

PHFA Connect-Connecting People, Process and Technology

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
Management Innovation: Human Resources

HFA Staff Contact

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Summary

The COVID pandemic was an unexpected catalyst for change. For many organizations, it exposed areas where technology and business processes had fallen behind and required updating and it changed the way that staff communicate. As the Agency recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, there is also a shift in the workforce as many of the staff that have been with the Agency for decades are retiring. This creates the need to transition process knowledge while also onboarding new staff in ways that they can connect to fellow employees and the Agency mission. As PHFA transitions from reactionary change to strategic change, the focus is on “Connections” in our relationships, our processes, and our systems.

The Innovation

As an organization whose employees are invested in a mission to create opportunities for affordable housing, it is evident that the Agency values connecting to a purpose. It feels rewarding to contribute to helping others be a part of a community. Likewise, it is recognized that it is equally important to create a sense of community within our Agency. To reinforce that community, the Executive Director announced an Agency theme of “Connectivity”.

We all bring diverse perspectives and talents to the workplace and by connecting ideas, experiences and establishing inclusive relationships, we can build a stronger house. PHFA wanted to make sure those connections didn’t get compromised by the new hybrid work culture because connecting as people (non-virtually) allows us a chance to get to know each other in a more meaningful way.

The theme was linked to many strategic activities to include professional development, enhancing internal and external business relationships, and transforming processes and technology to be better integrated.

The Implementation and Benefits

The Agency is reinforcing connections to our work, our mission, our partners, and each other in several ways:

1. The employee SMART goals include an Agency-wide Connect Event goal. These events are in-person events that are designed to be informative but also provide opportunities to network and meet other staff. Every employee has a goal to attend at least 3 events but there are many to choose from that are scheduled on different days of the week and across every month. These events include a hosted event by each Division to share information about their work, several Workday Connect events to learn more about our new HR/Finance software and other cross-divisional events focused on building teams and ideas.

Benefits: Several events have already been held and the engagement level has been high. Staff that typically work on different hybrid schedules get a chance to interact with other staff that typically come in on different days. The Workday Connect events have been used as part of the organizational change management strategy to provide continual information about the project and the impact it will have on Agency staff and has included leadership discussion panels and functionality demos (and even Workday themed cupcakes).



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2. Our connectivity is demonstrated in our “Connections” theme for the 2024 Housing Forum focusing on the connections between housing and so many other aspects of our daily lives. In addition to the connections made externally with business partners, the Forum provides a place for staff to exchange ideas on how to create more affordable housing, meet industry insiders, reconnect with friends and business partners, and learn about the industry.

Benefits: The attendees for the Forum include a diverse population across the industry with varied informational topics, professional speakers, and networking “connection” opportunities.

3. The Agency is modernizing, automating, and integrating the financial and human resources systems through the implementation of Workday. The HR implementation is in July of 2024 and the Finance implementation is scheduled for October 2024.

Benefits: Implementing Workday HR brings several benefits for employees, enhancing their experience and providing tools to manage various aspects of their work and career. It enhances the employee experience, streamlines HR-related tasks, and promotes a more transparent and collaborative work environment. Employees benefit from having a centralized and accessible platform for managing various aspects of their employment within the organization. This includes:

- A self-service portal that allows employees to access their personal information, view pay stubs, manage benefits, and update contact details.
- Real-time access to data.
- Employees can access training resources, enroll in courses, and track professional development.
- Time-tracking for overtime or time charged against grants, ability to manage leave and ability to view attendance.
- Facilitation of communication and collaboration among employees and teams to include features like organizational charts and collaboration tools.
- Improved experience for outside applicants and for new employees being onboarded into the Agency with tools to help new employees better connect to the people and the culture.

The implementation of Workday Finance has the benefits of automating manual processes which enhances the ability to work effectively as a hybrid workforce. It also has improved many of the financial controls.

4. PHFA invested a significant amount of time documenting the existing processes across the three multi-family divisions and gathering feedback from all employees in those divisions. The Agency is currently negotiating a contract with a software vendor to begin to automate many of the multi-family business functions.

Benefits: The collaborative approach to discussions on the processes and the creation of a change leadership team has opened the dialogue across the three divisions and is the beginning of better alignment in the process flow, roles, and systems.

5. Building Connections with Microsoft Teams-PHFA is leveraging the implementation of Microsoft Office 365 to create improved divisional and cross-divisional collaboration spaces.



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Benefits: The Teams sites (designed with proper structure) create one place for documents to be shared and provides better version and retention control. It also reduces the number of emails being sent with documents attached.

6. PHFA invested in on-site leadership training for managers and supervisors. The Directors completed the initial cohort and will be providing feedback for the next two groups for managers and supervisors. The training is designed to provide better tools for managing in the new hybrid culture.

Benefits: Learning techniques on coaching employees and communicating in ways that improve “connections”, ignite new ideas and encourages professional growth.

Next Steps

The Agency will stay “connected” throughout the year with the various monthly Connect events, the implementation of the Workday HR and Finance system, the design of the multi-family system, the completion of the remaining leadership training sessions and the continued opportunities for networking and professional development.

Submitted by: Kim Burky, Senior Director, Transformation and Operations