



# FTA Awards Nomination/Entry Form

## Person who led this effort or project

**Name** Nikki McCoy  
**Agency Name** Washington State Dept. of Revenue  
**Phone Number** (360) 705-6616  
**Email** nikkim@dor.wa.gov

## About your program, idea, or project

**Name your program, idea, or project:** Leading with Data: Enterprise Recruitment and Retention Tactics for Today

**What is the problem that you wanted to solve?** Like other organizations, the Washington State Department of Revenue experienced one of the most challenging years ever for recruiting prospective employees and retaining knowledgeable and trained staff. There were several contributing factors including the lingering pandemic with vaccination mandate for all state workers, a tight job market, negative perception of government work, and a record number of resignations that led to the coining of the phrase, "The Great Resignation." These factors all led to one thing: employee strain. As an agency that prides itself on data-driven decisions, it was difficult to process one specific datapoint in the annual Washington State Employee Engagement Survey. With some of the highest-ranking job satisfaction in state government, there was one question: "My section/unit has enough staff to adequately accomplish the workload," that had been dropping since 2019. In fact, it has dropped over 19% in three successive years, down to 54% positive in 2022. For context, 88% of the agency's nearly 1,300 employees responded to the 2022 survey. Other questions, such as "I know how my agency measures its success" and "My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect" had high positive scores of 80% and 95% respectively. Not being able to find qualified applicants and the resulting stress on employees to do more with less had become a clear area of focus in what was an overwhelmingly positive survey. The agency had no choice but to reevaluate. Competing against other state agencies for the same talent, it was imperative that Revenue put resources into workforce management. Two pillars hold up Revenue — processes and people. With operations running smoothly, even with constant implementation of legislation and new technologies, the agency was ready to put even more efforts into attracting and developing talented staff.

**Who was involved in addressing the problem?**

Revenue's recruitment team, Human Resources staff, appointing authorities, hiring managers, and employee input all shaped the conversations and decision points along the way.

**How did they go about finding a solution?**

Revenue began by looking at data differently. Standard performance measures and month-to-month stats weren't offering the predictability they once did, which required drilling into the data. Revenue's recruitment team wanted to see what the numbers offered beyond positions posted and filled.

They discovered that, for instance, some vacancies required multiple postings, and they still weren't getting filled. One division found themselves reposting 70 percent of recruitments for revenue agents. While that number was unacceptable, having the information meant data-driven decisions could become part of the solution. The staffing team paid attention to the position descriptions and tested which would need re-posting after the initial run.

"The applicant pool was pretty predictable – until it wasn't. We had to do something different."

– Senior Staffing Consultant

**Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity?**

As with tackling any problem, leadership started with a holistic enterprise approach to address the underlying issues. Working collaboratively and deliberately, workgroup members determined the first step was to really analyze and critique position descriptions.

'Starting from Scratch'

While position descriptions are finessed regularly, each division's hiring managers and appointing authorities needed to start with a fresh, blank slate and ask themselves: What are the necessary qualifications for the job? Take, for instance, an Excise Tax Examiner position. Is it really an accounting degree that's needed, or is it people who are investigative and enjoy working with numbers?

Re-working the language as well as the qualifications was a refreshing exercise and brought renewed encouragement to frustrated hiring managers. This big-picture view also allowed other changes, such as accepting year-for-year experience in place of degrees for some positions.

Applications in 2018-2019 averaged around 40 per job opening. Since then, they had dropped to fewer than 20. Knowing that it only takes one right candidate to fill the role –the question became: how can qualifications be modified to invite a wider range of experience? Not only does this make it easier for jobseekers, but it also models an open-minded culture that values diverse backgrounds.

'Adding a Personal Touch'

The recruitment team included more 'soft skills' qualifications and added a short bio and picture of the recruiter to each job posting to create a more personal touch and invite contact. This has increased direct contact to recruiters like never before—currently, Revenue is the only Washington state agency to take this approach and it appears to be working. Since adding direct contact info, calls have increased from zero to several per week and emails have more than doubled.

This also demonstrates commitment to the (internal) customer experience, building relationships and empowering success from the start—even before an employee is hired.

More and more, it's about getting creative and finding unique ways to set the agency apart. An award-winning recruitment video and subsequent influx of applications and interest exemplify the importance of innovation.

#### 'Sharing Qualified Candidates as They Arrive'

For years, the process had been to wait until a recruitment closes, batch the candidate pool, then send along to hiring managers. In this tight market, time is of the essence. Now, the process is to send qualified candidates to hiring managers immediately and for them to begin the interview process as quickly as possible. Managers report that they appreciate being able to reach out to potential hires right away. And no candidate has ever been upset to get a quick callback—they want to know they are high-value and sought after.

#### 'Putting the Pieces Together'

The data told the story that there wouldn't be a one-size-fits-all solution, so the agency adjusted a variety of pieces, which resulted in small gains that added up. Top strategies included:

- Responding to generational shift.

Revenue recognizes that degrees in fields such as accounting are not as common as they once were. Younger generations are more likely to pursue degrees in fields such as Information Technology. In addition, jobseekers today are looking for belonging within an organization that aligns with their values.

- Developing hiring managers.

As society and the workforce evolves, it becomes increasingly important to provide implicit bias training and coach hiring managers to adapt to today's environment which values diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Promoting from within.

Developing employees starts the first day on the job. Revenue offers many in-depth trainings on a regular basis. In FY22, the agency promoted 204 employees, more than double the 89 promotions in FY21. These were 204 team members who may have looked for advancement someplace else. Employee engagement and retention efforts matter.

- Prioritizing employee experience.

Building on the concepts of employee development, focus on the entire employee life cycle is imperative, from orientation to exit interviews. Leadership models a work/life balance and employee input is solicited and considered regularly.

"Revenue has an evolved sense of community in its work culture. Management prioritizes employee well-being, and it shows in training and improvement opportunities as well as work/life balance. I am happy here and feel respected." -

Wendy L., Property Tax Division

- Continuing teleworking/hybrid environment.

Employees have spoken. They value a hybrid work environment. The agency continues to adjust and evolve its approaches to providing flexibility while cultivating inclusion and belonging.

- Empowering employees.

As a founding principle, engaging and empowering employees means that Revenue strives to be an employer of choice through strategic and day-to-day actions. Two-way communication, compassionate coaching, and cultivating a culture of respect are a few ways to do this. Values of

Integrity, Cooperation, Accounting, Respect, and Excellence (I-CARE) are baked into initiatives and activities, and as a result, employees are empowered to succeed.

- Leveraging Employee Engagement Survey results.

Employee input is asked for in a variety of ways, including the annual Employee Engagement Survey. With an employee participation rate of 88%, results are taken seriously. 95% of respondents say that usually, or always: "My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect." For lower-rated areas, leadership determines areas of improvement and makes them a priority.

- Embracing diversity.

Agencies have never been so well-positioned to continue work around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Statewide Business Resource Groups (BRGs) as well as internal Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) help spread awareness, guide decisions, and solve problems. This year, Revenue was nominated and won the Respect, Acceptance, and Dignity of persons with Disabilities (RADD) award from the Disability Inclusion Network BRG. Nomination points included attracting more talent from communities of people with disabilities and consulting with Revenue's Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee.

- Increasing accessibility.

Revenue's recruitment team worked with the Customer Experience and Communications division to improve the accessibility of the Revenue careers web page as well as the accessibility of job announcements so that members of the disabled community can better access and apply for jobs.

- Widening networks.

Data shows that handshakes, even virtual, are often more effective than postings on a job site. Adding the personal touches of direct recruiter contact online, expanding outreach, and leveraging BRGs and ERGs helps Revenue stay top-of-mind. At in-person events, recruitment materials and touch cards (small business cards that link to our careers resources and contact info) include QR codes, bringing opportunities to jobseekers' fingertips. Additionally, encouraging each employee to be an ambassador has shaped a new era of recruitment.

**What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale.**

In FY22, the agency noted the following improvements:

- Filled 409 positions, over 150 more than any year prior.
- Developed and delivered 24 Mitigating Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process trainings, training 359 managers, supervisors, and panel members.
- Filled 49.9% of positions with promotions.
- Hiring managers reported increased confidence in the hiring process.
- Recruitment team won an agency award for Teamwork.
- Augmented outreach practices to focus on diverse hiring.

This resulted in some of the most diverse hiring rates in state government:

41.5% of DOR new hires identify as a person of color, almost double the statewide average.

14.1% of DOR new hires are Veterans, more than double the Governor's goal for state agencies.

6.3% of DOR new hires identify as a person with a disability, pushing our overall agency representation to 5.2%, making Revenue one of few agencies exceeding the Governor's goal of 5%, more significantly doubling the rate maintained just a few years ago.

**Is there any component of your program that makes it workable only in your state or city?**

Everybody ought to be doing this.

**Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider?**

100% in-house

**Additional information or comments about your usage of outside vendors or service providers.**

N/A

**What comes next – will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches?**

Studies show that economy, hybrid work, cultural shifts, and younger generations will provide the greatest impact to the workplace in the coming years, and Revenue will be prepared.

The agency is considering hiring an advertising vendor to expand outreach via media and targeted online advertising. Outreach to the next generation is important as well, and the goal is to enhance college and high school career fairs with guest speakers in the classroom. Some divisions are also in the process of restarting their internship programs, which had gone dormant since the pandemic.

Staff continues to be energized by diversity efforts and the recruitment team will seek to find an even more diverse applicant pool. Nearly 1,300 employees give the agency nearly 1,300 recruitment ambassadors. The employee experience can be a positive story for each to tell within their networks and communities.

## Additional Optional Materials

### Documentation Upload



#### Questions?



Hello, my name is Lance and I will be assisting with this announcement. As a 20-year Department of Revenue employee, I understand the importance of finding a rewarding career with a work-life balance. At Revenue, we pride ourselves in connecting talented individuals with opportunity and would like to answer any questions you have.

Please contact any part of the Staffing team at [Jobs@dor.wa.gov](mailto:Jobs@dor.wa.gov) or give me a call (360) 704-5725.