

RCW 47.60.850 Implementation of workforce planning recommendations—Adoption of formal strategy—Annual employee survey—Workforce development and career advancement—Instruction—Evaluation of management practices—Report of staffing. (1) The legislature finds that the maritime sector in Washington state is currently facing historic labor challenges. The legislature further finds that the Washington state ferry system is an essential component of the transportation system. Therefore, the legislature intends that Washington state ferries implement the recommendations of the joint transportation committee study on workforce planning, completed in December 2022.

(2) Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal strategy to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion directives to address issues including, but not limited to, recruitment, employee development, retention, and agency branding for workforce marketing materials. The strategy may address specific goals and objectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, training and development of staff, and key performance indicators to track effectiveness of the strategy.

(3) (a) On an annual basis, Washington state ferries shall conduct an employee survey of employees' feedback on workplace conditions either via the department-wide survey or utilizing a third-party consultant. The results of the survey shall be used at a minimum to:

- (i) Perform an in-depth cultural assessment;
- (ii) Identify any issues of concern among the Washington state ferries workforce; and
- (iii) Form the basis of an action plan to remediate any cultural issues identified.

(b) Washington state ferries shall submit a summary of survey results and corresponding action planning to address cultural issues to the transportation committees of the legislature and the office of financial management at the time of Washington state ferries' biennial budget submissions, beginning with the 2025-2027 submission.

(4) Washington state ferries shall continuously seek methods to improve workforce development and career advancement for all employees with a focus on vessel engine room and deck, terminal, and Eagle Harbor maintenance facility tradespeople. In consultation with labor partners, Washington state ferries shall develop programs for employees to gain maritime credentials and marine pilotage required by the United States coast guard, as well as transferring knowledge through formalized mentorship, work shadow, or apprenticeship programs. Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal policy to assist applicants to gain required United States coast guard documentation and maritime credentialing necessary for entry-level positions. Assistance to perspective employees may include both financial and technical assistance.

(5) When possible, Washington state ferries shall partner with maritime academies and training facilities to offer instruction, including electronic learning, internships, or apprenticeships, to current or perspective employees.

(6) Washington state ferries shall continuously evaluate management practices concerning recruitment and hiring, staffing levels, scheduling practices, compensation, and agency technology needs, to optimize system and administrative performance. The evaluation must include a strategy to develop or modify a staffing

model to forecast staffing needs and succession planning for future biennia and set a target level of operational overtime.

(7) At the time of Washington state ferries' biennial budget submissions, beginning with the 2025-2027 submission, Washington state ferries shall report staffing progress for deck, terminal, maintenance shop, and engine room employees, identifying:

(a) The approximate number of employees eligible for promotion;

(b) The number of employees eligible for retirement;

(c) The number of employees who have utilized on-the-job programs to gain maritime credentials or fulfill marine pilotage requirements; and

(d) A forecast of all staffing needs and changes for the subsequent biennia. [2023 c 188 s 1.]