

Town of Chapel Hill Employee Engagement Surveys

How Are We Doing?

The Mission of the Town of Chapel Hill is *“Learning, serving, and working together to build a community where people thrive.”*

Since 2013, the Town has worked with UNC-School of Government’s Local Government Workplaces Initiative and the MAPS Group to conduct employee engagement surveys, in 2013, 2015 and 2018.

The surveys were designed to solicit employee perspectives and gain a better understanding of how the Town values its employees and how employees feel about the Town as their employer.

The survey data helps us determine what is working, what is not having the intended effects, and what we can do to continue to foster employee engagement at work.

All three surveys identified five consistent areas of focus: Communications, Engagement, Empowerment, Trust, and Professional Development:

Employee Engagement Survey 2018

Process: The survey was administered under the direction of Professor Leisha DeHart Davis, UNC School of Government.

- The Survey was voluntary and individual responses were **confidential**.
- It ran for three weeks in February 2018.
- Employees were allowed to complete it on work time.
- The Survey was administered online.
- Links to the Survey were emailed to those with Town email addresses.
- Computer labs were set up for Transit, Public Works, Parks Maintenance, and Housing employees who do not regularly access Town email.
- Assistance was provided at the computer labs, if needed.
- UNC also offered a text message option to take the Survey on a smart phone.

Survey participation rates: We continue to have strong participation rates for the survey.

2018	66%
2013	60%
2015	50%

Note: participation rates across North Carolina municipalities range from 50-60% contingent on a wide range of variables.

Sharing Results: Dr. Leisha DeHart-Davis and her team did a two-hour deep dive of the survey data for the Town’s Senior Leadership Team covering the identified five consistent areas of focus: Communications, Engagement, Empowerment, Trust, and Professional Development. In addition, her team conducted four focus groups representing a diverse mix of employees randomly selected to represent employees at all levels of the Town.

Department Follow-Up: In fall 2018 and early 2019, Town Departments conducted deeper dives with their employees, focusing on their Department results.

Departments were asked to address the five general findings of the survey and their specific feedback through:

- Joint design of strategies for improving their work teams;
- Enhancing communications;
- Encouraging employee voice;
- Empowering decision-making;
- Fostering professional development and teamwork; and
- Recognizing the value of employees.

Summary of 2018 Survey:

This video was shared with Town employees to explain the survey:

<https://youtu.be/lqnryfBgRaY>

This video from Dr. Leisha DeHart Davis explains the process and next steps:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wrs4M-Tt20OL6FQNAAYpWc8fuMkWX7_h

PDF Reports for all Town Departments are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vz2n2obi8zexpf7/AAB7bTzpfzVDTgvmOqQ1qs0Da?dl=0>

Full survey results are available on the [survey dashboard](#). The password is TOCH1357

Overview of 2018 Employee Engagement Comments and Examples of Department Responses	
Communications	
Heard	Responses
Increase verbal communication from supervisors, followed by Town email and staff meetings	Publish leadership team meeting notes for all employees to review
Improve accuracy and completeness of top-down communication	Include supervisors in leadership team meetings

	Enhance informal communications between leadership and employees
Improve down-top communications	Implement suggestion box Add "AMA" (Ask Me Anything) into every staff meeting
Increase face-to-face contact of supervisors and departmental managers with employees	Leadership team attends division meetings Enhance face to face communication opportunities from senior leadership to include all employees and all work sites
Keep employees informed about the status of decisions	Weekly Process Improvement Meetings Regular check-ins at staff meetings
Continue to foster opportunities for employee voice to safety speak to authority in areas related to their work and work environment	Implement suggestion box Add "AMA" (Ask Me Anything) into every staff meeting Supervisor retreat, focusing on voice Enhance safe opportunities for employee voice that would address fear of retaliation
Engagement & Empowerment	
Decision-making (Centralization)	
Heard	Responses
Engage employees early in decision making processes that impact them	Involve impacted employees in jointly designing next steps Use EE Survey results in conjunction with customer service survey results as material for departmental retreat Continue to explore employee involvement in options related to work/life balance and flexible scheduling
Ensure employees understand what happens with input they provide and how that input factors into decision making	Extend invitation and office hours for department head to meet with employees

	<p>Seek employee input on ways to regularly explain the “why” behind changes</p> <p>Enhance access to and explanation of policies</p>
Teamwork	
Heard	Responses
Empower employees through engagement in developing collaborative solutions	<p>Share and make connections both within and across departments</p> <p>Enhance cross-pollination between divisions</p>
Trust	
Heard	Responses
Employees at all levels often do not know the logic of changes. When employees do not know the logic of changes, they fill in the blanks. Their conclusions seem related to levels of trust in the decision-maker. If employees do not trust the decision-maker, they tend to assume changes are politically motivated. If employees trust the decision-maker, they tend to assume changes are due to external competing demands.	<p>Draft and distribute for input a detailed Department Work Plan, listing status of initiatives</p> <p>Regularly schedule time with employees to seek input and to debrief when change is made</p>
Continued efforts to improve trust between employees and supervisors and in linking the work we do with Our Mission, Vision and Values.	<p>Professional development and career progression key to building trust</p> <p>Seek opportunities for employee input on liking Mission, Vision and Values</p> <p>Enhance informal communications opportunities to build trust</p>
Professional/Career Development – mining talent	
Heard	Responses
Ensure all employees have a professional development plan, and training and advancement opportunities. Use EPMDS for “development” of employees.	<p>Multi-modal announcement of training opportunities</p> <p>Conduct full department solicitation for training requests</p>

	<p>Use opportunities related to succession planning for mining and developing talent</p> <p>Talent tapped and nurtured at early stage in every employee's work career</p>
<p>Charge, train and hold supervisors responsible for annually working with each employee on a professional development plan specific to them.</p>	<p>New supervisor training on use of EPMDS for development of employees</p> <p>Hold supervisors accountable for development plans for all their employees</p>
<p>Expand leadership development opportunities, extending these training/development opportunities to frontline workers.</p>	<p>Clarify and simplify information about opportunities and access to them</p> <p>Encourage employees at all levels of department to be involved in cross departmental committees and task forces</p>
Recognition	
Heard	Responses
<p>Continue to explore creative and meaningful ways to recognize both value and achievement</p>	<p>Annual all-employee meeting to celebrate departmental, team and individual accomplishments</p> <p>Continue to engage employees in exploration of alternative incentives</p> <p>Continue to explore formal and informal opportunities for building team and workplace community</p> <p>Explore alternative ways to regularly express appreciation and enhance retention, thereby building commitment and connection</p>