to align with the evolving needs and expectations of employees.

Resources

- [9 Trends That Will Shape Work in 2023 and Beyond \(hbr.org\)](#)
- [Hiring Post-COVID: How to Level Up Your Recruitment Strategies for 2021 | Compt](#)
- [\(5\) Upskilling and Retraining Employees for a Post-COVID Workplace | LinkedIn](#)
- [Building Resilient Organizations | The Forge \(forgeorganizing.org\)](#)
- [Building Radically Adaptable, Collaborative, and Resilient Teams \(aaronhall.com\)](#)
- [Communication Channels: Definition, Types and Role | Marketing91](#)
- [How to Value Frontline Staff - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [O*NET OnLine \(onetonline.org\)](#)

Questions