WORKFORCE CONVERSATION GUIDE:
A RECRUITMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Attracting qualified applicants is essential to maintaining a strong workforce in child welfare. Agencies must implement ongoing and proactive recruitment strategies to remain competitive in today's labor market and to ensure a pool of qualified, mission-driven candidates. To figure out the best recruitment strategy for your child welfare agency, it is beneficial to review existing data and answer questions about a variety of aspects of the workforce. This process takes time and a dedicated group of people, but it can help your organization understand what the needs and challenges are before deciding how to solve them.

WHAT IS RECRUITMENT?

Recruitment is a process that includes efforts to make potential job candidates aware of job openings and influence whether they apply, maintain interest in the job until an offer is made, and accept an offer (Breaugh, 2008).

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

This review should be conducted by a workforce team to ensure different perspectives are at the table. This team may include:

- people recently recruited, those involved in recruiting,
- hiring managers,
- human resources (HR) managers or liaisons to the child welfare agency,
- child welfare agency leaders or managers,
- HR analytics staff,
- website administrator or team member, and
- someone in communications.

External workforce experts can also provide a fresh perspective and greater knowledge of the research related to recruitment, selection, and retention to prompt additional questions. Some team members should be familiar with the data sets used in the review and how information is gathered.

USING THE WORKFORCE CONVERSATION GUIDE

Workforce challenges are common, but it can be difficult to pinpoint which aspects of the employee lifecycle provide the greatest opportunity for improvement.

This resource is designed as a starting point to dive into your data and understand where you can strengthen your workforce. These workforce conversation guides address topics related to recruitment, performance, and well-being. Each one provides a list of questions intended to prompt your workforce team to consider what they know, what information is missing, identify possible trends, and question what the data mean.

These resources are designed to help you assess your needs. It is recommended that you work through each one, as workforce challenges are interconnected (see Key Takeaways from Phases of the Child Welfare Employee Lifecycle). For example, your retention problem may be directly linked to your recruitment sources. We encourage you to pull together a team, meet regularly to work through the questions, and ask yourselves "why" you are doing something in a particular way. The amount of time this process takes varies, but at the end of it, you should be able to identify where to invest your time and resources.

WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK AT?

Information will be drawn from sources such as:

- records or reports of recruitment strategies
- recruitment materials
- copies of job postings
- the application form
- applicant and candidate records
- web analytics to learn where candidates are coming from to reach your posting
- records of standard and ad hoc communications with candidates
- candidate survey results
- compilation of online job and agency reviews
- data and metrics that reflect the incidence, outputs or outcomes of any of the above.

The team may also gather new information through focus groups, interviews, or surveys of recent hires. Agencies should be thoughtful and intentional about how and where this information is stored so that only the necessary individuals have access to it. It is also best to use aggregate, deidentified data.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE EXPLORE?

Strategies and activities currently in place:

- Is recruitment proactive or reactive? For key jobs with high turnover, are openings posted continuously or only as needed? Is the approach optimal for the need?
- What active strategies are used to attract potential candidates (e.g., job fairs, campus events, community outreach activities, social media, direct outreach to candidates)? Discuss these with your team and look at available data to understand which ones yield the most qualified/successful candidates. If you do not have data to help you answer this question, consider ways to learn more.
- What passive strategies are used to inform candidates of job openings (e.g., Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, agency webpage)? If you can track this information, discuss the success of these strategies.
- Is there a referral program for current employees to recommend candidates for consideration? If yes, are there tiered incentives to promote success? If yes, how successful are the candidates that come through that referral source, compared to other referral sources?
- What is the yield for each recruiting strategy? Consider overall numbers and candidate quality. Are there strategies that could be bolstered, added, or dropped?

How potential candidates learn about open positions:

- Are job openings easily located on your agency webpage? If not, what can be done to improve that? How do you monitor if potential candidates see and access these listings?
- Are search engine optimization strategies employed to promote visibility of job openings or other recruitment information? If not, can they be used?

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- Are Google Analytics (or another application to analyze website performance and user behavior) used to understand where applicants are coming from and to explore other interactions they have with your website? If so, what do the data reveal?
- Does the **job posting** provide a clear and compelling overview of the job, the qualifications and other requirements, the compensation and benefits, the agency, training and supports, how to apply, and what to expect in the hiring process? Talk through what information is presented and what might be missing.
- In circumstances when there aren't immediate openings for a job (but there likely will be in the future), is there a way for a candidate to learn about the job and express interest and be notified when an opening becomes available?
- Do candidates get a realistic overview of representative positive and negative aspects of the job?

The application process:

- Is the application process clear and simple to follow? Is it mobile friendly? If not, how can that be improved?
- Does the application include a question about how the applicant first heard about the job opportunity? Are the response options comprehensive? If so, what do the data reveal?

Post-application process:

- After candidates apply, what additional strategies are used to encourage interest in the job and motivate them to accept an offer if one is given? Are there opportunities for improvement?
- Is there regular and timely communication with candidates from application to job offer? If not, discuss why that is the case and if there could be ongoing communication with candidates.
- How do candidates feel about the recruitment and hiring experience? What can be done to improve the candidate experience?
- Is there a candidate satisfaction survey in place? If not, how could one be implemented?
- What number and percentage of candidates voluntarily drop out of the process and at what points? Is there any information about why? What can be done to reduce dropout of qualified candidates?

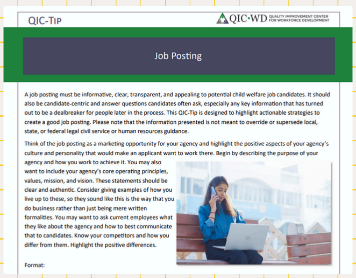
Reputation:

- What is the agency's reputation as an employer? What do online reviews from former employees say? What has been done or could be done to build a positive reputation?

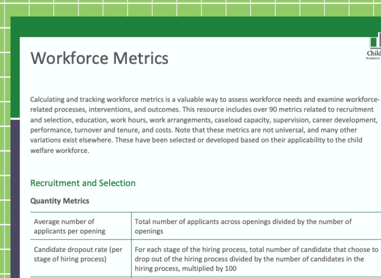
WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Digging deep into your data is not a simple task. The guiding questions listed above will likely lead to more questions or prompt team members to want to learn more about the success of recruitment strategies. Below are a few curated resources to support your team. (Please note that no team member is expected to be an expert in these workforce topics and that bringing in an external consultant to help work through this process can be a significant benefit to any workforce team.)

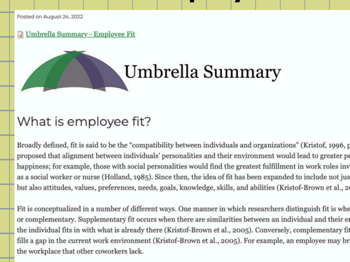
Job Postings



Recruitment Metrics



Umbrella Summaries on Recruitment, Realistic Job Previews, Employee Fit



For additional information on the research behind various recruitment tools, see the Umbrella Summaries on Recruitment, Realistic Job Previews, Employee Fit

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Congratulations on examining how the various elements of the recruitment process impact your workforce. This is just one step in the process of your workforce self-assessment.

After you work through the questions above, you may identify a few areas for further consideration. For example, your team may realize that you need to learn more about how people learn about job openings in your agency. Review the questions and information gathered during the process to ensure clarity, interpret the findings, and identify any additional questions or analyses that may help. In the example above, your team may dig into website analytics to better understand what is driving traffic to your site. Digging deeper into this aspect of the recruitment process can get you to a root cause that you can address. Share what you learned with your management team, to get their reactions and interpretations of your findings. Management may also need to discuss available resources (e.g., time, money, and people) before your team can move on to select (or create) a workforce intervention or analytics tool to address the challenge.

The needs and expectations of the workforce change, and your organization must be responsive to those changes. This exercise should be repeated every few years, especially if employee recruitment issues arise and employee surveys indicate challenges with the number of applicants applying for open positions in the agency. We recommend that you review your selection process as the next step.

REFERENCES

Breaugh, J. A. (2008). Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research. Human Resource Management Review, 18,103–118.

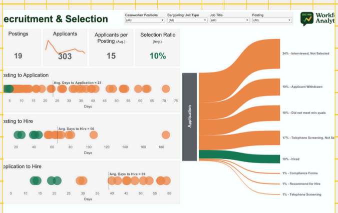
RESOURCES

Data visualization tools, such as dashboards (recruitment and selection example here, and general workforce analytics example here), can help workforce teams identify trends and monitor

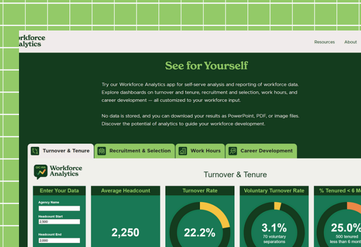
The Workforce App (embedded under the "See for Yourself" header) to input basic workforce data and see visualizations related to Turnover & Tenure, Recruitment & Selection, Work Hours, and Career Development

Use the Practitioner View of the Workforce Research Catalog to learn more about the association between common workforce outcomes (e.g., burnout, stress, turnover) and the variables that predict them.

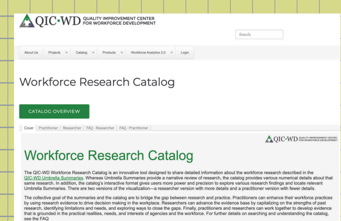
Data Dashboards



The Workforce App



Workforce Research Catalog



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