

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments eNews - Employee Engagement December 2017



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From the Director's desk...

Outside Magazine's November 7th edition highlighted "100 Best Places to Work in 2017" noting, "from unlimited vacation time to powder days, these are places that know how to treat their employees."

Of the 100 Best Places to Work, most are in the West. Forty-one are in Colorado. Nine are in the NWCCOG region. Of those:

- Only one pays an average salary above the area median income of \$70K (of those provided).
- Six are "creative" industries; architecture, media, travel or marketing
- Two boast of working outside - RA Nelson (construction) and A-Basin (ski)
- All employ workplace concepts that take advantage of flexibility, choice and place, like
 - ◦ Company bikes for errands and workouts
 - ◦ Generous flex time and paid time off
 - ◦ Regular group activities & outdoor "meetings"
 - ◦ Weekly perks - free staff yoga or other group fitness opportunities
 - ◦ Annual allowances for individual discretion for education, family or fitness purposes



Sound familiar? The NWCCOG region is full of companies like those highlighted in Outside. Companies that heavily leverage local lifestyle & location specific amenities (ski hills, trails, bike-able places), with flexible hours and dynamic company cultures. I'm not talking about catering to ski bums, I'm talking about care and feeding of productive professionals. Most people are here because they want to be, and the best employers know that dynamic extends to workplace talent.

My only beef, no local governments made that list.

Many of the benefits noted above are not expensive, but they do require leadership that values culture and empowers employees, entrusting them to balance work with play and family-flexibility that local governments don't always allow themselves the permission to embrace because of a variety of fears of public perception, and dated management practices.

My guess is that by leaning-in to being a great employer, these companies get a return on investment 10-fold better than "traditional, 9 to 5" employers. They leverage the principles of intrinsic motivation outlined in Daniel Pink's book, Drive as do national workplace trends outlined in studies like the "Gallup State of the American Workplace Report." It isn't just startups with a pending stock IPO that have creative policies, and empower employees to make choices to shape their work.

I bring this up because we talk in the public sector about our aging workforce, and the real challenge of succession planning. Yet, we seem unable to grasp this shift: the benefits and workplace structures that motivated today's retiring employees are not necessarily the same as those that will motivate their 30-year old successors. Of course, with some benefits, local governments have always been progressive, like robust health plans that are only increasing in value as health costs explode in the high country. We sometimes complain that this generation doesn't share the same values about community or service, but we don't often listen and re-structure our management practices to make our workplaces attractive to that next-generation talent.

Simply having the right zip code and telling employees to wait until the weekend doesn't make a great employer. Leveraging place and quality of life is not a passive endeavor. Savvy employers

leverage place by tailoring creative company policies that make great work places
At NWCCOG, we've been conscious of moving in this direction, and overhauled our Employee Handbook this past winter with that in mind. When I was working at Eagle County Government, the county worked very hard at playing-up employee quality of life, flexible hours and a company culture focused on wellness. Prior to 2008, county spent tens of thousands of dollars on consultants to build team and culture. As a result, it retained motivated and engaged employees even through a lengthy downturn in which 30% of the budget was cut. The county didn't broadcast it, not the way the Town of Vail is today by becoming Certified as Great Place to Work (see 4 min video on the HR web page).

I suspect there are other local governments and department heads around the region that also focus on a great workplace... very quietly.

Why quietly? What will taxpayers say? I've watched citizens harass government employees pointing a finger saying, "you work for me." So we get defensive, cautious, strategize about efficiency and performance metrics, we cut budgets for training and employee benefits, all the while forgetting to tell our story, and forgetting that as Peter Drucker said, "culture eats strategy for lunch." We wouldn't want to appear to be a fun place to work or one that values energized employees. What would the public think?

Outside magazine didn't say it, but remember the number one reason employees leave is because of feeling under-valued by their supervisor, which means by extension, undervalued by the framework of policies and practices within their workplace; in other words, culture.

Most local governments are GREAT places to work. I challenge our members at NWCCOG to tell that story, and if we don't get Outside Magazine's attention, maybe we need our own list.

Jon Stavney

To contact Jon directly about your workplace story: jstavney@nwccog.org

Vail Employees say 'Great', want even better.



Employee Appreciation Day

The Town of Vail decided in 2017 that just because it's a 'certified great place to work' doesn't mean it can't do better.

In November 2017, Vail celebrated a year since achieving a Great Place to Work Certification by hosting an all-employee kickoff meeting to focus on improving employee culture. Even though survey scores from www.greatplacetowork.com were high enough in 2016 to achieve that

eponymous certification, they set in motion a year of internal discussions in which staff leaders embraced the need to adapt their workplace. At the kickoff, organizational commitments were shared in the context of announcing an employee-led initiative called "Think Differently."

The idea of a survey came from Aryn Schlichting, who was hired five years ago as an HR professional charged with recruiting and culture. Schlichting wanted to understand and quantify internal perceptions to leverage that knowledge for recruiting. She discovered Great Place to Work™ while researching employee survey tools.

Vail's Director of HR, Krista Miller, points out, Schlichting is exactly the employee profile Vail and other mountain towns must strategically attract- motivated, professional, educated, and lured to public service from a solid private sector job.

Already fanatically focused on Service, the Town of Vail's employee culture utilizes a well-established Rewards Program whereby peers or community members recommend employees for going above and beyond. These types of programs lead to the type of feedback that the survey reveals "91 percent of employees are proud to tell others they work here," Vail Human Resources also used this opportunity to tell the story of their culture with a video on their web page highlighting employees.



Those mechanisms of collecting and sharing narratives accumulated many examples of guest service excellence. Some became shopworn; encapsulating what employment at the Town of Vail was about; like the 'lost wedding ring story' when a Town of Vail employee rescued a guest's ring in a sewer. Yet narratives get diluted, and Vail HR was worried that the 1/3 of 270 full time employees new within the past 5 years, not to mention the 70 seasonal employees required each year, or the sheer multitude of talent that will be required to replace the impending "cliff" of retiring baby boomers might not embrace those narratives as much as some legacy employees. And town leadership had other goals that were not integrated into the Rewards program.



Opportunities to Contribute to the Community.

The "Great Place to Work" initiative includes a cross-department committee of 13 employees empowered to "educate themselves on modern workplace practices," focus on diversity & inclusion, as well as such tangible tasks as re-writing job descriptions. One of the more innovative ideas announced at the kickoff is a once-a-year-pitch event for an employee to make a pitch to leadership ideas to increase efficiencies, improve safety, guest service, cost saving measures.

We at NWCCOG look forward to reporting on "Great Place to Work" in the future and hearing success stories the employee engagement initiative from the time when Great wasn't good enough for Vail.

International Public Management Association - Human Resources - offers additional tips on [Making the Most of your Workforce.](#)

NWCCOG Employees on the Move....

Susan Juergensmeier Retires

When Susan Juergensmeier joined NWCCOG nearly six years ago, she was hired specifically to coordinate transportation resources to help qualified groups of individuals get to and from medical appointments. Her role was originally funded by grants from CDOT including the FTA Veterans Transportation Community Living Initiative grant.



Her responsibilities evolved into three major areas:

1. To facilitate the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council, bringing together a group of stakeholders from throughout the region whose mission was to manage, consolidate, educate, promote, enhance, and facilitate a seamless access to transportation services for the veteran, disabled, older, and low-income adult population in the geographic region composed of Garfield, Pitkin, Eagle, Summit, Grand, Jackson and Routt Counties
2. To create a call center that is user friendly, maintains a regional database of transportation resources, and helps to coordinate trips for citizens both within the boundaries of our region and to medical appointments in the Front Range, and in Grand Junction.
3. To create a regional NEMT Medicaid billing system for ride reimbursements through Medicaid.

Throughout the entire development of the project, Susan and her teams were able to work through issues, brainstorm solutions, successfully write grants that ensured adequate funding, and provide leadership that was the backbone of the achievement of these goals.

Basically an entrepreneur at heart, Susan decided her job was complete and it was time for someone else to take the program to the next level.

But don't expect her to slow down much. She's been working at the Keystone Nordic Center (this will be her 19th winter), she has a trip planned to Morocco, she's very active with international youth exchange and the local grants program with the Rotary Club of Summit County, and she'll be spending time with her parents in Iowa.

When asked what she's going to miss most about working at NWCCOG she said, "The people, both at the NWCCOG and my colleagues at CDOT, the County HHS departments, Transportation providers including Steamboat Springs Transit, RFTA - The Traveler, ECO Transit and Summit Stage, County Senior programs including Pitkin County Senior Center, Grand County Council on Aging, Summit Senior Center; veterans service officers; county and town officials."

Tom Clark, Mayor of the Town of Kremmling and Chair of the RTCC has this to add, "The RTCC greatly appreciates the work Susan has done for us. Susan worked hard and diligently to bring a seemingly difficult organizational idea to a real efficient coordinating council. After over five years the number of people the RTCC arranges rides for continues to grow, and the partners that Susan has brought into the fold has increased. The RTCC is now a state model for transportation coordination. Thanks Susan, we wish you the best."

David Harris is hired



Having recently hired David Harris as the Elevator Inspection Program director, with his impressive skill set, the NWCCOG is positioning the EIP to make great strides in correcting compliance issues identified in a recent audit, and building the program's reputation through consistency, trust, extensive transparency and communication. Finding just the right person for this critical position was not easy, but we knew it would take a very special talent to create the kind of culture we seek to instill in our organization on a daily basis. See the full

announcement of David's hiring [here](#).

Mobility team reorganizes

With Susan Juergensmeier's retirement, her team was empowered to redesign the workflow, and expand their job descriptions. Molly Tompkins, Call Center Manager and Chelsey Voden, Mobility Manager, each received a promotion commensurate with their increased responsibilities. The Mobility team along with Erin Fisher, Director of the Alpine Area Agency on Aging, felt that their responsibilities aligned closely with those of the AAAA and made the determination to interweave their newly formed positions under the AAAA umbrella.



Full team training

All hands on deck to learn CPR/AED and First Aid a 6 hour certification class. We're prepared for just about anything!



2018 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Full Council, EDD Board & NLF Board Meeting

Location: Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley, Rm 230, 150 Miller Ranch Rd.,
Edwards, CO

Time: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Primary Agenda Items: Introduction of new members/representatives; elect executive committee & officers; adopt 2018 meeting schedule; annual NLF Board meeting; EDD Board meeting & election of officers.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

www.nwccog.org

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN NWCCOG!