
2014 MAJOR GOALS

Goal 4 - Grow and Develop Our IT Workforce

Recruit Skilled Workers

Develop and Retain Valued Staff

As technology becomes more complex, the challenge of staffing IT programs at both the agency and enterprise level grows more difficult. This is apparent in both recruitment and retention of skilled workers. State government faces three main issues: loss of key staff with institutional knowledge to retirement as baby boomers age out of the workforce; agencies that have difficulties finding qualified IT staff through traditional recruitment methods; and filling vacancies through transfers between agencies. All of these issues must be addressed. The simple fact is that none of the guiding principles, major goals, and strategies described in the preceding pages of this plan can be achieved or implemented without people – talented, dedicated, and forward-looking state IT staff. They are the undeniable foundation for success.

4.1 RECRUIT SKILLED WORKERS

The state is committed to a “Grow Our Own” IT skills program – evaluating current staffing needs and identifying and implementing outreach and transition strategies. This includes an ongoing and comprehensive internship program for promising students from the UW System and technical colleges, in which the internship positions come with clearly established goals and pathways to permanent employment. First of all, recruiters will stress an important concept to students: State employment in IT now entails challenging, transformational work, a truth that even just a cursory glance at this strategic plan will reinforce.

The Division of Enterprise Technology (DET) will train the students particularly for application development and IT infrastructure skills, as well as introducing them to state government processes. The state will utilize social media sites, such as *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*, so that students are aware of the opportunities, highlighting growth potential and the chance to make a difference. To guide student development, mentoring is provided along with regular and constructive feedback. The internships include compensation, to show interns they are valued and the state is serious about transitioning these opportunities into long-term employment. Interns are given meaningful work experiences and are treated and trained as “real” employees.

DET is continuously looking for ways to enhance the internship program, while the division solidifies its relationship with universities and technical colleges throughout the state. The program provides opportunities for a variety of majors, putting the focus on a student’s career goal rather than major.

4.2

DEVELOP AND RETAIN VALUED STAFF

Internships and outreach programs can bring talented, hard-working individuals through the door. Then the challenge becomes keeping them. Continuous training opportunities and career development are the answer, particularly cross-training staff in critical functions and integrating new technologies into current skill sets. Keeping existing staff proficient in current and emerging technologies through ongoing training is a means of both investing in employee retention and facilitating adoption of new technologies throughout the enterprise.

“Grow Our Own” doesn’t stop once an intern is hired as a full-time state employee - it’s a philosophy that extends throughout the employee’s career in state service. Once employees see that agencies are determined to develop leaders from within, they will be more inclined to invest their futures with state government. This reciprocal approach is reinforced by supporting employees as they pursue professional designations such as Project Management Professional (PMP) and technology certifications.

Along with ongoing training, another strategy for retaining valuable employees is keeping their assignments interesting and flexible. For example, DET is developing a consulting pool for agencies to draw upon. The IT professionals in the pool can utilize their skills in rotating assignments and agency environments. Similarly, interns have the capability of working in multiple DET work areas to home in on their preferred specialties and experience a variety of training opportunities as they consider whether state employment is the right long-term option for them.

Even with innovative recruitment and retention strategies, the reality is that talented IT staff are in high demand in both the public and private sectors. The state faces the ongoing challenge of competing with the private sector for limited IT resources, and must be able to meet that challenge through technology and job opportunities. And when IT staff are intrigued by the training and advancement opportunities within their own agency, there is less incentive to take jobs at other agencies as the perceived only route to promotion.

Experience has shown that staff respond to the key elements of state service: enhancing residents’ quality of life, helping to grow Wisconsin’s economy, and protecting citizens from cyber threats, while at the same time enjoying generous benefit packages and a reliable work/life balance. These factors have always been instrumental in attracting valuable and loyal state employees. With a renewed emphasis on exciting work, ongoing training and enhanced job flexibility, these basic features of state employment can continue to ensure a qualified and dedicated workforce to achieve our strategic IT initiatives.

Workforce

With the baby-boom generation rolling into retirement, the state will face growing turnover in its ranks — at the state Department of Administration, **53%** of workers are age 50 or older.

Quick Facts