

# Federal Lands Highway Human Capital Plan



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration



# This Human Capital Plan presents a blueprint to ensure that we can address the existing and future challenges with the right people and the right skills.

The Office of Federal Lands Highway's (FLH's) mandate is to be stewards for the programs and funds we administer in order to improve the transportation systems for federal and Tribal lands. Our people are the key to our success. FLH employees, working in partnership with Federal Land Management Agencies and Indian Tribal governments, contribute each day to making transportation systems serving federal and Tribal lands more efficient and effective for the citizens of this country.

In order to maintain our high level of performance, we must ensure that we maintain our technical excellence and continue to improve our two primary business objectives, namely program and project delivery. Our ability to maintain a workforce with the technical and managerial talent we need is impacted by several converging trends. The supply of talent is dramatically decreasing, projected retirements will reduce institutional knowledge, continued program changes and the number of projects and priorities is increasingly unpredictable, while the cost of project delivery is escalating.



This Human Capital Plan presents a blue-

print to ensure that we can address the existing and future challenges with the right people and the right skills. The four human capital goals focus on maintaining the excellence of our workforce and workplace in the current and emerging environment. Further, they build on the good work we are already doing in managing our most valuable asset—our people.

I am committed to implementing the Human Capital Plan and making it a critical tool for corporate decision making. I ask FLH leadership and all FLH employees to actively contribute to meeting our human capital goals.

Arthur E. Hamilton, PE  
Associate Administrator  
Office of Federal Lands Highway

## A Message from the Associate Administrator

## Introduction

The Office of Federal Lands Highway (FLH) provides program stewardship and transportation engineering services for planning, design, construction, and rehabilitation of the highways and bridges that provide access to and through federally owned lands. FHWA's initial partnership began with the U.S. Forest Service in 1914 and expanded to the National Park Service in 1926. The 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act created



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the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP). The primary purpose of the FLHP is to provide financial resources for a coordinated program of public roads that service the transportation needs of federal and Indian lands. FLH currently provides transportation engineering and related services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. FLH continues to be the “transportation partner of choice” by delivering context sensitive design solu-

tions to more than a dozen federal, state and local partners.

FLH has become respected and well-known for its focus on partnering and quality projects. Yet, the greatest FLH asset is unquestionably the workforce. FLH recognizes that having the right workforce with the right skills and the ability to leverage the private sector to meet increasing and changing customer demands is essential to successfully accomplishing the mission. To this end, FLH has developed the Federal Lands Highway Human Capital Plan (HCP). The goal of the HCP is to develop and manage a workforce that will enable FLH to meet the emerging future.

## What will the Human Capital Plan do for FLH?

The Human Capital Plan aligns human resource strategies to the FLH mission and business plan by raising human capital planning to corporate strategy level. This approach enables leadership to leverage and balance limited workforce resources with workload, while supporting workforce agility and changing skill sets, and providing measurable results of human capital strategies. The HCP is informed by workforce analysis which provides high-level profiles of FLH functions, competencies, and employee demographic information that allows a crosswalk of human capital needs against the ever-changing business environment, e.g., new authorizations, emerging programs, FLH-partner focus areas as identified within the FLH 5-Year Business Plan and yearly Strategic Implementation Plan. Put simply, the HCP is a corporate-level tool to help manage human resource decisions at both the Headquarters and Division levels.

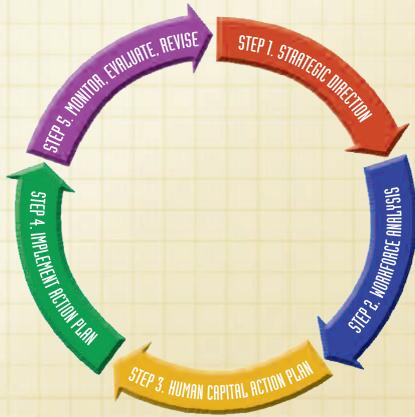


## The HCP will help FLH:

1. Determine the most effective use of limited FLH resources.
2. Quantify high level workload needs and costs.
3. Identify core fulltime equivalent (FTE) needs and assess impacts of FLH ceiling fluctuation.
4. Evaluate organizational employee competencies and needed development.
5. Complete future year FAIR Act Inventories.
6. Identify corporate core training needs.
7. Estimate FLH wide recruitment needs for systematic recruitment and succession planning.
8. Estimate and leverage other Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Lands Management Agency and private sector resource needs.

## Is "Human Capital Planning" just a new buzz-word?

Human capital planning has been important to FLH for many years. Many of the tenets and initiatives of the FLH HCP build on the past and reflect current and ongoing FLH best practices. However, the primary attribute that distinguishes human capital planning and management today from yesterday's related personnel programs is the integration of human resources into the business process of the organization to meet strategic goals and objectives. No longer can FLH "hire over here" and "talk about business over there." As FLH makes organizational decisions, the most treasured resource—people—must be a key consideration in strategic discussions. To facilitate that process, FLH leaders need to possess information and tools to make better decisions. In addition, the advisory role of human resource professionals must expand to help programs anticipate the human capital implications of critical business challenges.



## Human Capital Planning Process

The FLH Human Capital planning process follows a five-step model – **1. Set Strategic Direction, 2. Analyze the Workforce, 3. Develop Action Plan, 4. Implement Action Plan, and 5. Monitor, Evaluate, and Revise.** The model lays out a repeatable, ongoing, strategic and systematic approach to ensuring that FLH has the necessary talent at the right place at the right time. The leadership of FLH will use the model to make corporate decisions about the future of the FLH workforce, develop the necessary strategies to

achieve that future, measure the success of their actions, and make changes to strategies as necessary to align with emerging business drivers. In addition, the results of corporate human capital planning will inform Division human capital plans tailored to the local business and workforce environment.

Results of the planning process are fully integrated into the FLH annual business planning process. FLH develops and implements a multi-year Business Plan

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supported by an annual Strategic Implementation Plan. Among the major inputs to the business planning process are the FLH Workforce Planning Analysis, Human Capital Strategic Plan and the Human Capital Plan Implementation Plan. The initiatives recommended through these processes are included in the corporate list of improvement initiatives considered in June of each year for resourcing and support by FLH leadership. The final FLH Strategic Implementation Plan includes only the critical improvement initiatives. Other improvement initiatives will be deferred for out-year consideration, assigned to a functional discipline leader, or may be continued on a pilot or test basis pending further consideration. If selected for FLH support, a human capital initiative is included in a process of action planning and monitoring and will be reported quarterly and annually.



## 1. Strategic Direction

The first step in the model is to set strategic direction. In order to ensure the long term success of talent management decisions, they must be aligned with and support the mission and strategic direction of FHWA and FLH.

### Key business drivers:

A variety of forces will drive and shape the emerging future of FLH.

- The program stewardship and oversight responsibilities are increasing and project responsibilities will be transitioning from contract oversight to technical assistance and ensuring effectiveness of project drivers such as financing, controlling costs, and accountability. There will also be increased emphasis on mitigating risk and ensuring safety.
- As costs of project delivery continue to increase due to inflation in the cost of fuel, materials and salaries, it will be necessary to instill a cost conscious culture and improve financial stewardship.

This will mean increased emphasis on internal controls and the increased use of management systems to provide accurate information for decision making, planning, and tracking.

- In order to maintain excellent customer service, emphasis will be on improving, measuring and accelerating project delivery while maintaining a nimble organization equipped to respond to any program changes, needs of our customers/partners, and increase in projects.
- The transportation industry is changing rapidly with increasing demand for roads and substantial metropolitan growth in federal lands areas. Increasing visitation and fuel costs have influenced a demand for alternative transportation on public lands.

The FLH human capital goals are strategically aligned to support and address these key business drivers.

**FLH Vision: Creating the best transportation system in balance with the values of Federal and Tribal lands.**

**FLH Mission: Improving transportation to and within Federal and Tribal lands and providing technical services to the highway community.**



## Strategic Impact on Human Capital Management:

The business drivers will have varying degrees of impact on the structure and management of both skills and people. In order to meet the current and emerging FLH business challenges, FLH will need a workforce that is: flexible, skilled, motivated, efficient, accountable, results-focused, and diverse.

- In order to remain nimble and responsive in mission delivery, FLH must con-



### Primary Tenets Driving FLH Workforce of the Future:

- Skilled in leadership
- Technically capable
- Innovative and creative
- Emotionally intelligent
- Able to work virtually
- Mobile
- Multi-skilled with some specialization
- Culturally diverse and sensitive
- Continuous learners
- Skilled leaders who are credible coaches

stantly align workforce and workload and get the right skills sets in the right places to meet customer expectations and deliver our core businesses. This means developing the ability to assess and mobilize the employee skills and to use the engineering occupational specialties most effectively.

- As the result of changing demand, FLH must utilize the private sector and shift required skill mixes toward more program and project management, trans-

portation planning, innovative contracting and financing, and stewardship.

- The mission requires maintenance of a high level of internal technical expertise which must be supported by vibrant training and recruitment geared toward balancing a loss of experienced personnel.



## 2. Workforce Analysis

The second step in the workforce planning model is to analyze the current demographics and FTE and competency demand and supply. One of the key inputs to FLH human capital strategic planning is a comprehensive workforce analysis supported by a human capital modeling tool, Workforce Planner<sup>®</sup>. FLH has committed significant time and resources to studying its workforce requirements using data

and business driven methods to identify current and future demand and supply of positions and competencies in FLH. The methodology includes defining products and services, projecting anticipated changes, identifying the critical competencies required, and linking them to the services. The FLH competency-based model provides data on skill and FTE gaps and allows for testing alternative scenarios. The demand and supply data and accompanying analysis is updated regularly as

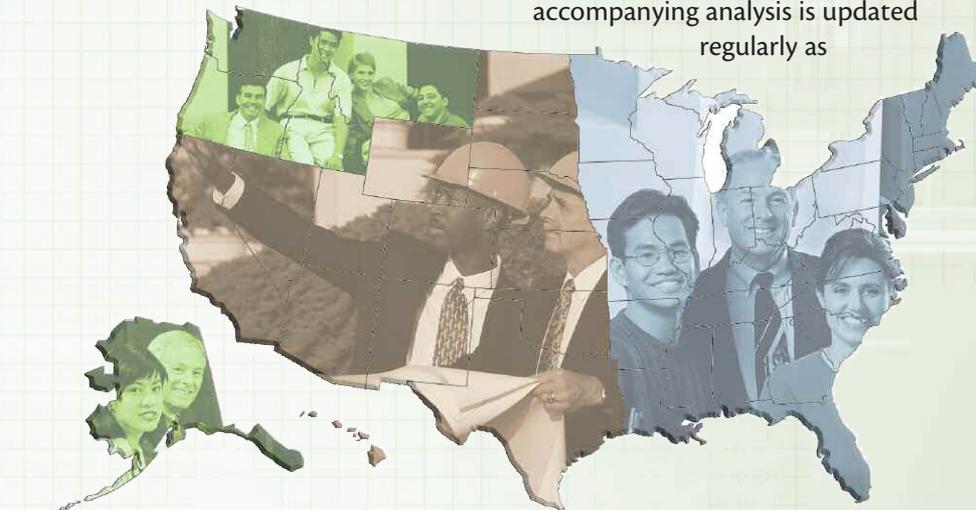


an ongoing input to talent management decisions.

A full workforce analysis is available in the Federal Lands Highway Human Capital Planning Process (HCPP) documentation. A brief profile of the FLH workforce follows.

FLH is proud to have a highly skilled and dedicated workforce of approximately 700 employees. This “organic” workforce is supplemented by a mix of internal and external contractors.

FLH is composed of a Headquarters and three Divisions divided geographically by state. Within the Divisions, personnel are deployed to a variety of locations and projects.



WESTERN—200 staff (29%)

CENTRAL—210 staff (30%)

EASTERN—253 staff (37%)

HQ—27.5 staff (4%)

Almost half of FLH personnel are Civil Engineers who perform both engineering and non-engineering functions. The remaining personnel are Engineering Technicians, Transportation Planners, Surveying Specialists, Procurement Specialists, and others. FLH employees are highly educated with the majority having

undergraduate degrees or above. Given the breadth of challenges and the complex environment in which FLH operates, employees will be required to use technical, interpersonal, and leadership skills in virtually everything they do. The critical competencies for FLH employees are noted below.

#### Critical General Competencies

- Communications/Interpersonal Skills
- Self/Life Management
- Leadership/Business Acumen
- Supervision
- Innovative Thinking/Problem Solving
- Program Management
- Project Management and Coordination
- Financial Management
- Human Resource Management
- Technology Management
- Information Analysis
- Process Management
- Contract Administration

#### Critical Technical Competency Categories

- Roadway Design
- Construction
- Environmental Protection Specialist
- Project Management
- Geotech
- Inventory
- Structural
- Hydraulics
- Safety
- Materials
- Survey/ROW/Utilities
- Planning/Asset Management
- Pavements
- Information Technology
- Acquisitions
- Finance



## 3. Human Capital Action Plan

Step 3 of the human capital planning process focuses on designing an action plan to address the workforce issues identified in Step 2 and build the workforce of the future. The FLH HCP identifies four action goals. Each of these is supported by key objectives. Further action planning takes place during the implementation planning phase in Step 4 when specific initiatives are designed to support each objective.

### Goal 1: Be the employer of choice; attract, hire, and retain high performing competency-based workforce

Maintaining and improving the FLH pool of talent is essential to continuing organization success. FLH will actively tailor and target its recruiting to obtain a high quality and diverse workforce equipped with the competencies to produce the prod-

ucts and services of the emerging future. The goal is to obtain and retain the best people—based upon current and emerging critical competencies. This may mean shifting more toward multiple disciplines. Attracting and retaining talent will require increased use of flexibilities available to managers and require the involvement of the entire workforce as they make recruiting “a way of doing business” embedded in all employees’ everyday interactions with peers and potential resources. Retention will focus on maintaining interest and challenge on current and long-term valuable employees as well as on new hires. Finally, we will use all available methods to assess our progress and act on the information. For example, biannual employee surveys have helped FLH test the pulse of the organization on a number of issues. Overall employee satisfaction scores have improved from 60% to 66.1% since 2001.

1.1 Develop a competency-based staffing approach: *FLH will shift planning/staffing focus from series and grade to skills needed for the job.*

1.2 Market and acquire high-performing diverse workforce: *Use a targeted recruiting plan to market FLH as an employer of choice.*

1.3 Retain high performing competency-based workforce: *Analyze intake, attrition and current employees and develop retention plans to maximize flexibilities.*



### New Employee Orientation and Employee Survey

Two cornerstones of the FLH retention strategy are attention to quickly integrating new employees into the work environment and consistently listening to employee feedback through the FLH Employee Survey. New employees are welcomed and mentored by an experienced FLH staff member who greets them upon arrival and checks in regularly to answer questions and find out how things are going. Supervisors are provided with a detailed checklist covering all the activities and tasks to be completed to provide a smooth entry into the workplace. The checklist begins before the arrival of the employee and covers the first one to four weeks. Once on board, all employees will take part in an organizational climate survey every two years. The survey produces both an overall satisfaction score and measures for individual categories such as customer satisfaction, senior support and communication flow. The results are used to identify and work on key areas for improvement.

## Goal 2: Provide a corporate workforce planning and development framework

This goal provides the alignment between the current and future workforce and the core mission and goals. By employing a corporate model and approach, FLH will achieve balance between program and people and will address all functional and competency needs. Workforce analysis and planning will regularly generate information on FTE and competency needs and gaps. It will also be used to inform strategies for competitive sourcing and outsourcing. Output from workforce



planning is input to leadership decision making.

2.1 Ensure linkage of workforce strategic planning to business strategic planning: *Incorporate human capital goals and strategies into the business planning process.*

2.2 Institutionalize ongoing workforce planning process: *Analyze workforce supply and demand and identify current and future competency and skill gaps.*

2.3 Improve workload – workforce balance: *Leverage all human capital resources to balance the workload.*

2.4 Use administrative systems to better assess the workforce: *Increase awareness of systems and available workforce information.*

### Workforce Planning Model

FLH uses a repeatable, data-driven model to obtain a comprehensive picture of its strategic and business direction and how it will impact the future workforce FTE and competencies demand and supply. Through the business-driven method, FLH identifies trends and issues over multiple years and bases workforce and deployment decisions on the strategic direction of the organization. FLH is guided in strategic planning for recruiting, developing, retaining and rewarding employees by analysis of the data produced by the model. The FLH model identifies core competencies based upon the changing business environment and projects competency gaps which can then be addressed by human capital strategies. FLH reviews the workforce planning process annually at a minimum, or as FLH's business needs or trends change.

### Goal 3: Have the critical competencies and skills required to perform in an ever-changing business environment

This goal focuses on identifying the critical skills needed for the future and ensuring that a formal strategy exists to proactively help employees obtain and maintain the competencies needed for the emerging business environment. The competency mix must support a nimble organization that can quickly adjust to change. The initiatives feature the development and encouragement of innovation and creativity, competencies which are important to FLH success. This goal also recognizes the importance of having the right leadership competencies in both technical and managerial leaders, and encouraging leaders to instill a corporate FHWA/FLH vision in the workplace.

The FLH Employee Survey results indicate that the majority of employees feel that they have access to career development

opportunities and that FLH is expanding opportunities to build project management and leadership skills. However, employees may find it difficult to schedule training and development because of project priorities and heavy workload. Successful accomplishment of this goal will require finding ways for employees to fully utilize training opportunities and for the organization to leverage training resources to target core competency/skill gaps.

3.1 Assess future business needs:  
*Continue to identify emerging needs.*

3.2 Inspire and develop leaders from both technical and managerial positions: *Continue to invest in leadership development.*

3.3 Foster innovation and creativity:  
*Build human resource incentives that promote creativity and innovation.*

3.4 Emphasize employee development:  
*Prioritize and leverage training resources to fill competency/skill gaps.*

#### Multi-Disciplinary Project Management Training and Certification

FLH Divisions are implementing Employee Multi-Disciplinary Development Plans in order to develop the non-engineering competencies needed in providing oversight and stewardship. Initially offered to high-way design engineers, training is being expanded to construction project engineers, planning, construction operations and bridge team leaders and other FLH employees that work in project management. Courses include Cost Estimating for Major Projects, Project Management and Process Review. FLH is establishing a “Project Management Oversight Certification Program” aligned to the core competencies for major project oversight managers.

## Goal 4: Ensure individual performance that aligns with and delivers the dynamic corporate business plan

Goal four will create a “line of sight” between organization goals and employees’ contributions in all occupations, including administrative and support positions. It supports “cascading” performance goals at the organization, branch, group and individual level. It is



important that everyone understand how they add value to the FLH mission accomplishment. Individual performance plans will reflect alignment with FLH goals and be adjusted as organization goals change. This goal also supports improved utilization and clearer definition of expected outcomes. Awards and recognition will be tied to business-related, value-added contribution rather than simply completion of a project.

4.1 Ensure that every work group and employee understands how their work contributes to the mission and adds value: *Communicate Business Plan, Human Capital Plan, and culture of FLH through a corporate communication plan to reach all employees.*

4.2 Align FLH employee performance management with the corporate business plan: *Enhance the ability of per-*

*formance standards and recognition to provide an employee “line of sight” to organization goals.*

### Focus on Performance Culture

FLH understands the importance of aligning individual performance to organization success. A Business Focus Award program and other award processes recognize employees for their accomplishments in addressing their business measures. These measures are tied to cost, technical adequacy, customer satisfaction and timeliness. FLH also evaluates the performance management system to ensure that it provides for accountability in the accomplishment of agency goals. FLH uses the Office of Personnel Management Performance Appraisal Assessment Tool to review all positions to determine if individual employee performance objectives reflect agency goals. Based upon the finding, a workgroup develops and implements an action plan to further improve the performance culture.



## 4. & 5. Implementing and Monitoring the HCP

The HCP is the blueprint for FLH human capital management. It is supported by an accompanying HCPP operational document. The HCPP includes a Human Capital Plan Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan defines human capital initiatives for each HCP goal and objective. Together with the FLH business planning process, the Implementation Plan provides the mechanism and process for documenting and monitoring progress on HCP corporate initiatives. Key features of the Implementation Plan include roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, an action planning process, success indicators, metrics, and projected time frames.

The objective of the Implementation Plan is to drive human capital decisions with meaningful data and ensure a level of accountability for leadership as progress is made toward achieving goals and promoting continuous improvement. The plan is a dynamic, working document that can be modified to reflect changes in priorities and to address emerging business needs and resource allocations.

The Human Capital Plan will ensure that FLH meets the challenges of the future with the right people and the right skills. It will serve as a blueprint and key planning instrument for corporate decision making. The success of the HCP and the implementation of its goals and objectives will depend upon the commitment and active contribution of all FLH staff. Together, FLH leadership and employees will forge new human capital successes that will maintain our technical excellence and continue to improve our program and project delivery.



**FLH anticipates that the Human Capital Plan and the Implementation Plan will become key instruments in approaching business challenges. Institutionalizing the HCP will require leadership and human resource community commitment. Together, they will forge new human capital successes.**

