A JOB-DEMANDS RESOURCES ANALYSIS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT IN THE

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

A Culminating Project Presented to the Department of Public Policy and Administration at

California State University, Sacramento in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

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December 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Californians win when staff of elected officials are engaged in their work. Higher work engagement benefits employee motivation, retention, and satisfaction. To this end, this report aims to identify workplace resources and demands that increase work engagement. Literature on the topic reveals four key factors influencing public sector work engagement - organizational goal ambiguity, positive co-worker relationships, the importance of managers, and hiring for public service mindset. Through in-depth interviews with four current legislative employees, first, I find legislative employees learn skills to mitigate goal ambiguity with elected officials through on-the-job-experience; however, this leads to stress for legislative employees early in their career. Second, I find legislative offices effectively use job resources to foster positive co-worker relationships; however, the Senate and Assembly Rules committees minimally support these efforts, which may lead to less positive co-worker relationships outside of an employee's legislative office. Third, I find legislative offices effectively use job resources to create positive supervisor relationships; however, the Senate and Assembly Rules committees minimally support these efforts, which may lead to less experienced managers learning on the job and struggling with a key component interviewees identified – communication skills. Fourth, I find both legislative offices and Senate and Assembly Rules committees do not specifically focus on hiring for public service mindset; however, legislative offices do probe new hires to see how they want to serve the elected officials district, which is a form of public service mindset.

In accordance with these findings, I suggest five recommendations to the Senate and Assembly Rules committee to increase legislative employees' work engagement:

1. Facilitate working groups with chiefs of staff to discuss and articulate best practices for each of the four theme areas. Provide these best practices to all elected official's offices,

and especially target offices that are struggling with these concepts with additional mentoring on the topics.

2. Identify a curriculum and create training to help staff learn the critical thinking and questioning skills to communicate with elected officials about their goals.

3. Create and distribute a survey to staff about what informal bonding activities they should invest time and resources in.

4. Require staff promoted into or hired into supervisor positions, like a chief of staff, attend communication classes.

5. Update their hiring packets to communicate the benefits of hiring for public service mindset and advise chiefs of staff to ask interview questions to identify candidate's public service mindset.

Section 1 demonstrates why three recent events (the #MeToo movement, a recent successful effort to allow staff to unionize and COVID-19) set the stage for Senate and Assembly Rules to take actions necessary to address legislative work engagement. Section 2 provides background on two key constitutional requirements effecting employees working in the California Legislature (elected leaders to legislative offices and term limits) that differ from other work environments. Section 3 reviews literature on public sector work engagement to identify four key factors – goal ambiguity, positive co-worker relationship, positive supervisor relationship and hiring for public service mindset. Section 4 explains my methodology of interviews with current legislative employees to understand how their job resources and demands compare to these four key factors. Section 5 organizes and describes my findings. Section 6 provides administrative recommendations to the Senate and Assembly on five recommendations to increase work

engagement. Section 7 concludes my paper, synthesizing the lessons learned from my research

and offering key takeaways for the reader.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Californians win when staff of elected officials are engaged in their work. Engaged workers are loyal to their workplace, trust their co-workers, are not looking for another job, express pride in their employer and have minimal boundaries between private and professional life (Hawrysz, 2015). Research demonstrates worker engagement is a key factor in studying human resources (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019). Work engagement is especially important for legislative employees. These professionals influence all Californians through their efforts to change laws on behalf of elected officials. High worker engagement is associated with increased productivity for employers and job and life satisfaction for employees (Hawrysz, 2015). A public agency, either the California Senate or Assembly Rules committee, employs legislative staff and unfortunately, considerable research details challenges facing public employees. Public employees are more dissatisfied with their jobs than their private sector counterparts are. Some explanations, explored later in the report, cite a source of stress as working in a more top-down regulated environment characterized by greater levels of bureaucracy that limits their realization of professional goals (Di Simone et al., 2016). In addition to the stressors public sector workers face, legislative employees face unique challenges. The highly public #MeToo movement highlighted a culture of sexual harassment. Legislative staff have been working to form a staff union, which requires legislative action, for six years.

In October 2017, 140 women signed an open letter acknowledging and denouncing historic sexual misconduct against mostly women by legislators and lobbyists. Three legislators were accused of sexual misconduct, and all resigned within a 12-month period (DiSarro & Hussey, 2019). The situation highlighted structural challenges whereas the Senate and Assembly cannot fire elected officials for misconduct towards their staff. Following the letter, the Senate

and Assembly Rules committees hired a law firm to investigate reports of misconduct from staff and adopted a resolution to release substantiated findings. The California Legislature passed laws to ban retaliation against legislative employees and lawmakers from reaching secret settlement deals against people they sexually harass. Despite these institutional changes, a Los Angeles Times survey of the women who signed the letter one year after found one-third believed the letter did nothing to change their day-to-day life; however, a majority believed it had a positive effect on California politics (Luna & Mason, 2018). One elected state official stated the scandal and fallout harmed public perception of the California Legislature (DiSarro & Hussey, 2019). This public perception can damage worker engagement, employee recruitment and retention.

In additional to the #MeToo movement, legislative employees are not represented by a union unlike most other public employees. In 1977, California lawmakers allowed all other public employees, except legislative workers, to form unions to collectively bargain for employment conditions (Luna, 2022). Private employees have had the rights since 1935. Legislative employees are at-will employees that elected officials can fired with little resistance from Senate and Assembly Rules committees. This tenuous situation with limited recourse can damage worker engagement. Elected officials have introduced five bills to allow employees to form a union. Four out of five attempts stalled during the legislative process. However, Governor Newsom signed the most recent legislation.

Although this report highlights unique characteristics of legislative staff engagement demands and resources, the California Legislature is not immune to general challenges in worker engagement. COVID-19 put social connections at risk causing loneliness, and lonely employees report negative well-being, poor performance, and low helpfulness (Andel et al., 2021). Employees who telecommuted more during the pandemic experienced higher work-related

loneliness (Andel et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the California Legislature moved their employees to remote work for nearly two years. Forty-eight percent of workers reported looking for a new job post COVID-19 pandemic, and theories on this occurrence include turnover shock and pent-up resignations caused by burnout (Gandhi & Robinson, 2021). COVID-19 may be causing "turnover shock" leading workers to seek a profession that is more personally meaningful to them. Turnover shock occurs when people quit their jobs because of an experience that causes them to reevaluate their lives (Holtom et al., 2005). Another explanation for recent resignations is employees put off switching jobs during the pandemic because of uncertainty; however, increased burnout during the pandemic may now be boiling over (Gandhi & Robinson, 2021).

As Marcus Birmingham, an employee engagement expert says, "focus on each person's strengths and manage around his weaknesses." This report aims to use the job-demands resources model to answer the questions of what are the solutions, or resources, which increase the legislative staff's work engagement. And what are the challenges, known as demands, which decreases legislative staff's work engagement. The goal is to better understand what the strengths and weaknesses of legislative staff's work engagement so the California Senate and Assembly can lean into its strengths and manage its weaknesses. To that end, the report includes five recommendations to the Senate and Assembly Rules committees to address work engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

For most of California's 173 years of existence, the California Legislature only functioned part-time. In 1966, this changed, when Proposition 1A passed and gave the California Legislature the control to raise its own salary and set its own schedule (Kousser, 2005). This change followed a general trend across the nation of professionalization in state houses. Since the 1960s, higher salaries, better benefits, more staff, improved facilities, and lengthened legislative sessions led more people to consider and thrive in careers in state legislatures (Robinson, 2011). Today, 1800 people work for the California Legislature, and California is ranked number one in two-key metrics of professionalization - total number of staff per legislator and highest pay for legislators (Kousser, 2005).

A key difference between working for the California Legislature and most other work places is Californian's elect a legislative employee's boss; the institution cannot hire them into this leadership position, or conversely, fire them if they are not a good supervisor. In 1990, voters passed Proposition 140 ushering in the most significant reform to professionalization in the California Legislature. Proposition 140 limited legislators to three two-year terms in the Assembly and two four-year terms in the Senate (Kousser, 2005). More recently in 2012, voters altered term limits to allow elected officials to serve up to 12-years in either the Senate or Assembly. Kousser (2006) believes term limits decreased the quality of legislative leadership and legislation. Elected officials can only serve for 12 years, but the average legislative employee's career is much longer. Work engagement may suffer because of forced turnover in the leadership of legislative offices. However, positively, term limits are associated with more legislators identifying as a woman or a member of a minority (Cain & Kousser, 2004).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on worker engagement identifies four key factors of importance that support or harm workers engagement – (1) organizational goal ambiguity, (2) positive co-worker relationships, (3) the importance of managers, and (4) hiring for public service mindset.

Organizational goal ambiguity means an organization has vagueness of goals and performance criteria (Rainey et al., 2021). In these environments, it is difficult for employees to understand how to proceed and prioritize their tasks to achieve collective goals. Organizational goal ambiguity requires public employees to expend more cognitive effort to identify tasks that may meet an organizational goal (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019). This is especially harmful for senior public managers because elected officials rely on them to be accountable for the outcome of the organization. They may find this difficult if they struggle to communicate goals to their subordinates. Organizational goal ambiguity is especially damaging because it is associated with public employees not reaching out to external stakeholders (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019). This is a key function of legislative staff. One resource that combats goal ambiguity is trust between employees. When employees trust each other, they share sensitive information more readily causing them to meet goals more efficiently.

Effective management and co-worker relationships are resources to bolster worker engagement. Related to goal ambiguity, Hawrysz (2015) finds, if there is unclear leadership in a company, managers play a key role in building worker engagement by respecting workers, defining goals, providing consistency, supporting workers in problem solving and showing appreciation to workers. Good middle management is a resource public agencies can lean on to increase engagement, especially when factoring in that elected officials can only serve for 12 years. Additionally, research shows positive coworker relations leads public managers to

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increase engagement and protect the engagement from the damaging effects of organizational goal ambiguity (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019).

Finally, public service mindset is "the belief, the values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate" (Vandenabeele, 2007, p. 547). People with higher levels of this mindset internalize their work as benefiting society, which increases their work engagement. Conversely, people with low levels of this mindset may struggle to handle bureaucracy in public agencies like cutting red tape, which can lead to lower engagement. Similarly, public service motivation research shows people with higher levels of public service motivation are more satisfied in their jobs and receive better work evaluations from their supervisors (Rainey et al., 2021). This mindset pushes public servants to use their resources to stay engaged and perform better.

In addition to key themes effecting worker engagement, it is important to understand how working for a public organization may cause employees to have different demands and resources. Rainey et al. (2021) offer that public and private organizations are more similar than different though. It is important to identify the organizational tasks of a public agency to compare it to private agencies. The California Legislature primarily performs the unique task of establishing laws for individuals and companies who live or do business in California. For this reason, comparing this public agency to private agencies may be more difficult.

Rainey et al. (2021) challenges practitioners to focus on the sources of influence a public agency faces when identifying resources and demands. One challenge is the public may stereotype legislative employees as lazy bureaucrats. Conversely, the public may receive beneficial services like subsidized health insurance or quality education, which can lead to

positive stereotypes of legislative employees. As noted in the introduction, the news media may also be critical of the California Legislature because of its treatment of employees. This can benefit engagement if the institution implements changes to address the issue.

As demonstrated, employees who work for the California Legislature face demands and resources that effect their engagement. The job demands-resources theory offers that these demands and resources effect outcomes by impairing and motivating success of the individual and organization. Resources refer to "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that either/or (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) are functional in achieving work goals; (3) stimulate personal growth, learning and development" (Mussagulova, 2021, pp. 220-221). On the other hand, job demands "lead to exhaustion, negatively affecting individual performance and are defined as factors that cost energy, such as high workload and role ambiguity." The California Legislature can better isolate successes and weaknesses to learn how to bolster positive factors and manage negative factors by studying these individual contributions as inputs to answer the two questions. First, what are the solutions, or resources, that increase the legislative staff's work engagement? And second, what are the challenges, known as demands that decreases legislative staff's work engagement?

4. METHODOLOGY

When analyzing the resources and demands effecting work engagement for legislative staff, I will use four interviews of staff completed between October 26, 2023 and November 8, 2023. I interviewed legislative staff to understand how their job resources and demands compare to research on the topic and create administrative recommendations that caters to both lived experience and research.

In choosing whom to interview, I considered legislative staff work tenure, work responsibilities and positions. First, I chose staff with both managerial and non-managerial to understand how resources and demands may affect them differently. Second, I chose staff who worked in the California Legislature for different tenures to decipher how their expectations differed about work engagement and how work engagement may have changed over the course of a decade, especially with the recent introduction of remote work following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I considered how staff who had worked in multiple offices during their career working in the California Legislature could compare environments. Finally, I chose legislative staff working in different positions to see what themes of work engagement I can attribute to a specific position or to all employees in the California Legislature. Based on these criteria, I interviewed:

- A chief of staff with ten years of experience working in both the California Assembly and Senate who has worked for three elected officials;
- A scheduler with eight years of experience working in the California Assembly who has worked for three elected officials;
- A legislative director with eight years of experience working in the California Assembly who has worked for three elected officials;

- And a legislative aide with nine months of experience working in the California Senate who has worked for one-elected officials.

I identified each interviewee through previous work experience, reached out to each of them via email using my Sacramento State email to request an interview and held one-hour interviews with each employee. During the interview, each interviewee answered questions detailed in the appendix about the resources and demands effecting their work engagement. I based my questions on identified resources and demands that affect work engagement from the literature review. Namely, 1) organizational goal ambiguity, (2) positive co-worker relationships, (3), the importance of managers and (4) hiring for public service mindset. I designed the questions to understand if their perspective on work engagement in the legislature aligned with the research. After the interviews, I re-listened to the interviews and identified themes that overlapped in interviews and labeled these themes as either a job demands or a job resources.

5. FINDINGS

Table 1 summarizes findings from interviews. Based on four categories, I respectively

identify the job resources and demands.

Table 1: Summary of findings

Category	Job resources	Job demands
Organizational goal ambiguity	- Experienced staff manage up to understand elected officials goals - Chief of staff and elected official host staff retreat	- Elected official presents vague goals - Elected official unavailable to provide guidance
Positive co-worker relationship	- Senate and Assembly Rules hosts networking events for schedulers, chiefs of staff and committee consultant - Staff associations representing affinity groups exist - Senate and Assembly Rules supports workplace conduct unit - Chief of staff and elected official hosts informal bonding activities - Chief of staff and elected official host staff retreat	Senate and Assembly Rules committee provides limited formal investment to create positive co-worker relationships
The importance of managers	- Chief of staff hosts staff meetings with District and Capitol staff and 1:1 check-ins - Chief of staff conveys an open door policy to communicate issues - Chief of staff investing in professional development - Chief of staff respects work life balance and provides work from home accommodations	Senate and Assembly Rules committee provides limited formal investment to create good managers
Hiring for public service mindset	Chief of staff or elected official ask questions in initial job interviews about how the candidates values aligned with elected officials values	Senate and Assembly Rules committee provides limited formal guidance to probe for public service mindset during initial job interviews

Organizational goal ambiguity

When legislative staff are hired, the legislative office and Senate or Assembly Rules committee provide job descriptions that outline their expectations. All staff interviewed described understanding the basic duties of their job. Interviewees discussed two demands that decrease work engagement and two resources that increase work engagement. One demand all interviewees offered is the elected official they work for providing vague policy or

> *"The first couple of years a lot of the goal posts kept moving because [the elected official] was just trying to figure her way out."*
>
> *- a chief of staff with ten years of experience describing their elected officials initial goal ambiguity*

district ideas and requiring staff to create projects to meet said goal. For example the legislative aide described the moving goal post the elected official they work for presents, "she will have a broad idea and she thinks and processes everything as she says it… it's hard just keeping it all in order. Like is this what you want? Or is this what you want? Because you are changing your answer consistently." This goal ambiguity led to increased stress. On the other hand, a job resource three interviewees noted was experienced staff decreasing goal ambiguity in this same situation by "managing up" to ask questions and help legislative members to better articulate their policy goals. The legislative director I interviewed offered they acknowledge this demand but the ambiguity did not stress them out after they realized their job is to ask questions to lead their member to decide on a concrete goal. They succinctly stated, "Our goal is to make sure [the elected official] can define his goal when rubber hits the road." This is consistent with the literature review that revealed managers could protect against the damaging effects of goal ambiguity by increasing engagement with coworkers (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019).

An additional demand three interviewees stated is that competing priorities pull elected officials in many directions, which leaves little time for staff to get concrete answers on how to proceed. For example, the scheduler stated it is challenging, "when [the elected official] is not being accessible, and I need information and I cannot get ahold of that information." Elected officials must sign off on all policy decisions, like how they plan to vote or what amendments staff can make to their legislation. Staff felt stagnant and less engaged when the elected officials was not available to answer necessary questions. And finally, one specific resource half of interviewees mentioned as a job resource to decrease goal ambiguity were staff retreats, where all staff, often up to eighteen people, came together to discuss largescale policy goals for the upcoming legislative session.

Positive coworker relationships

Each elected official's Capitol office is comprised of between four and eight staff. Legislative staff work for one elected official but the Senate or Assembly Rule's committees technically employ each staff member. All are at-will employees that are hired and trained by their individual legislative office. Three out of four legislative staff expressed positive coworker relationships were the most important factor in their work engagement. For example, the legislative director I interviewed stated, "if I have trouble communicating with those around me and having a good time with them, my work engagement is going to be nonexistent." Two legislative staff stated their offices naturally felt like another family because they spend more time with them than their own biological families. Conversely, two interviewees noted the

> *"We spend so much time at work it becomes like your other family."*
>
> *– a scheduler with eight years of experience describing why a positive relationship with their coworkers is important*

emotional strain negative coworker relationships have on their work engagement. One stated she felt disconnected from her work because her office was very quiet and emotionally cold during the day. Another stated how awkward the office can feel if they cannot connect with even just one of the staff members in the office.

Interviewees discussed many resources individual offices, Senate, and Assembly Rules committee offer to increase positive coworker relationships. Three interviewees cited programs Senate or Assembly Rules has created to increase positive co-worker relationships, specifically they noted meet and greets between schedulers, chiefs of staff and consultants. Additionally, half of the interviewees offered that the Senate and Assembly Rules committee supports staff affinity group associations, like the California Latino Capitol Association Foundation or the Capitol LGBTQ Association. These associations have caucuses supported by the institution with staff and funding. Additionally, two interviewees noted that Senate or Assembly Rules committee mitigated bad behavior, which would decrease positive coworker relationships, through the workplace conduct unit or supporting a chief of staff through challenging HR situations. Although all staff could cite specific programs created by Senate or Assembly Rules committee to support positive co-worker relationships, three of the interviewees wanted more activities coordinated by Senate and Assembly Rules committee to cultivate positive co-worker relationships. For example, one interviewee acknowledged the benefits Assembly Rule's provides by creating the workplace conduct unit to mitigate harassment but stated overall their efforts "still leaves a lot to be desired on many fronts."

In individual offices, as previously noted, staff retreats, are a resource interviewees stated their offices uses to increase positive work engagement. These retreats often include informal lunches or dinners and icebreakers. In addition to staff retreats, all interviews stated managers

influenced positive coworker relationships by supporting informal get-togethers like happy hours or birthday parties. Interviewees always noted these informal meet ups were optional, however they served as a time to build memories and show supervisors cared about employees enough to take time out of their personal time to invest in relationships.

The importance of managers

Chiefs of staff are the main supervisor in legislative offices and manage between twelve and eighteen staff in both a District and Capitol office for the elected official who represents their district. The elected official manages their chief of staff; however, the elected official often advises other staff on work product. All interviewees expressed the important

> *"He trusts us and there is an open door, if we have an issue, we can talk to him and he will do his best to address it."*
>
> *- a legislative aide with 9 months of experience talking about their relationships with their chief of staff*

resource supervisors provide to their office by fostering and environment with open communication. For example, the scheduler put it simply that "if the manager is accessible then it makes it easier for you to do your work." Two interviewees stated their work engagement increased when their chief of staff had an open-door policy to talk through their concerns about a policy proposal or office structure. Interviewees also noted when chiefs of staff are transparent about information it shows trust in the team and helps staff get their work done more efficiently. Three interviewees specifically noted the importance of hosting a weekly staff meeting with district staff, capitol staff, and the elected official so everyone remains in the loop on pertinent items and staff can get their own questions answered quickly. The scheduler offered how this practice increased their work productivity too. They stated it makes their work easier when, "the member is on the phone call so we get the answers that we need from him right there and then."

Conversely, this scheduler stated in a previous office they worked in that closed off communication was a demand on their work engagement that led them to seek other employment.

Two interviewees noted their supervisor's disposition could be a job resource or demand that effects work engagement. They offered that they felt more engaged when the elected official they worked for was happy and excited to be at work. For example, the scheduler talking about the elected official stated, "He sets the tone of the office and he's always laughing, sending funny things." The chief of staff I interviewed was aware of this dynamic and noted the elected official and their mood affecting their staff's experience. They stated, as a supervisor "We really have to focus on our attitudes and personalities for that day, and how we approach things… Because we set the tone for the office. We set the perspective, the expectations."

An additional resource staff noted that increased work engagement was having a supervisor who respected their work-life balance. Legislative staff work long hours when California Legislature is in session, primarily from March to September. Two interviewees noted they respected supervisors who understood they put in long hours during this time and offered them leniency during slow periods to work from home or take time off. Three out of four interviewees worked for the California Legislature before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Three out of four interviewees' offices offered work from home after the pandemic. For example, one interviewee stated, "there's also more flexibilities about working remotely and providing more accommodations for people with different needs or different family situations. I think that's really helpful." Finally, all interviewees stated that supervisors who focused on staff growing professionally in their position and beyond their current position as a resource that increased work engagement.

Despite the staff's focus on managers effecting work engagement, only two interviewees could identify two efforts by the Senate and Assembly Rule's committees to create positive managers. The two efforts were a Senate Leadership Conference to discuss ideas about how to build leadership capacity in the Senate and an Academy hosted by Assembly Rules to support new chiefs of staff. Conversely, one interviewee described a situation where their previous chief of staff with limited experience was struggling to execute their position and did not receive any support from their Rules committee to build their skillset. The elected official ultimately replaced the chief of staff after a year of progressively worse performance. Additionally, no interviewees could identify measures in their own offices to teach staff about how to become better managers. However, the chief of staff I interviewed noted the elected official they represent support them with additional resources if they asked for back up during difficult supervisorial situations.

Hiring for public service mindset

Chiefs of staff most often hire new staff of elected officials. Three interviewees stated when their current chief of staff hired them for their current position, they asked them questions in their interview about how their values aligned with the elected official they hoped to work for; however, none explicitly probed to see if they had a more general inclination towards a

> ***"In my previous office, part of the screening was asking, "how much are you willing and how much do you care to look at things from the prospective of marginalized communities?" Because the member represented South LA, so the work we do in this office is to help those communities."***
>
> *- a legislative director with eight years of experience describing how public service mindset was determined in a job interview*

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public service mindset. These questions focused more on the needs of the district the elected official represented. The chief of staff I interviewed stated when they performed interviews for their elected official's office they asked about what community service the interviewee performed in the community. The chief of staff explained the goal of this question is to establish how important serving the community is to the potential job candidate. The chief of staff noted Senate Rules committee provided packets to help them format potential job candidate's interviews; however, they did not include specific questions about probing for public service mindset. The elected official's office independently created and asked these questions.

Additionally, one interviewee responded affirmatively when I asked if they were screened for public service mindset because they were, "screened by a panel of twelve judges" on the topic, because their first job working in a legislative office was a fellowship program focused on hiring student leaders with backgrounds in community service. Further research may explore the pipeline of fellowship and internship programs that primarily focus on community service experience leading to a legislative workforce with inherently high public service mindset.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Senate and Assembly Rules committee facilitate working groups with chiefs of staff to discuss and articulate best practices for each of the four theme areas. Additionally, the committee should provide these best practices to all elected official's offices, and especially target offices that are struggling with these concepts with additional mentoring on the topics. A key takeaway from the interviews is Senate and Assembly Rule's provide limited formal initiatives related to organizational goal ambiguity, positive coworker relationships, the importance of managers, and hiring for public service mindset. Yet, staff identified these skillsets as job resources within the elected official's office they work in. Elected officials and chiefs of staff create positive environments absent formal directives. However, this is problematic when the elected official or chief of staff does not prioritize job resources in on or all of these areas. All interviewees identified job demands decreasing work engagement in their current or previous office in at least one area that another interviewee's office was mitigating. For example, one interviewee described their office as cold because their chief of staff was not prioritizing positive co-worker relationships while three other interviewee went on and on about the multitude of informal bonding activities the chief of staff planned and how that increased their work engagement. The California Legislature can help itself by leaning on offices excelling in these factors to increase work engagement.

Recommendation 2: The Senate and Assembly Rules committee identify a curriculum and create training to help staff learn the critical thinking and questioning skills to communicate with elected officials about their goals. All interviewees described the difficulties of their respective elected official's inability to articulate the goal of their ideas. Interviewees with more than 8 years' experience described this as their boss's usual first step, a kind of

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brainstorming that was typical and welcome. These same two interviewees stated their job was to ask the elected official questions and probe to find their true intention before they moved on to writing policy or planning an event. In contrast, the interviewee with nine months of experience did not have the skills to move forward when their boss posited vague goals. Senate and Assembly Rule's committees give trainings to legislative staff to know how to take a bill from drafting to getting the Governor's signature, however there is no formal training on how to take a bill from vague policy proposal to drafting a concrete bill. This type of training can alleviate stress and support sound public policy making.

Recommendation 3: The Senate and Assembly Rules committee create and distribute a survey to staff about what informal bonding activities they should invest time and resources in. All interviewees identified the informal bonding activities as a job resource to enhance positive coworker relationships. The chief of staff I interviewed stated before COVID-19, Senate Rules Committee hosted scholarship dinners and pizza parties to bring staff together; however, Senate and Assembly Rules did not bring these programs back after the shutdown. The legislative director I interviewed noted outside entities, like lobbying firms and staff associations, hosted baseball games and luncheons to bring staff together, but these were not always open to all staff. Additionally, some floors host weekly donut days to bring staff together but each office only advertises and hosts the event to a subsection of the staff and staff organize this event in addition to their formal job duties. Staff then finance these networking events out of their own pockets or ask their elected officials to sponsor the event. To ensure maximum participation, the survey can guide what activities staff desire before the Senate and Assembly Rules committee expends time and financial resources.

Recommendation 4: The Senate and Assembly Rules committee require staff promoted into or hired into supervisor positions, like a chief of staff, attend communication classes. All interviewees identified open communication as a key resource that a chief of staff and elected officials instituted in their office. Additionally, interviewees stated a chief of staff's mood can alter the work environment to increase or decrease work engagement. These communication classes should focus on the tactical skills to communicate with staff (setting up weekly 1:1 check-ins, facilitating effective staff meetings) and social-emotional skills (regulating emotions, communicating during conflict). Additionally, interviewees stated they felt positive work engagement when their supervisors took an interest in supporting their professional development. This initiative may also increase work engagement among chiefs of staff because Senate and Assembly Rules committee is showing they are committed to building their skillset.

Recommendation 5: The Senate and Assembly Rules committee update their hiring packets to communicate the benefits of hiring for public service mindset and advise chiefs of staff to ask interview questions to identify candidates public service mindset. Senate and Assembly Rule's provide legislative offices with interview guides for hiring. These include rubrics for ranking interviewees and suggested questions. All interviewees stated elected officials ask questions to see how their legislative and district priorities align with the prospective job candidate. However, only one interviewee stated they ask questions to identify if the interviewee cares about public service. Chiefs of Staff and elected officials may be more inclined to widen their questions past their own district and legislative priorities if they knew people with higher levels of this mindset internalize their work as benefiting society, which increases their engagement in work. Finally, by researching and suggesting questions, the Senate and Assembly Rules committee decreases the burden on individual offices to construct questions.

7. CONCLUSION

This report uses the job-demands resources model to answer the questions of what are the solutions, or resources, which increase the legislative staff's work engagement. And conversely, what are the challenges, known as demands, which decreases legislative staff's work engagement.

Through the four interviews, I find legislative employees learn skills to mitigate the job demand of goal ambiguity with elected officials through on-the-job-experience; however, this leads to stress for legislative employees early in their career. Second, I find legislative offices effectively use job resources, like informal bonding activities, to foster positive co-worker relationships; however, the Senate and Assembly Rules committees minimally support these efforts. This lack of investment may lead to less positive co-worker relationships between employees in different legislative offices. Third, I find supervisors in legislative offices effectively use job resources, like fostering an environment with an open door policy to express concerns, to create positive supervisor relationships; however, the Senate and Assembly Rules committees minimally support these efforts. This may lead to employees to face the job demand of a less experienced manager who are learning on the job and struggling with communication skills, a key component interviewees identified. Fourth, I find both legislative offices and Senate and Assembly Rules committees do not specifically tap into the job resource of hiring for public service mindset; however, many legislative offices do probe new hires to see how they want to serve the elected officials district, which is a form of public service motivation.

I finish this administrative report by providing the Senate and Assembly Rules committee with recommendations to address the strengths and weaknesses, identified in the findings, of legislative staff's work engagement.

Although these findings are drawn from interviews of four legislative employees/or workers, this report provides important takeaways for practitioners to~. Future research can focus on just one aspect of the findings to identify differences among elected officials offices compared to internal qualities of the office. For example, future research may compare legislative employees work engagement compared to the experience level of their supervisor, because this was a major theme identified in the findings. This may lead Senate and Assembly Rules committees to invest in the professional development of key supervisors – chiefs of staff.

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Appendix

Interview Introduction Script

The goal of my cumulative project is to answer the question - what are the challenges, known as demands that decrease legislative staff's work engagement? And what are the solutions, or resources, that increase legislative staff's work engagement? I am interviewing you to learn what challenges and resources, you have and if those match up with established research on the topic. The definition I am using of work engagement is being "loyal to their employers, trust both supervisors and co-workers are not interested in changing their job, are proud of their work for a given company and that the boundary between private and professional life is often blurred" (Hawrysz, 2015). I will keep your answers confidential; I will identify you in the paper by the number of years you have worked for the California Legislature and your current job position title

Interview questions

1. What are the factors in your workplace that improve your work engagement?

2. What are the factors in your workplace that decrease your work engagement?

3. What efforts have you seen by the institution to maximize factors that increase work engagement and minimize factors that decrease work engagement? What about efforts by your manager or in your specific legislative office?

4. How do your relationships with co-worker effect your work engagement?

5. Have you seen efforts from the institution to increase positive co-worker relationships? What about efforts by your manager or in your specific legislative office?

6. How does your manager effect your work engagement?

7. Have you seen efforts from the institution to create and support good managers?

What about efforts in your specific legislative office?

8. If a manager: How has the institution invested in you to become a good manager?

9. Do you experience goal ambiguity? How does this effect your work engagement?

10. If a manager: How do you screen for the desire to serve the public in your hiring process? Has the institution every told you to screen for this desire?

11. If they do screen: what is the effect of this screening?

12. How did COVID-19 effect your work engagement?

13. Have you seen any efforts by the institution to maximize positive changes and mitigate negative changes since the pandemic? What about efforts by your manager or in your specific unit?