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**Rubin, Jessica A.** *Developing an Effective Onboarding Program for ABC County*

## Abstract

Onboarding programs are beneficial to organizations in several ways. They streamline processes, provide for open and consistent communication, reduce time, cost and turnover. ABC County is in need of a consistent and effective process for integrating new employees into the organization. The purpose of this study was to identify what practices should be incorporated into the onboarding process for the organization. Employees were surveyed and participated in focus groups. Based on the survey results, feedback that was received, and best practices that were identified, a new onboarding program was developed. ABC County will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the program for continuous improvement opportunities.

# Acknowledgments

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Thank you to Ms. RuthAnn who planted a seed when I was too young to understand what I was capable of, to Kristin who is my rock, and to Jeff and the kids for being my reasons *why*.

**Table of Contents**

## List of Tables

**Chapter I: Introduction**

ABC County is a local government entity located in northwest Wisconsin with a population of just over 15,000 residents.  The organization employs over 180 staff to provide local services to the public.  Various departments administer services that are required by local, state, and federal mandates and they are charged with providing all of these services while remaining fiscally responsible.  ABC County, like many small rural entities, has limited financial resources; however, the Administration endeavors to incorporate programs that support staff in their personal and professional development.  With financial resources restricted due to budget constraints, the County must be creative with benefits and policies that will enhance the work environment to attract and retain staff.  ABC County is fortunate to have a County Board that is supportive of the employees and appreciative of the services they provide to the community and its residents.  The County Board continues to support creative and innovative programming, as they recognize the challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers.

The small workforce and restricted funding limits programming that is not directly related to services for the residents and other citizens requiring services provided by county government.  The organization does function well; however, an effective onboarding program would be beneficial to help retain employees.  Engaging employees on their very first day and within their first few weeks and months should be a priority, to help employees assimilate to the organization and learn relevant customer service skills, reinforce internal communication, and build trust.  Employee engagement efforts would be focused on creating healthy working relationships, developing trust and respect, establishing open and frequent communication, while training employees on their new duties; as well as acclimating them into their new environment.

Positive workplace attitudes and perceptions could be improved by standardizing a process of effectively engaging new employees as they come into the organization.

Because ABC County did not use consistent formal procedures for onboarding new staff, the organization had been impacted in several areas including: increased vacancies and turnover, higher levels of stress among current staff who are burdened by the increased workload, a less prepared workforce, and an increase in the use of financial resources as it relates to recruiting. These issues had a great influence on the culture of the organization and also influenced the community's perception of how effectively county government operated. ABC County was not unique in experiencing turnover in difficult to fill positions. When a vacancy occurs staff within that department are impacted by having to take on the additional workload. Extended vacancies were burdensome to those who were already experiencing burnout in high-stress professions. ABC County could potentially experience less turnover and increased productivity by engaging employees more effectively at the onset of their employment with a more robust onboarding program.

When recruiting, the organization's process involved human resources and department heads updating position descriptions and then posting the opening. After the closing date of the posting, human resources and department heads review the applications and interview qualified candidates. After an offer of employment was made, the necessary pre-employment screenings were conducted and after the successful completion of those, the new employee began the first two hours of their first day with human resources. This was the only scheduled time the new employee spends with administration and human resources personnel. The employee began their first day in the human resources department, completing payroll and benefits paperwork. They were then given a brief tour of the facility and handed off to their department. This was where

human resources' involvement in orientation ends. It was unknown what the individual departments were doing to orient the new employees to the organization and every department had their own process.

Although there had been a shift toward a more collaborative relationship through purposeful open communication, the organization still had work to do to continue to improve employee engagement, behaviors and attitudes. It was also understood that an onboarding program would not solve the issues of attracting and recruiting talent; however, it may contribute to keeping valued employees with the organization for a longer period of time.

**Statement of the Problem**

ABC County was located in a rural, sparsely populated area of the state and drew from a small labor pool. The decline in qualified applicants meant it was difficult to fill vacancies with skilled workers. The tight labor market had made talent acquisition more competitive, creating greater challenges in retaining talent. ABC County had a process for orienting new employees, but lacked any formal onboarding procedures before or after the individuals first day.

**Purpose of the Study**

The process of onboarding new staff and acclimatizing them to the organization is an essential aspect of developing and retaining a productive and engaged workforce. The administration of ABC County and the human resources personnel were interested in creating a better first impression with the new hires and wanted to engage other key stakeholders in the process. The purpose of this study was to investigate current best practices in onboarding and identify what impact(s) an effective onboarding program would have on ABC County. The research assessed the experiences of staff through the onboarding process and identified effective onboarding programs used in both the public and private sector. The goal was to examine

effective onboarding programs, the impacts of those programs, and provide detailed recommendations for an effective onboarding program for ABC County.

**Assumptions of the Study**

The intention of this research was to provide a general understanding of effective onboarding practices, understand the impacts of an effective onboarding program, and to develop an onboarding program that is effective for ABC County. The recommendations will be used by the leadership of ABC County to develop a comprehensive onboarding program.

**Definition of Terms**

Terms that have been used are defined.

**Automation.** The technique, method, or system of operating or controlling a process by highly automatic means, as by electronic devices, reducing human intervention to a minimum.

**Employee engagement.** Emotional connection an employee feels toward his or her employment organization, which tends to influence his or her behaviors and level of effort in work related activities.

**Mentor.** A trusted and experienced advisor.

**Microlearning.** Relatively short engagements in learning-related activities – typically ranging from a few seconds up to 20 minutes (or up to an hour in some cases) – that may provide any combination of content presentation, review, practice, reflection, behavioral prompting, performance support, goal reminding, persuasive messaging, task assignments, social interaction, diagnosis, coaching, management interaction, or other learning-related methodologies.

**Onboarding.** Onboarding is the act or process of integrating a new employee into an organization or familiarizing a new customer or client with one's products or services.

**Organizational culture.**  Organization culture **is** the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization.

**Orientation.**  Orientation **is** the process in which a new joinee or a new employee is integrated into the organization by making him/her aware of his place of work, team members, his immediate reporting managers, the business in general, the policies, working hours, etc.

**Recruitment.**  The process of finding and hiring the best-qualifies candidate (from within or outside of an organization) for a job opening, in a timely and cost-effective manner is recruitment.  The recruitment process includes analyzing the requirements of the job, attracting employees to that job, screening and selecting applicants, hiring, and integrating the new employee to the organization.

**Retention.**  Retention is the effort by a business to maintain a working environment which supports current staff in remaining with the company.

**Turnover.**  The number or percentage of workers who leave an organization and are replaced by new employees is called turnover.

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study include sample size, questionnaire participation, bias and perceptions, time constraints, available financial resources, and the extent to which elected officials were involved in the day to day operations.  In addition to these limitations, there were several factors that impacted the success of organizational change interventions such as implementing an onboarding program.  This study was limited and did not capture all those aspects.

**Methodology**

      A survey was conducted using qualitative methods to gather information about new employee and manager experiences as they relate to the onboarding process.  The electronic survey was emailed to employees via their county email.  In addition to the focus group that was conducted with approximately 17 new hires, another focus group was conducted with three managers.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

Onboarding new staff effectively is an essential aspect of developing and retaining a productive and satisfied workforce. ABC County was in need of an effective onboarding program to better develop and integrate new staff. The literature review topics consist of the difference between onboarding and orientation, current onboarding best practices, and the impact implementing those practices has had on organizations. Additionally, the processes that are encompassed in an effective onboarding program and onboarding technology options are also discussed.

### Onboarding is Not Orientation

The components and process of onboarding and orienting new employees varies from one organization to another (Heathfield, 2019). According to Lewkovich (2017) an important factor in these procedures is that they are two distinct processes. The process of onboarding is impactful to the employee's overall experience within the organization long-term because it is an ongoing process (Lewkovich, 2017). Likewise, orientation is significant to the employee's first impression of the organization. Even though orientation is just a one-time event, it is an important factor because it provides an introduction and a general overview of the organization (Lewkovich, 2017).

Sims (n.d.) asserts that orientation involves the initial introductions, completing payroll and employment forms, reviewing policies, procedures, and the organization's philosophy, as well as familiarization with the new environment. Most of this occurs on the employee's first day, but depending on the organization, it might occur over the first few days of employment (Lewkovich, 2017). Typically, the Human Resources department has the most involvement in this process, along with the employee's direct supervisor and possibly other key leaders within

the organization (Sims, n.d.).  Differentiating orientation from onboarding can be done by understanding orientation to be a one-time event, as opposed to onboarding, which is a series of events that occur over a longer period of time (Sims, n.d.).  The orientation experience, when done right, can help organizations retain skilled workers and is an important aspect to building lasting relationships (O'Toole, 2019).

New employee orientations give a new hire the sense of belonging and make them feel welcomed to the organization (O'Toole, 2019).  While orientation programs are less comprehensive than a complete onboarding program, some experts have recognized the need to improve the orientation process since it is an important aspect of bringing new talent into an organization.  Acevedo and Yancy (2011) examine the importance of new employee orientation programs (NEO) and explore how, during those initial days and weeks, organizations can assimilate employees to provide for an improved socialization experience within the organization.  They suggest that this process begins early, is performance focused, and that, with proper socialization, employee trust is established (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011).  Trust is a key element to employee engagement and productivity (Dyer, 2019).  Research shows that 91% of engaged employees trust their managers compared to 51% of disengaged employees (BlessingWhite, 2013).

According to Steenbrink (2018), the onboarding process requires a greater level of participation by the key stakeholders within the organization.  Having more people involved does not necessarily improve the process; however, having the right people involved does.  The process of onboarding new employees can be thought of as a way of socializing and acclimating them to a new environment over several months, and within that first year of being on the job (Little, 2015).  The first year is the timeframe in which the new employee will be learning their

new role within the organization, how their skills and abilities contribute to the success of the work that is being accomplished, and what the overarching attitudes are that exist within the organization (Heathfield, 2019; Lewkovich, 2017).

**Onboarding Best Practices**

Focusing efforts on making a good first impression is essential to establishing employee engagement and getting new employees enthusiastic about what their experience will be within the organization (Lauby, 2018).  While providing the employee with the essential expectations and goals of the position, the organization strategically benefits from creating an interactive process that immerses the employee in the values and culture of the organization (Colgate, 2010).  Reaching out to new hires before their first day on the job and making that connection with them prior to them starting provides an opportunity for the individual to inquire about matters that may be causing unnecessary angst (Gusto, 2019).  It also is a good time to provide information such as where to park, what to wear, whether to bring lunch or not, and a simple timeline for their first day (Lewkovich, 2017).

Bauer (2010) asserts that the key factors of successful onboarding include: compliance, clarification, culture, and connection.  These factors determine the organization's onboarding strategy and are considered the "building blocks of successful onboarding" (Bauer, 2010, p. 2). An organization can measure how effective their current onboarding process is by utilizing these four components (Hearn, 2017).

Table 1

*The Onboarding Strategy Level and Four C's Outlined*

| Onboarding Strategy Level | Compliance | Clarification | Culture | Connection |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passive | Yes | Some | Little/None | Little/None |
| High Potential | Yes | Yes | Some | Some |
| Proactive | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Note: Adapted from Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success (Bauer, 2010, p. 2-4).

According to Bauer (2010), the four C's are applied at one of three-levels within organizations: passive onboarding, potential onboarding, and proactive onboarding. Bauer (2010) suggests that approximately 30% of organizations process at the passive onboarding level. This level is functional yet does not address culture or connection and is basically a checklist of unrelated tasks to be completed (Bauer, 2010). A more strategic approach, however, is the high potential level of onboarding which involves an organization covering compliance and clarification, along with some culture and connection aspects. Approximately 50% of organizations have reached this high-potential onboarding process, which is comprehensive, but may not be regularly implemented throughout the organization (Bauer, 2010). Finally, Bauer (2010) asserts that about 20% of organizations are functioning at the proactive level of onboarding. For these organizations, compliance, clarification, culture and connection are all key factors in the onboarding of their new employees.

Proactive organizations are improving their performance by analyzing the current environments which impact the work they do (Wroblewski, n.d.). Hearn (2017) suggests writing out the current onboarding process, then tying them to the four C's. This is an effective way to measure how effective your current onboarding process is. Additionally, there are metrics that

organizations can incorporate to measure onboarding success.  Understanding the organizations effectiveness in onboarding best practices can eliminate issues affecting the onboarding process (Perucci, 2019).  Some metrics that can be used include the following:

- Tracking employee happiness.

- Voluntary and involuntary turnover.

- Who is leaving.

- New employee satisfaction.

- Retention rates of individual managers. (Perucci, 2019)

Bamboo HR (2014) advises following the three A's: accommodation, assimilation, and acceleration.  Bradt (2014) suggests keeping these three verbs in mind while onboarding to ensure that new hires do not get lost in the shuffle.  Accommodation means making things easier and having everything that is needed ready for the new hire before they even begin work (Little, 2015).  Assimilation is when managers actively socialize the new hire into the organization, make them feel welcomed and valued as an individual and as part of the team (O'Toole, 2019).  Acceleration is providing the appropriate amount of ongoing support to help the new hire succeed and grow in their new role, at their own pace and over time (Bradt, 2014).

Table 2

*Onboarding Strategies and Goals*

| The Three A's | The Goals | The How | The Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| Accommodation | Acclimate | Define responsibilities, processes, and expectations. Assign a Mentor/ "Buddy". | Decreases time for new hire to become a contributing member of the team. |
| Assimilation | Engage | A thorough process that extends beyond the first week. Participate in get-to-know-you activities. | Increases new hire productivity and fosters working relationships. |
| Acceleration | Retain | Feedback and recognition. Receiving organized, relevant, and well-timed content. On-the-job training. | Decreased turnover. Increased role clarity, engagement, connection, and productivity. |

Note: Adapted from The new definitive guide to onboarding (Bamboo HR, 2018, p. 4 and 9), What is employee onboarding and why do you need it (Little, 2015), and What people really want from onboarding (Fica, 2018).

Little (2015) identifies acclimation, engagement, and retainment as the three main goals of an effective onboarding program. Since onboarding is an ongoing process, integrating the three A's with the goals of an effective onboarding process can improve employee retention by 25% (O'Toole, 2019). Along with helping a new employee familiarize themselves with the physical aspects of the work environment, acclimating a new employee involves helping them understand what the expectations are for their role and what they should expect from the organization (Little, 2015). According to Little (2015), many factors are influenced by the new employee's level of engagement including: productivity and profitability, turnover rates,

absenteeism, safety records, product quality, and customer satisfaction.  Finally, on-the-job training, feedback, and recognition are all important aspects to retaining new employees (Bamboo HR, 2014).  In a recent study, 47% of respondents indicated that meaningful feedback on early contributions was important and providing specific feedback about things they are doing well, will increase the likelihood that the favorable behavior is repeated (Bamboo HR, 2014).

**Collaboration and communication.**  Fica (2018) states that 33% of new hires desire their managers, not human resources, take the lead on their onboarding and 41% prefer that either a colleague or mentor communicate the organization's nuances. Including key stakeholders on the process, keeping them engaged throughout, and ensuring staff take a team based approach is not only essential to the success of the new hires, but also to the success of the entire onboarding program (Thiefels, 2019).  In many organizations, human resources provides the basic information related to the employee handbook and benefits, as well as the organizational overview (O'Toole, 2019).  Thereafter, O'Toole (2019) suggests that, moving forward, supervisors and managers take the lead on the onboarding process with human resources providing assistance and support.

A 2018 TalentLMS onboarding survey reported that 40% of onboarding methods are offline, meaning face-to-face and/or manual, with an addition 33% of onboarding process delivered through blended methods, which incorporate both online and offline methods (Zoe, 2019).  Since the process of onboarding is so personalized and interactive, it is important to have managers and other current employees actively involved in the process (O'Toole, 2019). Communication is not only essential from the initial steps of onboarding, but is essential throughout the entire process (Gusto, 2016).

Keeping the lines of communication open is important in any organization and particularly so for those employees who are new (Gusto, 2016).  Providing the new employee with a solid understanding of their role and what the expectations are of them reduces second-guessing and misinterpretation (Brown, 2019).  Checking in frequently is important and encouraging the new employee to participate in the onboarding process provides additional opportunities to ensure objectives, roles and responsibilities, and expectations are clearly understood (Bauer, 2010).  Manager involvement throughout the process with regular meetings, providing time and support to the new employee contributes to their continued improvement (Heathfield, 2019).  This approach is not only beneficial to the new hire but is also beneficial to the manager.  Early manager involvement establishes a pattern for future conversations around performance and recognition (Anderson, 2019).

**Resources and strategies for the new employee.**  Having a formal documented orientation program provides clear guidelines and expectations for all the individuals who participate throughout the process (Maurer, 2015).  Every individual involved in the onboarding process will understand what their role is in the process and the written plan ensures consistent implementation of the program (Perucci, 2019).  This written resource is another tool to keep new hires, managers, human resources, and all other stakeholders communicating and accountable (Bauer, 2010).  According to Zoe (2019), an effective onboarding process can improve new hire productivity by more than 70%, indicating that a formal documented process is not only a resource and tool for the manager and human resources, but for the new hire as well.

One simple resource that should be provided to the new hire is a welcome packet or tool kit with handy resources for frequently asked questions (Pepping, 2019).  An employee will be productive more quickly if they can easily refer to a small field manual regarding breaks,

restroom locations, an employee directory, and other useful information (Janzer, 2019). In addition to a tool kit, teaming the individual with a mentor or an organizational liaison keeps them connected to a dependable point person and assists in the formation of positive working relationships (Janzer, 2019). Additionally, the new hire is more likely to succeed in their role and is quicker to assimilate to the organization with the assistance of a mentor (Heathfield, 2019). In fact, 56% of new hires say that they want a mentor within the first week of being on the job to help them learn the job and the organization so they can begin to contribute in a shorter amount of time (Sui, n.d.).

Bauer (2010) provides a checklist for new employees to guide their own onboarding experience. This might assist those beginning in a new organization, as it could be a tool to reduce anxiety or stress. There are a number of new routines being learned and an abundance of information to take in during this short period of time. Using the short checklist below might be a simple tool to assist new employees through the process (Bauer, 2010).

- Gather information

- Manage first imprssions

- Invest in relationship development

- Seek feedback

- Show success early on

Employees who have a simple plan of action, clear goals, and accessible resources are more likley to feel supported and successful (MacMillan, 2019). With all of the new information they are receiving, providing this checklist to new employees as part of the onboarding process can assist in reassuring them (Holmgren, 2019).

**Impact of an Effective Onboarding Program**

A significant reason for an organization to have an effective onboarding program is to prepare new employees for success and to provide them with a clear understanding of their role in supporting the goals of the organization (Maurer, 2015). Important factors that contribute to an individual understanding their role is integrating the new employee by assisting in their learning of the organizational history, its culture, the mission vision and values, and how the organization sets itself apart from like organizations (Casey & Meredith, 2017). This is a critical period where an effective onboarding program will be impactful in encouraging desired talent to stay with the organization (Carucci, 2018).

**Engagement.** According to Wickham (2018), engaged employees benefit an organization in several ways. Productivity, positive attitudes, and communication are among the positive impacts of employee engagement (Wickham, 2018). Engagement might look different from one organization to the next, but commonly it involves employee satisfaction and "pride in their employer" (Vance, 2006, p. 2). Additional factors that have been identified in employee engagement are opportunities for growth and development, their understanding of how their work contributes to the organization's goals and objectives, as well as the level of employee/management communication and trust (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

Trust has an incredible impact on an organization's level of employee engagement, productivity, and profitability (Campbell, 2015). According to Campbell (2015), trust is built through communication and transparency between managers and employees, implying that trust must be given in order to receive it. When organizations put an emphasis on trust, it has been shown to increase an organization profit margin by 16%, demonstrating that trusting workplace relationships have a direct impact on the organization's bottom-line (Campbell, 2015).

**Cost reduction.** The 2016 Society for Human Resources (SHRM) Human Capital Benchmarking Report stated that it costs $4,129 on average for an organization to fill a single vacancy (2016). Although the cost varies by many factors including employment status, role, and hourly rate, a Center for American Progress study found that the cost averages at 20% of the annual salary for positions that fall within the midrange, which is $30,000 to $50,000 a year (Boushey & Glynn, 2012). That means, according to Boushey and Glynn (2012), in order to replace one individual within this salary range, the cost to an organization would be $6,000 to $10,000. In another study, SHRM determined that an organization will spend six to nine months of an individual's salary to replace them (Merhar, 2016). Having a strategic onboarding program can reduce these costs associated with preventable turnover and regrettable losses related to talent acquisition and retention (Maurer, 2015). Employees who have a clear sense of how they contribute to the success of the organization tend to feel more valued, leading to a longer-term employer/employee relationship and increased loyalty, which is directly related to job satisfaction (Spatz, 2018).

In addition to these benefits, employees who feel valued and have a higher level of trust within their workplace feel more confident and comfortable bringing information and ideas forward (Limeade Marketing, 2018). Innovation is increased when organizations invest in creation and encourage their employees to share ideas (Tanner, 2019). The more innovative the organization is, the more attractive it is to highly skilled talent (McKendrick, 2018). Employees who are empowered to share their ideas save companies money, time, and other resources (Spatz, 2018).

**Onboarding Phases**

It is important that the process of bringing new employees onboard is done strategically, with clear direction, and with intent (Christiansen, 2016). Lesniak (2019) asserts that being consistent with an onboarding program is important for all stakeholders involved in the process and leads to long-term success. Integrity in the process and clear goals will produce a better outcome for the new hire and the organization. Zoe (2019) emphasizes that, without accounting for specifics relating to organization, role, responsibility, etc., it can be a year before the new hire is socialized into the organization. This is important to remember, as a 2018 TalentLMS onboarding study indicated that 58% of onboarding training occurred in the first week or less (Zoe, 2019). However, best practices indicate that the duration for new hires to acclimate and assimilate is a much longer process (Maurer, 2015).

**Preparatory to first day.** Filling vacancies involves a significant amount of time, energy, and financial resources, before the new hire even begins work (Cappelli, 2019). For example, prior to refilling vacancies or filling a newly created position, the organization has developed or updated the position description to outline the purpose of the position, duties and responsibilities, experiences and skills necessary to be successful in the position, educational requirements, along with any physical requirements of the job (Shickman & Yonahara, 2012). The new hire is provided with a copy of this position description upon offer of employment and given an opportunity to review it prior to acceptance. The preparatory work is important for a smooth transition from vacancy to the first few weeks on the job (Hicks, 2018).

Managers and supervisors can get a head start on the relationship building by reaching out to the new hire prior to their first day on the job (Bauer, 2010). Small gestures demonstrate a greater level of warmth and confidence, which are important attributes when it comes to first

impressions (Zoe, 2019).  There is only one opportunity to make a first impression, a quick phone call to check in along with a short email welcoming them is a great way to make sure the first impression is a positive one (Deutschendorf, 2014).  Providing information and resources ahead of time for the new employee can ease some unnecessary angst (Pepping, 2019).

Having human resources provide the new hire paperwork prior to the first day is also helpful and provides information about benefits and programming available to employees so they are able to make informed decisions (Maurer, 2015).  Information such as premiums and deductibles is important to individuals who are trying to decide which benefits to elect, particularly if they have alternatives outside of what is being offered by their new employer. Additionally, automating this process through an employee portal and giving access to the new hire ahead of time will further streamline the process while assisting the organization with organizing, managing, and archiving required documents (Maurer, 2015).

Apostolopoulos (2018) suggests that, while the first day can be reserved for completing all the required forms and gathering necessary documentation, another option is to provide these forms prior to that first day.  By doing this, more time can be dedicated to activities that contribute to relationship building (Apostolopoulos, 2018).  It is best that human resources review the documents for accuracy, but for the most part, these are commonly used state and federal forms which are required for all employees and have very specific instructions that are included.  Most employees are aware of the requirement of the I-9, and the W-4 and WT-4 tax forms and have completed them in the past (Murray, 2019).  Sending them out to be completed prior to their first day could streamline that portion of the onboarding experience (Pollack, 2019).

**First day to week two.**  Following the preparatory steps will facilitate a more successful first day and initial week for the new employee (Maurer, 2015).  The new hire is concerned with

making a positive first impression, and likewise, the organization should be making every effort

to do the same (Lavoie, 2014). O'Toole (2019) states that managers and other staff should be

well prepared to invite the new hire in and have all the necessary tools, equipment and resources

on hand. This eliminates wasted time in gathering items and demonstrates to the new hire that

their time is valuable (Brown, 2019).

Ben Peterson, the CEO of BambooHR declares that "The worst thing for a new employee

is being wooed through the recruiting process and then arriving on the job and the receptionist

isn't even expecting you or your office isn't set up" (as cited in Maurer, 2015, "Creating an

Onboarding Program," para. 7). Preparing for the new hire illustrates that the team has been

anticipating the new hire's arrival, and that the team is are prepared and excited for them to come

aboard. Making this first day a success will contribute to the new hire's long-term effectiveness

and success within the organization (Augustine, n.d.; Maurer, 2015; Pollock, 2019).

Be sure to have a schedule and prepare individuals who will be involved with the process

throughout the first day and first week or two, so the expectations are clear (O'Toole, 2019). If

the new hire is being teamed with a mentor, it is important for that person to have a plan or a

checklist so the experience will be more meaningful for both the new hire and the mentor

(Augustine, n.d.). If a mentor is unprepared the new hire will feel less successful in their role

and they will likely feel alienated or be more confused than informed (Schmitt, 2013). A

mentoring program can also add to an organization's strategic plans for developing future leaders

and managers (Lavoie, 2014).

Maurer (2015) shares that meaningful introductions are important to making a positive

first impression and acclimating the new hire to the organization. Welcoming the new employee

by personalizing the onboarding process and beginning socialization efforts early on is key to the

new hire's cultural assimilation (Deutschendorf, 2014).  Organizations need to set the stage for how employees behave and communicate with one another (Apostolopoulos. 2018).  When introducing the new hire, incorporating specifics about their strengths and what area they will be focusing on within the organization will help make a personal connection to their work and provide a positive foundation for the new hire's experience (Bersin, Flynn, Mazor & Melian, 2017).  Encourage your team to reach out to the new hire not just as a friendly gesture, but for their unique expertise and input on projects (Augustine, n.d.).

Over the course of the first week or two, the new hire should have had an adequate introduction to the organization, a basic familiarity with who the key stakeholders are, and by this point, introductions to co-workers and the organizational structure is complete (Carter, 2015).  Heathfield (2019) suggests that allowing the new hire to acclimate gradually over time is important as they acquaint themselves with the basic information about their role and what their job expectations are.  Clearly defined role clarification is critical for the new hire and their co-workers since organizations have varying cultures and structures that make them distinct from other organizations (Bauer, 2010).  This is true even if some organizations have similar specialties or focus areas (Hillman & Noel-Levitz, 2010).

**First month and beyond.**  Understanding that the onboarding process does not end with orientation, or even the first day or initial weeks, will make the new hire more successful and benefit the organization long-term (Brown, 2019).  Having an outline or plan that provides a sequential process over the course of the new hire's first year makes their integration into the organization easier and prepares them for a clear career path within the organization (Hillman & Noel-Levitz, 2010).  Additionally, a strategic onboarding program provides the organization with

a foundation for succession planning, which is beneficial to the organization's long-term success (Day, 2007).

In a 2019 survey, the Compensation Best Practices Report found that 29% of participants indicated that their organization's largest investment area was training and development (Zhao, 2019). Depending on the organization, this may only take a few sessions; however, other organizations may require a significant amount of training for new hires. Providing adequate training that is effective will be beneficial to the organization in several ways (McNamara, n.d.). The new employee will get up to speed quicker contributing more to the team, and they will have a greater sense of commitment due to their level of engagement. A 2014 Bamboo HR survey found that 21% of respondents said that if training had been more effective, it would have helped them stay at their job (Sui, n.d.). Moreover, according to a 2018 Workplace and Learning Report from LinkedIn, investing in an employee's career would persuade 94% of employees to stay at an organization for a longer period of time (Zhao, 2019). This means that focusing on training and development during this time, and into the employee's future, will contribute to a decreased turnover rate and increase the organization's long-term success (Zhao, 2019).

Crebar (2016) explains that in order to drive proficiency and increase new hire success, managers need to provide consistent feedback and support to keep the employee informed on their progress. Additionally, welcoming feedback from the new employee is important for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the onboarding process (Hirsch, 2017). Addressing any concerns early and often can prevent new hires from exiting the organization prematurely due to frustrations with the training, or possibly the lack of training (Crebar, 2016). Appropriate training has other benefits to both the new employee and the organization. The employee will require less supervision, experience less accidents, and is likely to take few days away from

work. With few days away, productivity is increased, and the employee may have increased opportunity for promotion or growth within the organization (Juneja, n.d.).

Hirsch (2017) declares that onboarding is the time to impress employees, further asserting that organizations need to capitalize on their opportunity to improve organizational culture and build trust with new employees during the onboarding process. Establishing trust begins with first impressions and making personalized connections during those initial interactions (Vance, 2006). The approach the manager takes during the onboarding process will set the stage for the employee's long-term engagement, their level of trust within the organization, as well as their behavior and attitude (Sathik, n.d.). This means that the new employee and the organization would benefit from the managers working intentionally on building trust and making organizational culture an important factor (Vance, 2006).

A 2018 TalentLMS survey indicated that only 39% of employees received training on the organizational culture during their onboarding process (Zoe, 2019). Managers who express clear expectations and provide consistent feedback are more effective in building and maintaining a positive organizational culture (Crebar, 2016). If behaviors and attitudes have become an issue, starting with new hires can possibly influence the rest of the staff who may have become unengaged or dissatisfied in their role. Conversely, these poor attitudes can undermine the manager's attempts at integrating the new employee appropriately (Moran, n.d.). Managers can use the same strategies with tenured employees as they do with their new hires and ensure that the whole team is clear on roles and responsibilities (Maurer, 2015). In order to get the desired outcome, managers should encourage and support change in their staff. Fostering relationships does not end with the onboarding process. Tiambo (2019) emphasizes that continually coaching employees, providing constructive feedback, and holding the employee accountable while

providing autonomy in their work empowers employees.  In addition, addressing issues one at a time with the employee, thinking in terms of the broader context as opposed to an isolated factor, and identifying barriers to success are all effective ways to support not only new hires, but every employee (Hedges, 2015).

Tiambo (2019) explains that building trust through consistent dialogue can assist in eliminating the disconnect between employees and their managers.  When the manager establishes trust early on in the working relationship, they are enhancing the employee's experience in the organization in a positive manner.  Tiambo (2019) declares that it is the manager's responsibility to align the employee's desires with the goals of the organization, which will result in increased performance.  With 40% of turnover occurring in the first month of employment, a manager should not delay efforts to establish positive working relationships, and build rapport and trust (Zoe, 2019).  Hall (2017) explains that supporting and engaging new hires will increase employee satisfaction, contributing to a better work environment and decreasing turnover.  In fact, 51% of new hire attrition occurs within the first six months of hire so waiting to establish rapport can be costly (Hall, 2017).

Organizations can help new employees be more successful with their integration into the organization with the major levers identified by Bauer (2010).  Bauer (2010) asserts that, after selection, successful onboarding requires the new employee to go through multiple adjustments involving self-efficacy, role clarity, social integration, and knowledge of culture.  Retention rates and productivity can be improved, and new employees will feel more confident and connected when organizations onboard appropriately (Bauer, 2010).

Table 3

*The Four Major Levers to Employee Success Outlined*

| Task-Related Feature | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Self-efficacy | The new employee feels confident in their role, increasing motivation and success. Impacts organizational commitment, satisfaction, and turnover. |
| Role clarity | The new employee understands their role and knows the expectations. Impacts employee adjustment, performance, and attitude. |
| Social integration | The new employee is learning about the organizational "insiders", is getting socially comfortable, and feeling accepted by peers and superiors. Impacts effective working relationships, performance, and job satisfaction. |
| Knowledge of culture | The new employee is navigating the organizational politics, goals, and values. Impacts commitment, satisfaction, and turnover. |

Note: Adapted from Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success (Bauer, 2010, p. 4-6).

**Onboarding Technology**

Software options for organizations can make the onboarding process more convenient, flexible, and can speed up the process (Bamboo HR, 2018). Although integrating new software programs can be overwhelming and expensive, technology can save an organization time and resources. According to Bauer (2010), online technology for onboarding may not be as important if the organization does not frequently have a large number of new employees coming onboard. There are several resources available to calculate a return on investment for technology implementation. The overall cost savings will be dependent on a number of factors that impact the bottom line including the size of the organization and which processes are streamlined or eliminated (HROnboard, 2015).

During a 2019 HR Happy Hour 398 podcast, Dr. Wade Larson states that there are three key factors when considering technology: process, stakeholders, and system. He asserts that

consideration in technology must begin with streamlining the process. Thereafter, getting the right people to the table, then incorporating the appropriate technology are critical to achieving the desired results (Boese & McFarlane, 2019). In Larson's experience, it is best to analyze the process first to ensure that the process makes sense before integrating technology. An inefficient and ineffective process cannot necessarily be made better by just adding technology; in fact, it may make the process even worse (Boese & McFarlane, 2019). Additionally, Larson argues that software customizations should be avoided because they create complications and glitches when software updates occur. Instead, organizations should make every effort to streamline processes first, cutting out unnecessary customization requirements (Boese & McFarland, 2019).

**Automation.** Automating the onboarding process benefits the organization beyond the human resources department, improving strategic tasks for finance and other operational departments (Kissflow, 2019). Organizations use automation as a logical and effective tool for many of their processes and the onboarding process is no different. Automating the onboarding process is estimated to reduce turnover by 30% (Bamboo HR, 2014). It can be automated in a number of ways including: making and confirming the offer of employment, sending, collecting, and filing auditable documentation, adding new hires to the payroll system, and enrolling eligible individuals into benefit plans (Bamboo HR, 2014). When considering automation of the processes, keep in mind the importance of socialization and personal interactions through the process of onboarding. The new employee should not feel as though a robot is onboarding them. Automation should only be a part of the experience, and it should be used as a tool, not the solution in and of itself (Apostolopoulos, 2018).

**Microlearning.** According to the SHRM, in addition to automating the routine procedures of a new hire's onboarding experience, organizations have an opportunity to

streamline the training and cultural aspects of assimilation as well ("Managing the Employee,"

n.d.). This can be done through microlearning. Micro learning has a limited time commitment,

learning is done in small chunks and the topics are narrow while overall the content may be

complex (Freeman, 2017). The learning content must be concise, which prevents training from

being exhaustive and overwhelming. Bleich (n.d.) lists the 11 major types of microlearning for

employees:

- Interactive parallax-based scrolling

- Videos

- Infographics

- Static resources

- Simulations

- Branching scenarios

- Podcasts

- Gamification

- Social media

- Geofencing

- Performance support tools (PSTs) or job aids

According to Morgan (2018), of the 596 talent development professionals surveyed by

the Association for Talent Development, 79% were either currently using microlearning or

planning on using it within the next year. With numerous articles claiming a decrease in the

human attention spans, microlearning is an excellent solution to helping learners with focus and

retention (Apostolopoulos, 2018). Decreased attention spans can be attributed to multi-tasking

and having information readily available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (McSpadden, 2015).

Learning Management Systems 365 (LMS365, 2019) reports that humans are more distracted, and our memories are decreased making it necessary for organizations to change how they present information to employees. Some benefits to microlearning are flexibility, accessibility, retention, and building on knowledge (Morgan, 2018). Incorporating tools such as interactive PDF's, short quizzes, infographs, and videos are all ways to make learning more efficient and easier to absorb, while accommodating different styles of learning (LMS365, 2019).

**Conclusion**

Effective onboarding practices are crucial to development, satisfaction, productivity, and retention of an organization's human capital ("Managing the Employee," n.d.). An onboarding program that focuses on making a positive first impressions, collaboratively integrating and assimilating the new hire, building trust with individuals and within teams, and promoting a positive work environment that is supportive will have many long-term benefits to both the organization and its workforce (Bauer, 2010; Brown, 2019; Maurer, 2015). Technology can be used as a tool for streamlining the process of onboarding, but the human interaction is most important to the effectiveness of the onboarding program (Hirsch, 2017).

**Chapter III: Methodology**

The objective of the research was to investigate best practices of onboarding programs, examine the impacts an effective onboarding program, and develop an onboarding program for ABC County. The study required that information be collected from departments on current onboarding practices to determine what effective and efficient processes are currently used for onboarding new staff. Additional information that was collected included feedback from staff regarding their onboarding experience and their perceptions around workplace attitudes and behaviors. Research was also conducted through peer reviewed articles and other sources authored by subject matter experts.

**Subject Selection and Description**

Research was conducted using sources that included public and private sector employers, subject matter experts, and ABC County employees. This study used subjects in both supervisory roles and non-supervisory roles who were in full-time, permanent positions. Employee longevity ranged from newly hired to 36 years of service.

**Instrumentation**

Data was collected from peer reviewed journal articles, other counties and municipalities, and ABC County employees. Questionnaires were developed for employees who were hired within the last year. One questionnaire, found in Appendix A, with a set of nine questions, was developed for employees hired within an eight week to six-month timeframe to better understand their experience through the recruitment and interview processes, expectations, orientation, and training to date. Another questionnaire, with a set of 14 questions, found in Appendix B, was developed for employees hired in a six month to one-year timeframe to better understand their experiences as they relate to feedback, support, workload, and responsibilities. A third

questionnaire was developed for supervisors to better understand their experiences with recruiting staff, what their suggestions are for areas of improvement with supporting departments and new hires, and suggestions for updates in the recruitment, orientation, and onboarding process. The questionnaire was a set of five questions and is found in Appendix C.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected from ABC County new hires through questionnaires found in Appendices A and B. These were distributed via email. They inquired about the individual's experience with the recruitment and onboarding processes. Participation in questionnaire process was voluntary and options were provided for their preference in responses, including email, hard copy, as well as anonymously responding to the questionnaire. Participants were given two weeks to respond and participation was voluntary.

Data was also collected from supervisors through an emailed questionnaire, found in Appendix C. The email was sent to 24 individuals in supervisory roles. The questionnaire requested feedback on their experience through the recruitment process and areas of improvement for onboarding, support, and programming. They were provided a two-week timeframe to respond. Participation was voluntary.

**Data Analysis**

The questionnaires were reviewed for consistencies as they relate to best practices to determine what new hires and supervisory staff were experiencing in the areas of recruiting, orientation and onboarding. Responses from the questionnaires were compiled and all feedback was evaluated with regard to the best practices considered in the literature review. A new onboarding program was developed for ABC County with consideration to the feedback provided from the questionnaires and best practices.

Through analysis of the current process compared to best practices, and feedback received, a slide deck was developed for new hires, along with an onboarding checklist to be used internally from the pre-employment process through the new hires first 90 days of employment.

**Limitations**

Voluntary participation can be a limitation.  Participants who are either highly satisfied or highly unsatisfied may be the individuals completing the questionnaire.  This could create a sampling bias.  Maintaining anonymity creates a barrier to obtain additional information or clarity from participants.

Additionally, cost structure and use of resources for recruitment and retention purposes is determined by ABC County policy makers and their involvement is a critical aspect of funding programming and development.  Their input was not sought in this study.

Finally, a small workforce provides limited feedback and may attribute to additional sampling bias, as the workforce at ABC County is generally obtained from a small population with similar demographics.

**Summary**

Overall, information obtained through the research identified the need to develop an onboarding program for ABC County.  Requesting input and feedback from ABC County employees sought after their involvement in the development of the onboarding program.  Prior to this study, no formal slide deck or checklist was in place for the process of onboarding.

**Chapter IV: Results**

This study was conducted with the purpose of creating an effective onboarding program for ABC County.  Through the research, it was identified that onboarding programs are beneficial to organizations in several ways including: increased employee engagement and satisfaction, and decreased cost and turnover rates.

**Demographics**

ABC County employees were the population studied and questionnaires were distributed to both new hires and staff in supervisory roles.  Among those hired within the eight-week to six-month timeframe, nine responses out of a possible 19 were received.  For those hired in the six-month to one-year timeframe, seven responses out of a possible 22 were received.  Out of the supervisory staff four out of the possible 24 responded.

All of the employees who were hired within one year and all supervisory staff were emailed their perspective questionnaire.  Table 4 summarizes the number of participants in each category surveyed.

Table 4

*Questionnaire Participant Category for ABC County*

| Participant Category | Number Surveyed | Number of Participants | Participation Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 Weeks – 6 Month Hire | 19 | 9 | 47.3% |
| 6 Months – 1 Year Hire | 22 | 7 | 31.8% |
| Supervisory Staff | 24 | 4 | 16.6% |

**Item Analysis**

The surveys provided context for establishing a formal onboarding process. In most cases, until the employee's first day on the job, the communication between the new hire and the organization was isolated to that individual and human resources. The human resource staff was responsible for all initial communication from the time of offer to the first day orientation. Communication was ongoing regarding the status of the process, but information was limited to date and time of pre-employment appointments.

On the first day, human resources gathered information and required documentation from the new employee. After the completion of the required employment forms, the employee was given a brief tour of the facility, stopping to get their picture taken in the Clerk's Office, then down to IT for their email and key fob. After the brief two-hour orientation, the new hire was taken to their department for an orientation that was dependent upon their roles and responsibilities within that department.

The survey gathered a sample of nine employees' experience within the first six months of onboarding. There were nine questions where the participants agreed, disagreed or responded with individualized comments. Table 5 below summarizes the data that was collected from the distribution of Appendix A.

Table 5

*Questionnaire Results for ABC County Employees Hired within the Eight Week to Six Month*

*Timeframe*

| Question | Agree | Disagree | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| During the interview process, I was asked questions that were relevant to the role offered. | 100% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| During the interview, I was able to communicate information about my relevant skills, experience, and career goals. If not, what suggestions do you have to make it better? | 88.9% | 11.1% | 0.0% |
| The position description explained during the recruitment process was honest and accurate. | 90% | 10% | 0.0% |
| Do you feel you were given accurate information to have a good understanding of your department's functionality? | 70% | 10% | 20% |
| I received helpful organization history and service information during my orientation. | 70% | 10% | 20% |
| I found the orientation process met my expectations. If not, what suggestions do you have that would have made it better? | 70% | 20% | 10% |
| Overall, I feel my training is going well. If not, what suggests do you have that would make it better? | 80% | 10% | 10% |
| Were any topics not covered in the orientation process that you think should be included? | 40% | 60% | 0.0% |
| What is the most important information a new employee should receive? | N/A | N/A | 100% |

Responses for Appendix A are highlighted in Appendix D. Overall, staff commented that they are satisfied with the experience they had during recruitment, selection, and onboarding.

Table 6 provides a summary of the comments made by respondents, found in Appendix D.

Table 6

*Questionnaire Comments Summary from ABC County Employees Hired within the Eight Week to*

*Six Month Timeframe*

| Comments for the Recruitment and Orientation Process |
| --- |
| The interview questions were relevant, but the interview period could have been longer. Respondents were able to communicate information the was relevant during the interview, but a longer interview period that allowed for more time for them to speak to their work history and experiences would have been preferred. |

Most respondents felt that the position description was honest and accurate, but some felt it should include site information, contact names, hours of operation, and more detail regarding what the job entails.

Most respondents felt that they were given accurate information to have a good understanding of their department's functionality.  The feedback that was received would be expected for individuals beginning a new job at a new organization.

Respondents indicated that additional information could be provided during orientation, but most of the necessary information is acquired on the job through co-workers.

Most respondents indicated that the orientation process met their expectation, but they had suggestions for improvement that included, a checklist, more explanation of benefits, a more thorough orientation with department heads, as well as the tour and introductions spanning a two-day timeframe.

Overall, respondents felt training went well, but a mentor or having their predecessor on for a longer period of time to train them in would have been beneficial.

One respondent indicated that they believed HR should have advised them on their personal flexible spending situation, but overall respondents indicated the orientation included appropriate topics.  Some additional information that could be covered in more depth include: the policy manual, the pay schedule, dress code, and more health insurance information.

Respondents indicated that the most important information the new employee should receive includes:
   A genuine welcome
   A packet that includes, contact information, job description, general policies, benefit details, organizational structure, break/lunch details, details on other position responsibilities, and where to park.
   An overview of current and pending projects

Additionally, a survey was conducted of employees who were employed longer than six months, but no longer than a year. This survey, Appendix B, gathered a sample of seven employees with a total of 14 questions where participants agreed, disagreed, or submitted individualized comments. Table 7 summarizes the data that was collected when Appendix B was distributed to participants.

Table 7

*Questionnaire for ABC County Employees Hired within the Six Month to One Year Timeframe*

| Question | Agree | Disagree | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| I regularly receive useful feedback from my manager about my performance and progress. | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| My immediate manager effectively communicates business unit goals and objectives to me. | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| My manager is supportive of my development and work. | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| I have been given an overview of how to manage my performance and career. | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| I understand how my work will be measured or evaluated. | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| I have the tools needed to do my job well. | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| The workload required of me is achievable. | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| I am able to manage my responsibilities at both work and home. | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| I have a clear understanding of my objectives and tasks and what I am expected to accomplish. | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| I have supportive co-workers. | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| I believe my ideas are valued. | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| I feel welcome and part of the team. | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| I understand my organization's goals. | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| I understand how my role contributes to the organization's goals. | 7 | 0 | 0 |

The rated items provided insight into what the employee's experience was within the specified timeframe. Furthermore, the ability to provide candid feedback allowed the employees to describe and elaborate on their rating. Table 8 provides a summary of comments provided by respondents, which can be found in Appendix E.

Table 8

*Questionnaire Comments from ABC County Employees Hired within the Six Month to One Year Timeframe*

| Comments on Communication and Integration |
| --- |
| Respondents indicated that their supervisors provide feedback about their performance and progress, but it could occur more often. |
| Respondents indicate that communication regarding business goals and objectives is occurring. |
| Overall, the comments from the respondents indicate that the managers are supportive of the employee's work and development. |
| Respondents indicated some confusion with having received an overview of how to manage their own performance and career. This finding is not surprising as it has not been a topic of ongoing discussion with most management staff. |
| Four out of seven respondents indicated that they were unclear on how their work is measured or evaluated. |
| Respondents agreed that they have the tools needed to do their job well. |
| Respondents agreed that their required workload is achievable. |
| Most respondents indicated that they are able to manage their responsibilities at work and home. For two respondents, complexity of task at work and stress at home play a factor in managing the balance between work and home at times. |
| Respondents indicate a clear understanding of objectives and task expectations. All respondents indicated that their co-workers are supportive. |
| Six out of seven respondents indicated that they feel their ideas are valued. |

Most respondents feel welcomed and a part of the team.  One respondent indicated that they feel "tolerated by some and accepted by others".  A second respondent commented that "some coworkers are better than others at doing this and it also takes a while to trust individuals".  All respondents understand the goals of the organization.

All respondents understand how their role contributes to the organization's goals.

One respondent commented multiple times about how busy their supervisor was.  This could be an indication of the individual's previous experiences with entering a new organization, the time of year and workload for the supervisor, or any number of other factors.  This did not seem to be the case overall.  The survey data that was collected from supervisory staff through Appendix C is summarized in Table 9 and detailed in Appendix F.

Table 9

*Questionnaire Comments Summary from Department Heads and Supervisors*

| Comments on Strengths and Opportunities |
|---|
| Respondents indicated that the current recruitment process is working well.  The suggestions for improvement included continued development to ensure appropriate "fit for agency", school reimbursement options, and streamlining the application process to make it easier to submit applications online. |
| Respondent indicated that the organization does well in the areas of welcoming and brining on new hires.  Continuing to provide new hires with flexibility and an introducing them in the county newsletter were also important factors to respondents.  Some areas for improvement were providing additional explanation regarding retirement and compensation, exploring additional Employee Achievement Program supports, and completing more of the initial onboarding process in-person as opposed to over the phone. |
| Respondents indicated that the organization demonstrates their support of new hires by providing training and accessibility to assistive resources.  Some areas for improvement included, follow up after initial orientation to go over benefits and providing reimbursement for courses taken outside of mandatory continuing education.  Additionally, respondents suggested opportunities such as picnics and parties to socialize with coworkers and exploring additional programming that could be provided by the Employee Achievement Program. |
| Respondents indicated that the organization has provided support when onboarding staff by providing interim staff on a limited term basis to fill the gap and providing ongoing communication to help the department prepare for new staff.  One respondent who is new to supervising indicated that they were not clear on what the expectation was regarding training new staff.  Other supervisors indicated they utilize a checklist specific to their department. |
| Respondents indicated that their individual departments have done well with supporting new hires through sufficient training, gradual transitioning into roles, increasing accessibility to supports, and following an orientation checklist.  Respondents commented that they would like to continue with an orientation checklist that works well and ensuring ongoing communication is occurring between HR, the department, and the new hire. |

The feedback from supervisors indicated that overall, supervisors feel the organization is supportive of them through the recruitment and orientation process.  Additionally, supervisors feel that their department is supportive of new hires through the orientation and onboarding process.

The intent of conducting the research was to identify that onboarding programs are beneficial to organizations in several ways. Organizations that utilize an effective process for onboarding their staff have increased employee satisfaction and engagement rates. Those organizations also experience less turnover and decreased costs associated with recruitment and retention. This study was conducted with the purpose of creating an effective onboarding program for ABC County. Although the data did not produce valuable quantitative results, the surveys did reveal areas where the organization is doing well and areas for improvement. The feedback received from participants confirmed that incorporating onboarding best practices into the process could have increased staff satisfaction.

**Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation**

The research that was conducted provided substance for developing an onboarding program for ABC County. The benefits of having an effective onboarding program are not only extensive to new employees, but to the organization as a whole.

**Discussion**

Based on the feedback that was received, it is acknowledged that different questions would have yielded better results. The questionnaires for both the new hires and managers indicate that overall, respondents feel supported through the onboarding process. Feedback from staff also indicated however, that ABC County would benefit from updating a few of its procedures during the process including the application process, educating on the benefits that are available to staff, and providing a consistent process for all new hires.

New hires indicated that the application process is cumbersome. Currently, the applicant has the option to complete the application form electronically but cannot save it. Therefore, if the applicant does not have access to a printer or if there is an issue or error in sending the file via email, they lose the information and have to start over. This is a barrier to applying and has caused frustration for some applicants. Additionally, the only other way to complete an application for consideration is by obtaining a hard copy from the human resources department.

Some of the participants indicated that increasing the benefits education would have been helpful, as they felt they did not receive adequate information in order to make an informed decision. Currently, the organization does not have internal experts to educate on the various benefits that are offered, but those vendors have representatives that are available for assistance and information.

Finally, utilizing a consistent onboarding process across the organization was important to respondents and doing so in phases would remedy the overload of information provided on the new hire's first day. All new hires go through a similar process with the human resources department, but once that portion is complete, there is no timeline or formal process for each employee to go through, mostly due to the differences between the several departments within the organization.

**Conclusions**

ABC County has 21 departments all individually responsible for services specific to their area of expertise. With each having its own unique form of management, it was necessary to develop a consistent process for managers to follow through the onboarding of new employees. Additional resources were also necessary in order to better assist new employees through their first several months.

An onboarding checklist was developed for managers as a guide to acclimating new hires into their department. This checklist is meant to be used as a tool to ensure consistency across the organization. Currently, the onboarding process varies by position and department, so having a checklist will eliminate some of the gaps. A checklist was also a suggestion from the new hires and supervisors. This checklist can be found in Appendix G.

ABC County was lacking formal tools and resources for new employees to reference. Several resources were created during the course of the research, to better equip staff through the onboarding process. These tools include a slide deck for quarterly onboarding meetings with human resources, an instruction manual for the time and attendance system, and access to training modules. The slide deck can be found in Appendix H. Additionally, human resources has been working with the information technology department to develop a more streamlined

process for both the application process, as well as the initial new hire paperwork. Through the use of laserfische, ABC County will recognize a number of efficiencies once the appropriate workflow is created.

The use of the shared drive is also being developed as an online location for resources, forms and documents that are useful to all employees, especially new hires and their managers. ABC County is not consistent in where information can be accessed, and it can be difficult for employees to determine where they can obtain information or specific forms. While information can be found in several areas including, shared folders in Outlook and the county website, the available information is not consistent nor updated appropriately. The shared drive could serve the same purpose and have everything in one location, for ease of accessibility and updating.

**Recommendations**

The research has determined a number of areas that ABC County should focus efforts on in order to improve their new employee onboarding process. The recommended next steps include:

- Ensure all new hires are receiving a genuine welcome.

- Provide all new hires with a packet that includes, contact information, job description, general policies, benefit details, organizational structure, break/lunch details, details on other position responsibilities, and where to park.

- Provide new hire with an overview of current and pending projects within the first few days.

- Provide clear explanation on how work will be measured and evaluated.

- Quarterly human resources orientation meetings with all new employees hired within that last year. These meetings will focus on specific policies, benefits, and the overall compensation package.

- Develop a new employment application with additional options to save and submit after completion. As indicated in the supervisor feedback, the application process can be cumbersome and needs to be technologically updated. Developing a new version of the application and making it accessible to complete and submit online would resolve the issue of having to re-do the application if it cannot be printed or emailed.

- Develop a mentor program to help acclimate new employees to the organization. This will provide the new employee with a dependable on-site expert to assist with navigating the organization and any issues that arise. Each department would have a mentor appointed by the department head

- Utilize a consistent timeline to follow up with new hires, as well as supervisory staff after the initial orientation. This can be found in Appendix G. Using this timeline to ensure consistency in the recruitment and onboarding process will be important moving forward. Regardless of position status (unpaid intern to full-time benefited), there should be a process that is followed so critical steps do not get missed or forgotten.

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**Appendix A: Questionnaire for Employees within Eight Weeks to Six Months After Hire**

1. During the interview process, I was asked questions that were relevant to the role offered.

2. During the interview, I was able to communicate information about my relevant skills, experience, and career goals. If not, what suggestions do you have to make it better?

3. The position description explained during the recruitment process was honest and accurate.

4. Do you feel you were given accurate information to have a good understanding of your department's functionality?

5. I received helpful organization history and service information during my orientation.

6. I found the orientation process met my expectations. If not, what suggestions do you have that would have made it better?

7. Overall, I feel my training is going well. If not, what suggests do you have that would make it better?

8. Were any topics not covered in the orientation process that you think should be included?

9. What is the most important information a new employee should receive?

**Appendix B: Questionnaire for Employees within Six Months to One Year After Hire**

1. I regularly receive useful feedback from my manager about my performance and progress.

2. My immediate manager effectively communicates business unit goals and objectives to me.

3. My manager is supportive of my development and work.

4. I have been given an overview of how to manage my performance and career.

5. I understand how my work will be measured or evaluated.

6. I have the tools needed to do my job well.

7. The workload required of me is achievable.

8. I am able to manage my responsibilities at both work and home.

9. I have a clear understanding of my objectives and tasks and what I am expected to accomplish.

10. I have supportive co-workers.

11. I believe my ideas are valued.

12. I feel welcome and part of the team.

13. I understand my organization's goals.

14. I understand how my role contributes to the organization's goals.

**Appendix C: Recruitment and Onboarding Questionnaire for Supervisors**

1. In what ways has the recruitment process worked well?

   a. What are the opportunities for improvement?

2. What does ABC County do well when bringing on new hires?

   a. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?

   b. What should stay the same?

3. In what ways has ABC County demonstrated support for new hires?

   a. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?

   b. What other programs could ABC County consider offering?

4. In what ways has ABC County demonstrated support for the department when onboarding staff?

   a. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?

5. In what ways has your department done well to support new hires?

   a. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?

   b. What should stay the same?

**Appendix D: Questionnaire Responses from ABC County Employees within Eight Weeks**

**to Six Month After Hire**

1. **During the interview process, I was asked questions that were relevant to the role offered.**

*I was applying for the position that I had been volunteering for.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*Yes, I thought your interview questions were really good. I prefer skill based relevant questions over behavioral questions.*

*I thought the questions asked during my interview were indeed relevant; however, I thought the interview period could have been longer. I think more questions could have been asked about my experience and educational backgrounds.*

*I felt all the questions were very relevant to the job that was being offered. I was asked about experiences that relate to the job I was applying for.*

*Yes, I was asked relevant questions for the role offered.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I felt that I was asked questions that are relevant to the role offered to me. Although I may not have realized tis at the time, I have learned that all topics discussed at my interview were very relevant to the position.*

2. **During the interview, I was able to communicate information about my relevant skills, experience, and career goals. If not, what suggestions do you have to make it better?**

*Would be nice to talk about prior jobs worked at, skills, more about the job.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I didn't really speak to career goals, so you could possibly speak to that more. I was able to communicate relevant skills and my experience.*

*I was able to communicate my experiences and career goals; however, a longer interview time with more questions would have been better for going into more depth.*

*Yes, the group that interviewed me was great at giving me time to talk and explain myself. All the questions were related to my skills, experience and career goals.*

*Yes, I was able to communicate information about myself that I felt was relevant to the interview.*

*I was able to communicate a lot about my skills and experiences that would help me in the internship.*

*Yes, I was.*

*I believe I was given ample opportunity to describe and explain my relevant skills and experiences. I was given appropriate time to express my own thoughts and questions as well.*

**3. The position description explained during the recruitment process was honest and accurate.**

*A job description should be given with site info, contact names, hours of operation etc.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*Yes. It is always hard to fully understand the actual work involved, but it was a great overview of the position.*

*Yes, the position description was accurate.*

*Yes, I would recommend adding more detail about what the job entails.*

*Yes, I feel the position described was honest and accurate.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*The position description is in line with my duties within my position.*

**4. Do you feel you were given accurate information to have a good understanding of your department's functionality?**

*No*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I believe I received as much information that was needed during the interview process. When I received my offer, I asked for a tour of the facility as I wanted to be sure the atmosphere was a good fit for me.*

*When I arrived, I had difficulty learning the time system since many employees in my department are on different systems.*

*Yes, everyone has been great.*

*I feel I was given accurate information about my department.*

*I believe I was given very accurate information*

*I believe the information given was the best at that time due to this being a part time position with 2 different departments.  It was a new experience for all.*

*During the interview process, and even a few days after hire. It can be confusing on who does what and how positions work together within a department.  After time, I now understand how the department functions and the roles of each different position.*

## 5.  I received helpful organization history and service information during my orientation.

*No - I didn't think it was an orientation - need to explain that this job did not get benefits, no paid time off for x hours worked - told to look up and read the policy book on line, but needed to sign paper that I had the day of filling out the application.*

*Yes*

*Some*

*I am not sure if you are referring to the HR orientation or my department orientation with my department head.  Either way, I have learned what I need to know as needed and will continue to learn as I go.*

*My orientation went well, and I thought it was well done for a new employee.*

*Yes, it was nice having orientation with a different people (1 on 1s).*

*I feel I have received information over the course of the week I worked, rather than all/most of it during orientation.*

*I received a lot of important information about the department during orientation that helped me feel comfortable coming onboard.*

*(My co-worker) was very helpful and explained things on my first day.  My first week was spent with the (one of the two departments I am assigned to) and the next week with (the other).   Since I was learning 2 different departments, it was a lot of information to grasp.*

*I feel those who interviewed my provided their knowledge and experience on the position to help me better understand it.*

**6.  I found the orientation process met my expectations.  If not, what suggestions do you have that would have made it better?**

*Also answer in number 5 - maybe a check off sheet should be checked off at time of interview with all key points given. Copy of driver's license picture taken, background check etc.*

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I am assuming you are referring to HR.  Yes, I have a pretty good understanding to the onboarding process so didn't need much assistance.  But when I think of a new hire that doesn't have much experience with the paperwork process, I always feel there is room to improve and help employees more thoroughly through this process.  The general new employee doesn't understand things like LTD, Def Comp, Life Ins, etc.  I think the more in-depth explanation the County can provide would be very helpful for new employees. I would suggest a follow up a week after start of employment to tie up loose ends and go over any/all paperwork that hasn't been received to be sure the employee doesn't have follow up questions or lack of information to make a good decision.*

*I would suggest a more thorough orientation with the department head about specific department needs.*

*Yes, everyone has been great and able to answer any questions I may have. I would recommend the tour/meeting everyone breaking that up in 2 days. It was very overwhelming meeting everyone at once.*

*The orientation process met my expectations.*

*The orientation process exceeded my expectations and was one of the better ones from jobs I have had.*

*This kind of goes with my above comment.   I was unfamiliar with the time reporting procedure and it has taken me a bit to get used to all of that.*

*The County was accommodating to my availability and took their time to be sure the position details were clear in the interview.*

**7.  Overall, I feel my training is going well.  If not, what suggests do you have that would make it better?**

*Yes*

*Yes, it is going well*

*Yes*

*I am digging in and enjoying the challenge. Since I am further into the process now, I can say that I would have appreciated more of an overlap with my successor. I am appreciative of the 4 days of training I did receive and also the records that she kept, but as I work through this process- I have come to realize that I needed at least a one-month cycle with her. There are just too many tasks that need to happen, and she was unable to go over them with me. I think it would have saved time/money in the long run to overlap the training instead of me taking them time to research backwards to figure out how things were/are done. It would have been beneficial to be able to learn from someone who fully understood the concept and workflow.*

*Due to large turnover in my position in the past, there are many instances where I do not have a "mentor" to teach me some tasks. Many times, I need to figure out the next steps to take myself; however, I am accepting of the challenge and things will become easier after more time.*

*Yes, I think the best training is the ability to shadow someone, everyone has been great.*

*Yes, I feel my training is going well.*

*I think my training is going very well, I have been allowed to go at the pace that I am comfortable with and have been given the opportunity to learn before being 'thrown in'.*

*There is always something new each day, my training has gone well, everyone is very willing to answer questions and assist when I need them.*

*Training has been going well. I have been supported by the department which really helped with the onboarding process.*

**8. Were any topics not covered in the orientation process that you think should be included?**
*See number 5. Also, I was not told I needed a physical before I could get paid for the position, and that HR would be contacting me if there were anything yet needed on my application.*

*No*

*No*

*I had some questions on Flex Spending and I had to contact my accountant to get the answers and update the IRS guideline information within Burnett County paperwork. I think we could improve on knowing our benefits offered better to guide employees through them. I also didn't get much information regarding the Employee Policy Manual, I had to research that myself.*

*Department file storage (online and physical versions).*

*Nope, everything went great!*

*No, I don't know of any topics that I believe should be included.*

*No, there was not.*

*What is my payscale – I know what pay I was offered for the position, but didn't know what the payscale held for the future ( I know now). Dress code. More information on the Health Insurance benefits.*

*I believe all the topics were covered that needed to be.*

## 9.  What is the most important information a new employee should receive?

*Would have been nice to hear "Welcome Aboard", enjoy your new job, if you have any questions here is a printout of the phone numbers, email address for Burnett County Government Center. Not just HR will get in touch with you.*

*To listen to what people say and care about what you are doing because it makes better results and makes the day go by faster.*

*Orientation*

*All expectations of their employment including job descriptions and everyday policies that can/will affect them. Also benefits provided/offered in detail with guidance understanding them.*

*What projects are pending (where the last person left off).*

*Don't be afraid to ask, if you don't ask questions around here, you will never learn.*

*I think the most important information is an accurate description of their job and the department they will be working for.*

*Probably more about how the County works, how breaks and lunches work, more internal stuff that we were not told much about.*

*Where to park!  Seriously, there is so much info that it's hard to pin it down to one thing.*

*I think just providing examples and going into detail of each duty within the position provides an honest and open discussion about what is expected.*

**Appendix E: Questionnaire Responses from ABC County Employees within Six Months to**

**One Year After Hire**

1. **I regularly receive useful feedback from my manager about my performance and progress.**

*I have received some feedback, but not often.   I am a worrier, so at times I would like to know that I am on the right path.  However, instead of waiting for someone to tell me that I am doing things right or wrong, I need to be proactive and ask.*

*Yes*

*(My Department Head) is one of the best manager's I have had in my employment history.  She is awesome about giving me feedback and advice on my performance and progress.*

*My manager is very busy and infrequently provides feedback.  We have met a few times about my performance; I am thankful for the time my manager spent with me.*

*Yes, but it is my program supervisor who is particularly helpful.*

*My manager is prompt to tell me if I need to touch something up in my duties or if we are doing jobs right.*

*Working the night shift, so I don't see them very much, but when I do, they provide feedback on my performance and progress.*

2. **My immediate manager effectively communicates business unit goals and objectives to me.**

*Yes.  I think it would be a good idea to have a bi-weekly, or monthly staff meeting for our office to go over items.  Oftentimes, we can assist each other with projects, and brainstorm ideas that may help.*

*Yes*

*(My manager) communicates with me very well.*

*My manager is very busy but does communicate unit goals via formal Support Staff Meetings on a monthly or bi-monthly schedule (time permitting).*

*My manager is great at telling me what duties need to be done every day, and informs me of future projects we will have to do.*

*Information is passed on through email, and day shift.*

**3.  My manager is supportive of my development and work.**

*Absolutely*

*Yes*

*(My manager) has been very supportive.  She is always there to answer questions I have or she is very good at telling me to go back and look at my written instructions to jog my memory.  She never makes me feel stupid and is always very helpful and encouraging.*

*Honestly, I don't feel "personally" supported, but I understand my manager is very busy and has many other staff members to deal with.*

*Yes*

*My manager is supportive of my progress working here and appreciates when I come in on days off or get called in to come help.*

*My manager is a great, always helping where he can.*

**4.  I have been given an overview of how to manage my performance and career.**

*No, I have not, but I have approached (my Department Head) and asked him if he has any goals for me during the next year.  I gave him a list of goals that I had for myself.*

*Yes*

*I'm not sure how to answer this question.  I just know the people in this department do a LOT of work!!*

*I don't remember this happening. I have visited (Human Resources) in order to make sure my career doesn't become stagnant – I <u>really</u> want to be proactive about managing my performance and career.*

*Yes*

*I am understanding of managing my work performance and learning more of my career.*

*I haven't received an overview.*

**5.  I understand how my work will be measured or evaluated.**

*Yes, to an extent.*

*Yes*

*I don't know how my work is measured but (my Department Head) has given me an evaluation which I was very pleased with. Not only did it let me know what she thought of my performance it gave me the opportunity to reach out with any questions or concerns.*

*The metric used to evaluate my performance has not been explained to me. I am guessing if I get my work done – it is considered successful.*

*I know I have goals; I know what most of the expectations are, I know there will be a review, but I am not sure as to what all will be evaluated.*

*I understand how my work is evaluated and how I can do a better job if needed.*

*I am not sure when or if I get a review.*

**6. I have the tools needed to do my job well.**

*I have the tools to complete my tasks; however, we are in the process of trying to streamline and are finding new tools we would like. It is a work in process, so to complete my job as it is today, I have what I need.*

*Yes*

*I believe I have everything I need to do my job well.*

*Yes! My desk is older, but I am thankful for the lift unit sitting on top of it. Life is good!*

*For the most part, yes*

*Usually the tools we need are supplied and in working order. Also having good communication makes it easier to do the jobs well.*

*I have all the tools to do my job.*

**7. The workload required of me is achievable.**

*I will be honest; in the beginning I was concerned that I was going to be bored. I did let our office know in a meeting that I had more capacity to take on more. Since that conversation, I have become busy, but never to the point that I feel overwhelmed on a daily basis.*

*Yes*

*The workload is achievable for me right now. I know I will need to learn more in order to be cross-trained and how that will affect my workload I don't know yet. I do know that there is a LOT*

*to do in this department and I am truly blessed to have such great co-workers who are willing to help me and work with me.*

*I have met with my manager about providing me with additional duties.  The workload is more than achievable!*

*Yes*

*The workload is pretty spread out evenly between all of us so it is easy to achieve.*

*Workload is achievable.  I do work many hours of overtime.*

**8.  I am able to manage my responsibilities at both work and home.**

*This is a hard one for me.  I tend to take on too much at home, so at times I will bring that stress to work with me.  However, I am always able to chat with coworkers about life and that helps.*

*Yes*

*I feel I am able to manage my responsibilities.*

*Yes!*

*For the most part, yes, but sometimes I get behind with work if some items become more complex.*

*I am able to manage my responsibilities with this job and my home life.  Having twins and a two-year-old toddler is hard to keep up with sometimes, but with this job I am still able to be home a good amount of time and keep up on household chores.*

*Yes, I am able to handle work and home.*

**9.  I have a clear understanding of my objectives and tasks and what I am expected to accomplish.**

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I understand the tasks that I have been given so far, but as noted above, there is still much more for me to learn.*

*Yes!  When I first started, I was trained by (a co-worker), and she still makes time to answer any questions I might have.*

*At first, this was difficult because it was not clear, so you had to learn by doing something wrong sometimes before you were told differently, or there was conflicting info.  However, now, for the most part, yes.*

*My manager makes it easy to understand what work we will be doing and gives us a timeline of when we should be done doing so.*

*I have a clear understanding of my objectives, tasks and what is required of me.*

**10. I have supportive co-workers.**

*110% yes.  I have the best co-workers.  They are there to support each other both in the working world and in our personal lives*

*Yes*

*I have very supportive workers; (the department staff) are the best and (the office support) when she is here.*

*Yes! I have navigated the terrain and know who I can go to for assistance.  There are those that don't want to be bothered, and I stay clear of those individuals.*

*Well, some yes, and some can be at times.*

*My coworkers are friendly and easy to get along with.  They are supportive of me and let me know if I'm doing a good job and help me along the way too.*

*I have great co-workers.*

**11. I believe my ideas are valued.**

*Yes, and having the ability to bounce ideas off each other is wonderful.*

*Yes*

*I don't know that I've come up with any ideas but I'm sure if and when I do they will be valued.*

*Honestly, not really.*

*I am not sure I have shared any ideas, yet.*

*I believe my ideas are valued, we talk things over if we hit a snag in the job, and my manager and coworkers are open to any ideas I have and we try it out to see if it works.*

*I believe my ideas a valued.*

**12. I feel welcome and part of the team.**

*Absolutely!! From day one, I felt like I was always part of the team.*

*Absolutely*

*I do feel part of the team.*

*I feel tolerated by some and accepted by others.*

*This has taken awhile, and some coworkers are better than others at doing this.  It also takes me awhile to trust individuals.*

*I feel welcome to be part of the team, everyone is friendly and cheerful and usually asks how the day is going.*

*I feel welcome and have become part of the team.*

**13. I understand my organization's goals.**

*Yes*

*Yes*

*I feel I understand the organization's goals; to do our jobs to the best of our ability and to serve the public in a professional and helpful manner.*

*I believe our department/organization exists to support the needs of the community.  I am here to support all the professionals helping those community members. It hasn't been spelled out for me, but I believe I am assuming correctly.*

*Definitely!*

*I am aware of my organization's goals, there is usually a memo or email explaining things, so I understand them.*

*I understand the organization's goals.*

**14. I understand how my role contributes to the organization's goals.**
*Yes*

*Yes*

*I do understand how my role contributes to the organization's goals.  Teamwork!!!*

*Yes! I know that the county is depending on me to accurately data-enter services into our state system. I have other duties but that is probably the most important one.*

*Absolutely!*

*I understand my role in this organization and its goals. We maintain the building and keep it clean and a friendly atmosphere.*

*I understand how my role contributes to the organization's goals. I am a very important part of (Unit) operations for the county.*

**Appendix F: Recruitment and Onboarding Questionnaire Responses from ABC County**

**Supervisors**

## 1. In what ways has the recruitment process worked well?

*In my short time here, we have hired two new staff members. I felt that overall, we drew from a competitive pool of candidates and led to us hiring people who fit very well with what we are doing.*

*I believe the current system works when getting the announcements sent out, if you are sending it to the appropriate places that interested individuals will see it. The timing to get permission to hire is not an issue, things seem to go smoothly when asking to fill as well as get the announcements out.*

*I do feel we are reaching some as we are getting a few from outside the region which is great.*

*For (my department), I think there is strong communication between our Department and HR. We have brainstormed together, and time is always made for conversation and processing.*

*It has worked because I have gotten candidates every time I have had an opening. But I do not get many applicants.*

### A. What are the opportunities for improvement?

*Recognizing that we live in a rural area and draw from a limited pool I don't see any improvement opportunities at this time.*

*At this time I have no suggested improvements.*

*I think if we nail done (specific position) school reimbursement options this may help. I am always a proponent for keeping within arms reach of our neighboring counties regarding pay.*

*I would continue to advocate for new ideas on how we vet our applicants. I think we have done some good improvements with the questions we ask and additions to our process (such as the more informal meetings between supervisor and applicant), but I would like to continue discussions and development on how we can appropriately ensure the applicant is a good fit for our agency. Maybe there are ways other departments operate that the organization as a whole could benefit from.*

*I put my most recent job opening on our department Facebook page and I get 6 people that were interested. It is way easier to apply that way and I think that is why I got so many candidates, but they still need to go through the process of completing the actual county application. I think the biggest improvement should be upgrading the online application. It should not be so hard to complete the application. Fill it out online, print, sign and mail in. It should be able to be complete, click send.*

**2.    What does Burnett County do well when bringing on new hires?**

*I believe we are flexible with starting dates for individuals and getting them up and running in our offices when first starting. We offer them the policy manual and try to allow them time to review that. We allow some flexibility with their hours, but some of the past employees have tried to work extra to build up PTO. I have had to explain the flexibility is not for them to build their PTO bank, but rather allow them an hour here or there if they had to leave early for a dr. or dentist app or kids ball game. I normally handle this in house, but I think sometimes the expectation is there.*

*I truly think the person feels welcome and the work environment is inviting and supportive.*

*Again, I think we communicate well and have done some nice additions to our (department) orientation process to prepare staff for their first day.  I really like the new hires for the entire organization being listed in the newsletter.  It's a great way to see other new hires from other departments.*

*Everyone is very nice.*

**A.    What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?**
*N/A*

*I think people that are new the Government do not understand their pay. They look at their hourly wage and figure the normal reductions for tax, but I think it is a shock when they have to pay the retirement and health care on top of that. I know the last few hires in my departments were surprised, they just didn't realize that those were being taken out automatically, they don't get to choose with the retirement deductions. It's usually a shock that their take home pay is way less than they anticipated and I think this has been a reason some of them have left. Younger generations are not looking at their retirement and would rather have the $ in their pocket now. Somehow, we have to show the importance or benefit of that retirement portion. We say they get state retirement, but they do not understand what that actually means and quite honestly, I don't think they care when they are in their 20's and early 30's. Once they are in their mid-40's, then they are going to wish they had thought differently. (Is it possible for them to wave the state retirement benefit and take their portions of that as direct take home pay?) Is it possible to show them on paper some estimated projections as to what it means for their retirement money wise after 5, 10, 15, 20 years of service?*

*Exploring what services our EAP could provide that would allow for additional support would be of interest to me.*

*What I remember from the start of the process is confusion.  I did not have much experience with starting at a county position.  I feel like it was just assumed that I would know what would need to be done.  From the drug test to the online manual to the pay format and raise schedule.  Most of the process was done over the phone, so maybe that did not help.  When I would orientate people at the nursing home we would bring them in and go over all of the paperwork and give them a tour of the facility and just explain everything.  Maybe I was just overwhelmed at the time and did not pick up what was being told to me. A lot of stuff about "county work" I was taught by my co-workers.*

### B. What should stay the same?

*I'm sure it's true of most if not all departments but our staff has really been accommodating to the new employees and helpful in answering any questions. I know they appreciated being featured in the newsletter too which was an additional show of appreciation and welcome.*

*Unknown*

*New hires in the newsletter*

### 3. In what ways has Burnett County demonstrated support for new hires?

*We offer as much training as we can afford, up front. We try to work with our staff as much as we can and explain the many different processes.*

*In talking with new staff, I have found there is a strong sense that they know where to go to ask questions and feel they can approach admin/HR with those questions or concerns. Or, at least, they are verbalizing that. I'd be curious to hear if there is follow through.*

### A. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?

*The programming we use offers webinars and opportunities for training.*

*It might be nice to meet with them after a month and ask them how things are going and if they have any questions. I realize the Dept. Heads should be doing this, but we cannot answer many of the questions they have, usually seems to be questions regarding Insurance, or something to do with their pay stubs.*

*As mentioned above the course reimbursement plan.*

*While there has been some of this, I think it would be good to consider scheduling times to come back to new staff within the first 60 days (a process in place now in our orientation checklist), in the first 6 months and again just prior to probation ending.*

*I think that the Employee Achievement Program is a great new opportunity. Maybe if there are more ways to get them in the building so that we truly understand what they can do for us and we would become more comfortable using them.*

*I knew about the flexible spending account situation because I had used it before but for those that have not utilized it before it seems like they are not explained how to use it. I have had to help several co-workers through the process. Not sure when it is discussed with them, but maybe it is too soon in the hire process.*

*It is also hard to know who to talk to in the Admin office. I do not know what each person does as to who to speak to about a certain issue. The same holds true as a supervisor. I do not know if I am supposed to go through my department head for all interaction through Admin or if I can contact them myself. My department head does not mind being cut out of the process as long as I keep her in the loop on what is happening.*

**B.  What other programs could Burnett County consider offering?**

*N/A*

*I don't know.*

*I would be interested in exploring programs through our EAP that could benefit us or be a good fit for our needs.*

*Not sure what other programs are out there.  I would really like to see more done to support interdepartmental relations.  Picnics, parties, something to be able to get to know other departments.  I feel like if I had started in the (my current department) I would not know anyone in the building and that I am lucky to have started in (my previous department).*

**4.  In what ways has Burnett County demonstrated support for the department when onboarding staff?**

*The fact that they recognized that being down a staff member or two and offered LTE support in the interim was great. BC also did a great job of establishing a start date and letting us know when that would be which helped with preparation.*

*I have no issue with the support I have received when working a new employee into the system. It really just comes down to communicating any issue with the appropriate person and things usually get done.*

*We have restructured our on boarding to allow time to learn without overwhelming. The employee checklist touches on most all aspects and ensures we do not miss anything.*

*For me, I have found that there has been great communication between HR and our department.*

*Honestly with the new staff in (my department) I am not sure.  I had to go over all of the county stuff with the staff.  I explained the use of county vehicles, how to get paid for expenses, how to use the gas pumps, how to get at the flexible spending forms.   Not sure if it was gone over and was just too much at that time or if it was not discussed at all.  Maybe department heads are confused about what county "policy/procedure" stuff is being covered by the Admin department and what they are responsible to cover.*

**A.  What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?**

*N/A*

*No suggestions at this time.*

*Continue to push for standardized training for (specific positions) if we ever need it. (Specific positions) seem to have more options.*

*I know of other agencies who have existing staff as part of the hiring process to varying levels (part of the interview process, meet and greet applicants, spending some time prior to hire).  I would be interested in exploring if this would make sense for us as well.*

**5. In what ways has your department done well to support new hires?**

*The demeanor of the staff has been great for new hires. Further, establishing a clear understanding of the individual's role in the department as well as gradually transitioning the person in his/her role rather than dump everything on them at once.*

*We offer as much training as we can that directly impacts their work. We have weekly sit-down discussions with everyone in the department. Unfortunately in this department we all have pretty much independent jobs, so it can be a little tough at times to work directly with a new hire, but we do the best we can and we try not to ask them to do things that are out of their comfort zone until they are ready.*

*From my perspective I have tried to provide more time during this process to be available for questions/issues. Provide regular time to meet and allow time for shadowing when available.*

*I feel we have improved and by revamping our orientation checklist by trying to ensure we are reducing redundancies and embedding ways to support new hires. I think we have bolstered our internal communications between units and have really been thoughtful about how we onboard staff.*

*(The Department Head) does a good job of following up with staff, but I think the waters get a little murky with the (this department). Since staff is employed by (one) county, but work in (two counties) they should truly be orientated to each county, but I am not sure how completely that happens for each county.*

**A. What are the opportunities for improvement? What areas or programs?**

*N/A*

*Unknown*

*I find that we are learning from past issues/mistakes and applying what we know to new hires in trying to not repeat those mistakes or at least control the things we can. I think we are consistently discussing the process and speed of onboarding and trying to keep good communication between staff and new hires open and candid about how things are going. I think we could do a better job of checking in with existing staff about their interactions and observations with new hires and reducing that stigma that seems to surround it (like they are tattling if they may have concerns or feedback).*

**B. What should stay the same?**

*Everything.*

*Unknown*

*As it stands now, I like our orientation checklist.*

**Appendix G: New Employee Onboarding Checklist**

**ABC COUNTY**
**NEW EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING CHECKLIST**
Pre-Employment – 90 Days of Employment

**New Hire: _____**                    **Date of Hire: _____**

| PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKLIST | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Checkbox** | **Task** | **Who** |
| | Call candidate & email offer packet | Human Resources |
| | Complete new employee personnel action in New World | Human Resources |
| | Designate a mentor for new employee | Supervisor |
| | Create a training schedule for the first 1-2 weeks and designate times for mentor and new employee to connect | Supervisor |
| | Office / Cubical preparation (cleaning and stock w/ supplies) | Supervisor |
| | Notify current staff of the new hire and start date | Supervisor |
| | Contact new employee to tell them how happy you are he/she is joining your team. Discuss time and place to report on first day, parking, lunch plans (if any), dress code, etc. Keep in communication by following up via e-mail or phone before the official start date. | Supervisor |
| | | |
| **FIRST DAY OF EMPLOYMENT** | | |
| **Checkbox** | **Task** | **Who** |
| | 9:00 – 10:00 Orientation Initial Paperwork, Payroll Calendar, Key Fob (IT), I.D. Picture (Clerks) | Human Resources |
| | Discuss management style, expectations of position, culture of department, departmental dynamics, etc. | Supervisor |
| | Introduction to staff and tour of department (location of office, office supply order procedure, location of manuals and procedures) | Supervisor |
| | Give employee his/her keys | Supervisor |
| | Building tour and introduction to key employees in other departments (parking, bathrooms, recycling, break rooms, conference rooms, Sheriff's Dept., courthouse, highway locations) | Supervisor |
| | Review the job description and discuss expectations | Supervisor |
| | Take employee to Lunch (optional) | Supervisor |

| | Discuss training schedule for first 1-2 weeks | Supervisor |
|---|---|---|
| | Allow employee to get settled in his/her workspace and get acclimated to the information shared throughout the day | Supervisor |
| | IT meeting for technology setup | IT |
| | | |

### SECOND DAY OF EMPLOYMENT

| Checkbox | Task | Who |
|---|---|---|
| | Review department mission statement and organizational chart | Supervisor |
| | Explain work hours, overtime/compensatory time, breaks/lunches | Supervisor |
| | Explain department PTO policy | Supervisor |
| | Explain time off request procedure | Supervisor |
| | Review the job description and discuss expectations | Supervisor |
| | New employee orientation - Policy manual, educate & enroll in benefits | Human Resources |
| | | |

### FIRST 1-2 WEEKS CHECKLIST

| Checkbox | Task | Who |
|---|---|---|
| | Discuss formal and informal training needs. Go over type of training required or recommended, the duration, why, and when it is scheduled or offered | Supervisor |
| | Update calendars and setup reoccurring meetings and future events | Supervisor |
| | Review the county website | Supervisor |
| | Create/order business cards | Supervisor |
| | Explain how to use Outlook (conference room, laptop, vehicle reservation) | Supervisor |
| | Explain how to track and enter payroll | Supervisor |
| | Overview of department Shared Drive | Supervisor |
| | Review how and where to print, copy and scan | Supervisor |
| | Review how to submit an IT Helpdesk Ticket | Supervisor |
| | Review P-Card usage procedure | Supervisor |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Explain open records request | Supervisor |
| | Explain other department specific policies and procedures | Supervisor |
| | Setup a regular check in with new employee at the first 30, 60 and 90 days. Ask employee how frequently they would Like to check in going forward | Supervisor |
| | | |

| **FIRST 90 DAYS CHECKLIST** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Checkbox** | **Task** | **Who** |
| | Review County directory to explain roles of each department. | Supervisor |
| | Review training request procedure / mileage and meal reimbursements | Supervisor |
| | Schedule required new employee trainings | Supervisor |
| | Attend a Governing Committee meeting | Supervisor |
| | Attend a County Board meeting | Supervisor |
| | Pay Plan Review, County Mutual Safety Training, Review of GHT Incentives & UMR Website Registration, ReaLiving Video | Human Resources |
| | Stay interview | Human Resources |

Offer Packet Includes:
- Offer Letter
- Job Description
- Benefits Listing
- New Employee Data Form
- I-9
- W-4
- WT-4
- Direct Deposit Form
- Link to Manual on Website: (Link here)

New Employee Orientation Packet Includes:
- Policy Manual Signature Page
- Personal Vehicle Memo
- Benefits Listing
- Enrollment Change Form for Health & Dental
- LTD, Supplemental Life & Group Term Life Forms
- Flex Spending Form
- WRS Benefit Checklist
- WRS Beneficiary Designation Form
- WRS Variable Trust Form

90 Day Orientation Checklist Includes: - ***Reminder email prior to scheduled meeting – Bring Insurance Card***

- Pay Plan
- County Mutual Log In at http://www.wisconsincountymutual.org/training/login
  **Username:** (ABC County email address)  **Password:** (ABC County Specific Password)  *New employee will be prompted to change their password*
- GHT Wellness Incentives (Reimbursements, Preventative Exam Gift Card, EOB Review, Webster Wellness, Anytime Fitness)

- UMR Registration and Review of Website: https://www.umr.com/tpa-ap-web/?navDeepDive=publicHomeDefaultContentMenu
- ReaLiving Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE0hokBj_eQ