

# Ohio Department of Transportation Research Project Fact Sheet



## Recruiting and Retaining Staff

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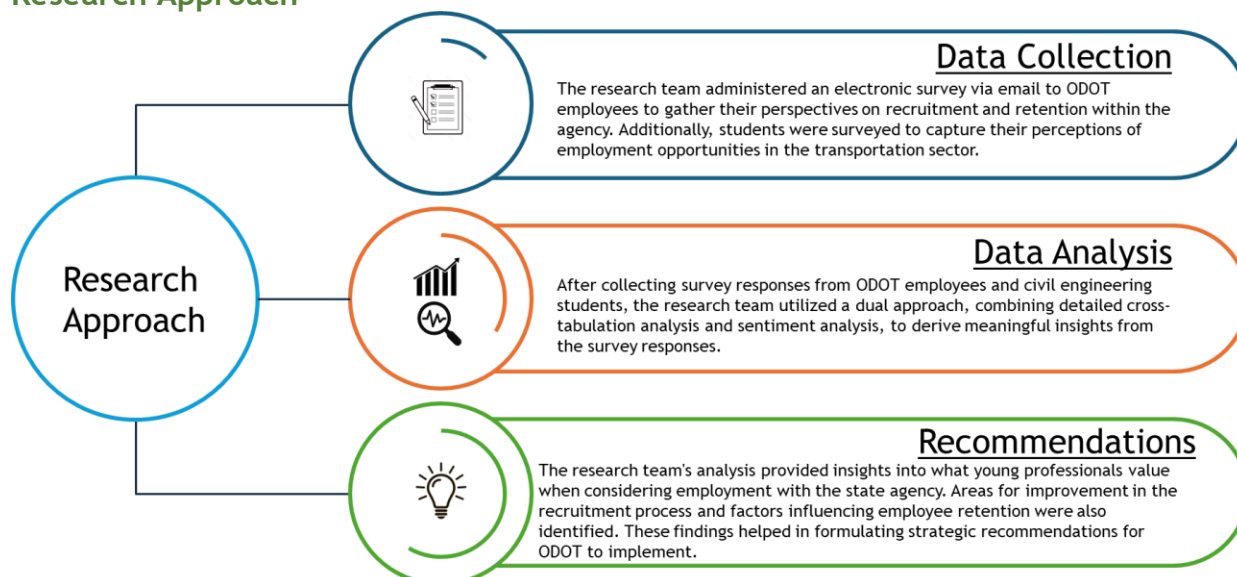
## The Problem

For the Ohio Department of Transportation to efficiently and timely complete their transportation projects, they must entrust these projects to their skilled workforce. This ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of public transportation services.

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) faces significant challenges due to staff turnover, reduced hiring of full-time staff, and the retirement of the baby-boomer generation, which exacerbates the need for innovative practices to attract and retain a workforce. High staff turnover rates lead to a loss of experienced personnel, creating gaps in expertise and knowledge in the department. Limited hiring of full-time staff further compounds the issue, as part-time and temporary positions often do not offer the stability and benefits that full-time roles do, making it harder to attract and retain skilled workers. Furthermore, skills and knowledge held by the retiring baby-boomer generation are irreplaceable too, their departure leaves a gap in leadership and expertise that is difficult to bridge.

The goal of this project is to identify innovative recruitment and retention strategies that attract a wide range of talents, focusing on job stability, succession planning and enhancing social and economic benefits to attract and retain top talent. To achieve this, comprehensive information on ODOT employees' perceptions of the recruitment process and factors influencing their decisions to remain with the organization was to be gathered. The same was to be applied to students to gather their insights about employment in the transportation sector, their assessment of university-acquired skills, and their awareness of job market dynamics and expectations.

## Research Approach



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This research was sponsored by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

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## Findings

### ODOT Employees

#### Recruitment Process

- Job stability, retirement plans, health benefits and vacation packages were the main factors that made ODOT employees join the agency across all age groups and experience levels.
- Improvement areas mentioned were shortening the recruitment process and increasing compensation packages.

#### Retention

- Enhanced retirement benefits, greater flexibility in work schedules, improved vacation entitlements, and health care benefits were key reasons for the employees to stay at ODOT.
- Young Professionals value a supportive work environment, to significantly contribute to their job satisfaction.
- Improvement areas were an increase in the salary cap to match the private sector, promotion and succession opportunities, and appreciation in efforts for the work done.

### Civil Engineering Students

#### Fields of Interests

- There is a significant interest among students in fields such as design engineering, traffic/transportation management, and structural and pavement engineering.

#### Attracting Factors

- A desire for work-life balance, job security, opportunities to serve the community, competitive salary, and health/insurance benefits.
- Their career preferences revealed a strong inclination towards continuous skill development, a willingness to extend work hours with appropriate incentives, and a preference for mentorship from senior members in the workplace.
- LinkedIn and handshake emerged as the most popular choices that students seek for job opportunities, this suggested that there's a diverse array of platforms utilized for job search and networking purposes

## Recommendations

The analysis performed by the research team indicates that the current ODOT has the majority of values that most young professionals view as the most crucial factor for them to be part of the state agency. Therefore, ODOT should consider the following.

1. Improve the timeline of providing feedback to individuals who were interviewed.
2. Improve the salary benefit to at least match the market in the private sector and be competitive and appealing to the young generations.
3. ODOT can advertise its policies and distinguishing benefits such capability to work remotely, receive paid time off, vacation packages, and other numerous benefits to young professionals in seminars and workshops.
4. Advocate for mentorship of the young professionals who join the agency by assigning the junior to be under the supervision of the experienced workforce hence creating a supportive environment for the young professional joining the workforce.
5. Implement robust internship programs targeting both high school and college students, as internships have proven effective in attracting young talent early in their career paths.
6. Leveraging social media and other digital platforms can significantly improve ODOT's online recruitment tools, making them more appealing and accessible to young professionals who are active online.
7. Recognizing and rewarding exemplary employee performance is also crucial. This practice not only boosts morale but also fosters a sense of team unity and engagement.

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