

FAQ: Employee Engagement Survey

What is the purpose of the survey: The Government Operations Agency and the California Department of Human Resources want to learn more about state employees' level of engagement with their jobs and to identify opportunities to improve their level of engagement.

What are you going to do with the answers? The answers will inform the work of our Civil Service Improvement work teams, which are looking at problems with the current civil service system. They will enable us to learn more about steps we can take to improve engagement.

Will you be able to identify the respondents? No, to ensure the anonymity of respondents' answers, the Government Operations Agency has retained JD Franz Research Inc., an independent research firm, to work with the state on this survey. The mailed questionnaires will not be marked or tracked in any way, and the online survey link will be general rather than individual. Completed responses will be submitted directly to JD Franz Research, which will aggregate the results and forward the findings to the Government Operations Agency. This approach will ensure that respondents' identities are not only protected, but truly unknown.

Why engagement and not satisfaction? Engagement measures how meaningful employees find their jobs and how connected they are to their jobs, rather than how satisfied they are with their jobs.

How did you come up with the questions? The state worked with the third-party consultant to develop questions that identify drivers of engagement, which can include whether employees feel they are valued, whether they feel their work is valued and meaningful, and whether they feel they have opportunities to develop. The consultant worked with CalHR to conduct two focus groups to test and refine the questions for clarity and comprehension.

What kinds of questions won't be asked? The general rule is not to ask questions about things you are not able to address. Certain topics, such as pay and working conditions in the case of represented employees, are already covered by collective bargaining agreements, and that process is the appropriate place to address them.

Has the state done this before? Not at a statewide level, although some departments have conducted employee surveys for several years as part of their organizational development strategies. The federal government has developed a very sophisticated employee engagement survey and uses it as one tool in a broad human resources and workforce planning strategy.

What if there are negative answers? It is always better to know about the negatives, particularly now as the state begins its Civil Service Improvement efforts. The survey can identify problem areas, which can be brought to the attention of the work groups that are developing recommendations for the Civil Service Improvement project. Some problems have been years in the making and may not be able to be turned around quickly.

How long will the survey take? Less than five minutes.

Will the results be public? Yes.

Are employees required to take the survey? No. Participation is voluntary.

Do employees have to answer every question? No.

Do employees need to inform their managers? No. Every effort is being made to ensure that respondents and responses are anonymous.

What if an employee is uncomfortable taking the survey using their work computer? They can forward their questionnaire to another computer if they wish.

Will the results be broken down by department? No. Results will only be analyzed by length of employment, classification, age, and gender.

Is asking 5,000 people enough to get a good representation of state government? Yes, it is statistically sufficient.

How will the results be shared? Results of the survey will be available on the GovOps website; on the CalHR website, and in social media.