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2025 Hernando Employee Survey

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Introduction

Employee engagement is a vital factor in maintaining an effective and motivated workforce. Organizations that actively assess and respond to employee sentiment can cultivate a more productive, satisfied, and committed team. The 2025 Hernando County Employee Engagement Survey was conducted as part of the County's strategic planning process in order to provide county leaders with data-driven insights into the perspectives, concerns, and overall experiences of county employees.

This report presents a detailed analysis of employee feedback, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement across a variety of key workplace dimensions. Among other factors, the survey measured job satisfaction, workplace morale, compensation and benefits, leadership effectiveness, communication, and overall perceptions of the current organizational culture. Understanding these insights allows the county to make informed decisions that enhance employee experience and workplace satisfaction.

The findings presented in this report provide an in-depth assessment of the county's current engagement landscape, offering leadership a clear roadmap for strategic improvements. As part of the strategic planning process, the final section includes targeted recommendations designed to strengthen employee satisfaction, foster a positive work culture, and ensure Hernando County remains a desirable employer in the region.

Data and Methods

The 2025 Hernando County Employee Engagement Survey was distributed to 861 employees, yielding 180 responses (20.9% response rate). The survey was conducted electronically and remained open for several weeks to allow for broad participation across various county departments. Employees were encouraged to provide candid feedback, with assurances that all responses would remain anonymous to promote honest and constructive participation.

The survey instrument was designed to capture employee sentiment across multiple engagement factors, including job satisfaction, organizational culture, compensation and benefits, supervisory relationships, and leadership effectiveness. The questionnaire included both quantitative Likert-scale questions and open-ended responses to ensure a comprehensive understanding of employee perceptions. This mixed-method approach allows for both statistical analysis and

qualitative insights into workplace dynamics. Analysis of the data was conducted using traditional statistical reporting techniques and was augmented with the use of a generative AI platform (Chat GPT 4.0, *OpenAI*) to assist in tasks such as content analysis of open-ended survey comments.

Survey Respondent Characteristics

To determine how balanced the survey’s representation of the workforce was, demographic data were collected, including length of employment, supervisory status, and age (Table 1). Employees from all experience levels participated in the survey. The largest proportion of respondents, 30.4%, had been with Hernando County for two years or less, while 19.6% reported tenure between eleven and twenty years. This broad distribution ensures that the findings reflect perspectives from both newer hires and long-standing employees. Employees in supervisory roles were well represented, with 34.2% of respondents reporting at least some managerial responsibilities, while 65.8% reported none.

Table 1.
Respondent Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
<i>How long have you been employed by Hernando County?</i>		
Two Years or Less	48	30.4
Three to Five Years	29	18.3
Six to Ten Years	25	15.8
Eleven to Twenty Years	31	19.6
More than Twenty Years	25	15.8
<i>Does your current position include Supervisory responsibilities?</i>		
Yes	54	34.2
No	104	65.8
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	6	3.8
25-34	22	14.0
35-44	23	14.6
45-54	50	31.8
55-64	53	33.8
65+	3	1.9

The age distribution of respondents was also diverse. Employees aged 45-54 and 55-64 constituted the largest segments of participants, comprising 31.8% and 33.8% of responses, respectively. The smallest representation came from employees aged 18-24, who accounted for only 3.8% of the sample, which is not uncommon in public sector workplaces. These demographic trends provide useful context when interpreting the data, particularly concerning workplace priorities and engagement strategies.

Key Themes and Takeaways

A detailed summary of the survey responses is provided below, but several key findings emerged from the results. These are outlined below:

- ✓ **Employee Morale is Relatively High, but the Data Show Some Opportunities for Improvement:** While most employees enjoy their jobs, some concerns emerged with regard to work-life balance and workplace culture.
 - 94.4% of employees reported liking their job, but only 43.3% look forward to going to work most days.
 - 19.4% strongly agreed that overall morale among employees is high, while 39.5% disagreed, including 18.9% who strongly disagreed.
 - 86.6% of employees reported having a good work-life balance, but 13.4% expressed dissatisfaction, citing workload and stress.
 - Nearly half of employees (45.5%) rated Hernando County as a “Fair” place to work, with only 27.5% rating it as Excellent.
- ✓ **Employees Understand Their Roles but Seek Greater Alignment with Organizational Values:** Employees have a clear understanding of job expectations, but some feel disconnected from the county’s overall mission and values.
 - 95.5% of employees agreed that they know what is expected of them in their roles.
 - 97.2% understand how their job contributes to the organization’s mission, suggesting strong role clarity.
 - However, only 48.9% “strongly” agreed that their personal values align with those of the county.

- ✓ **Compensation and Career Growth Opportunities Are Major Concerns:** Many employees feel undercompensated and believe career advancement opportunities within the county are limited.
 - 39.5% of employees disagreed that they are fairly compensated, including 18.9% who strongly disagreed.
 - Only 35.7% strongly agreed that they see opportunities for promotion within the county, while 16.2% disagreed.
 - 28% of open-ended responses cited pay and compensation concerns, including lower wages than neighboring counties.
 - 7% of responses specifically mentioned lack of career growth and advancement as a frustration.

- ✓ **Communication and Transparency Emerged as Opportunities for Improvement:** While employees have strong relationships with their direct supervisors, communication and transparency at higher leadership levels were sometimes cited as areas of concern.
 - 82.7% of employees agreed that they receive regular feedback from their supervisor, and 90.6% feel treated fairly by their supervisor.
 - However, only 62.2% believe that senior leaders listen to employee opinions, and 37.2% disagreed, including 14.4% who strongly disagreed.
 - Only 58.4% agreed that different departments communicate effectively with one another, while 41.7% disagreed.
 - 31.3% of employees disagreed that county leaders act transparently, highlighting an opportunity for improved openness in decision-making.

- ✓ **Employees Value Public Service but Cite Retention, Growth Management, and Workplace Challenges:** Hernando County employees are committed to public service but feel that retention challenges, growth management, and workplace policies could improve.
 - 29% of open-ended responses cited community service and public engagement as a core strength of the county.
 - 33% of responses listed pay and benefits as a weakness, with 22% mentioning retention and turnover issues.

- 20% of employees stated that the county does not uphold the values it claims to prioritize, particularly in areas like fairness and transparency.
- Overdevelopment (20%) and bureaucratic inefficiencies (17%) were cited as concerns, with employees noting that growth is outpacing infrastructure and staffing capacity.

Survey Results

The subsections below provide a summary of the survey findings across the major themes and topics covered in the questionnaire, including (1) Employee Morale, (2) Organizational Mission and Values, (3) Equity and Inclusivity, (4) Compensation and Professional Development Opportunities, (5) Organizational Communications, (6) Departmental Culture, (7) Supervisory Relationships, (8) Organizational Leadership, and (9) Strategic Planning.

Employee Morale

The survey asked employees about their general satisfaction with their jobs, work-life balance, and overall morale within the organization (Table 2). In total, 94.4% of employees reported liking their job, with 64.4% strongly agreeing and 30.0% somewhat agreeing. When asked about their work-life balance, 86.6% agreed that they have a good work-life balance, while 10.6% disagreed, and 2.8% strongly disagreed.

Table 2.

Employee Quality of Life (reported as percentage of respondents by row)

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about working for Hernando County...</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like my job with the County	64.4	30.0	4.4	1.1
I have a good work-life balance in my current role	47.2	39.4	10.6	2.8
I look forward to going to work most days	43.3	41.1	10.6	5.0
Overall morale among employees is high	19.4	41.1	20.6	18.9
Working for the County contributes positively to my overall quality of life	38.3	41.7	12.2	7.8

Responses on workplace morale were more mixed. While 43.3% of employees agreed that they look forward to going to work most days, a notable 15.6% disagreed, with 5.0% strongly disagreeing. Perceptions of overall organizational morale were lower, with only 19.4% strongly agreeing that morale among employees is high. 41.1% somewhat agreed, while 39.5% disagreed, including 18.9% who strongly disagreed. Employees were also asked whether working for the county contributes positively to their overall quality of life, with 80.0% agreeing, while 12.2% disagreed and 7.8% strongly disagreed.

Along with these specifics, employees were asked to rate Hernando County as a place to work in general, with four response options: “Excellent,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.” Notably, only 27.5% rated the county as an excellent place to work, while 19.7% rated it as good (Table 3). The most common response, however, was “Fair” at 45.5%, indicating that nearly half of employees see room for improvement. 7.3% of respondents rated the county as a poor place to work, representing a small but notable segment of significant dissatisfaction.

Table 3.

Hernando County as a Place to Work

<i>Overall, how would you describe Hernando County as a place to work?</i>	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	49	27.5
Good	35	19.7
Fair	81	45.5
Poor	13	7.3

These findings suggest that while a portion of the workforce views the county as a strong employer, the majority believe it falls somewhere in the middle. The relatively high percentage of “Fair” ratings suggests that employees do not necessarily have strong negative opinions but do see areas where working conditions, policies, or culture could be improved.

Organizational Mission and Values

To better understand public service motivation and value congruence among county employees, the survey asked respondents about their alignment with the county's mission and values, as well as their understanding of their job expectations. The responses were largely positive. For example, 95.5% of employees agreed that they know what is expected of them in their role, with 71.1% strongly agreeing and 24.4% somewhat agreeing. Similarly, 97.2% agreed that they understand how their job contributes to the larger mission of the organization, with only 2.8% disagreeing.

Table 4.

Organizational Mission and Values (reported as percentage of respondents by row)

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about working for Hernando County...</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I know what is expected of me in my job	71.1	24.4	3.3	1.1
I understand how my job contributes to the larger mission of the organization	78.9	18.3	2.2	0.6
My personal values are consistent with the values of the organization	48.9	41.7	6.1	3.3
I feel a sense of accomplishment in my job	57.2	34.4	6.1	2.2
I am proud of the work I do for Hernando County	70.8	22.5	3.9	2.8

However, perceptions of personal alignment with the county's values were slightly lower, but still positive overall. For example, 48.9% of employees strongly agreed that their personal values align with those of the county, while 41.7% somewhat agreed. Meanwhile, 9.4% disagreed, including 3.3% who strongly disagreed. When asked about task satisfaction, 91.6% of respondents agreed that they feel a sense of accomplishment in their job, and 93.3% reported being proud of their work.

Equity and Inclusivity

Employees were asked whether they feel Hernando County provides a fair and inclusive work environment (Table 5). In total, 88.8% agreed that the county is an inclusive workplace, though 6.1% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 91.1% agreed that employees are treated fairly regardless of race or ethnicity, while 8.9% disagreed.

Table 5.

Equity and Inclusivity (reported as percentage of respondents by row)

<i>Thinking about Hernando County as a place to work, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This is an inclusive workplace	50.8	38.0	5.0	6.1
Regardless of race or ethnicity, employees are treated fairly	64.8	26.3	5.0	3.9
Regardless of gender, employees are treated fairly	60.9	27.4	7.8	3.9
Regardless of age, employees are treated fairly	63.1	25.7	6.7	4.5
We have an environment free of harassment or discrimination	50.8	35.6	7.3	6.1

Fair treatment across other demographics showed similar trends. 88.3% of employees agreed that gender does not impact fairness in treatment, while 11.7% disagreed. Responses about fair treatment regardless of age were slightly lower, with 88.8% agreeing, while 11.2% disagreed. Employees were also asked whether the workplace is free of harassment and discrimination, with 86.4% agreeing and 13.4% disagreeing, including 6.1% who strongly disagreed.

Compensation and Professional Development Opportunities

Based on the survey responses, compensation and career growth opportunities were among the most significant areas of concern for employees. When asked if they are fairly compensated for their work, 60.5% of respondents agreed, while 39.5% disagreed, including 18.9% who strongly disagreed (Table 6). Satisfaction with benefits was slightly higher, with 63.3% agreeing that they are satisfied with the benefits package, while 36.7% disagreed. In the case of benefits, the responses were notably less positive than is often seen in public sector organizations.

Table 6.**Compensation and Professional Opportunities (reported as percentage of respondents by row)**

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following:</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am fairly compensated for the work I do	21.1	39.4	20.6	18.9
I'm satisfied with the benefits offered by the County	28.9	34.4	21.7	15.0
I have the materials, resources, and equipment needed to do my job well	42.8	40.0	10.6	6.7
The organization provides opportunities for professional growth and development	42.5	38.5	10.6	8.4
I can see myself being promoted within the County	35.7	40.8	16.2	7.3

Employees were also asked if they have the necessary resources to perform their job effectively, with 82.8% agreeing and 17.3% disagreeing. When it came to career advancement, 81.0% of respondents agreed that the county provides professional development opportunities, while 18.9% disagreed. The percentage of employees who see promotion opportunities within the county was lower, with 76.5% agreeing and 23.5% disagreeing, though it should be noted that this includes those who are currently nearing retirement or in terminal leadership positions.

Organizational Communications

Typically, organizational communications register as one of the most significant areas of concern for employees in public sector organizations, and a similar pattern was observed among Hernando County employees. Respondents were asked about communication effectiveness at various levels of the organization. 80.6% of respondents agreed that employees communicate effectively with one another, while 19.5% disagreed. However, perceptions of communication across departments were significantly lower. Only 58.4% agreed that departments effectively communicate with one another, while 41.7% disagreed, including 13.3% who strongly disagreed.

Table 7.**Organizational Communications (reported as percentage of respondents by row)**

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about communication efforts within the organization</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Employees communicate effectively with one another	35.6	45.0	11.7	7.8
Departments effectively communicate with one another	17.8	40.6	28.3	13.3
Leaders effectively communicate problems facing the organization	22.2	43.3	24.4	10.0
Employee concerns are taken seriously	25.6	38.3	18.9	17.2

Leadership communication was another concern. 65.5% of employees agreed that county leaders effectively communicate problems facing the organization, while 34.4% disagreed. Similarly, 63.9% agreed that employee concerns are taken seriously, while 36.1% disagreed, including 17.2% who strongly disagreed. Collectively, the data suggest that strategic efforts to improve organizational communications could dramatically improve overall assessments of employee experience.

Departmental Culture

Narrowing the focus down to the department level, respondents were asked about their specific departmental culture, with a focus on morale, fairness, workload distribution, and accountability (Table 8). A majority (70.6%) of employees agreed that morale is generally good within their department, while 29.4% disagreed. Fair treatment of employees within departments received more positive responses, with 82.3% agreeing, while 17.6% disagreed.

Table 8.**Departmental Culture (reported as percentage of respondents by row)**

<i>Thinking about your department, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Morale is generally good among employees in my department	33.9	36.7	16.1	13.3
Employees in my department are treated fairly	45.6	36.7	8.9	8.9
I trust leaders in my department to act ethically	56.1	30.6	8.9	4.4
The workload in my department is fairly distributed among employees	40.6	30.6	15.6	13.3
Employees in my department are accountable for their performance	48.9	28.9	10.6	11.7

Trust in departmental leadership was relatively high, with 86.7% of employees agreeing that they trust their department leaders to act ethically. Attitudes toward workload distribution within departments were slightly more negative, with 71.2% of respondents agreeing that their department distributes work fairly, while 28.8% disagreed. Accountability within departments was also measured, with 77.8% of employees agreeing that staff are held accountable for their performance, while 22.8% disagreed.

Supervisory Relationships

Narrowing the focus down even further, the survey included several questions assessing employees relationships with their immediate supervisors. A notable majority (82.7%) of employees agreed that they receive regular feedback from their supervisor, while 17.3% disagreed (Table 9) Fair treatment of employees from supervisors was also rated highly, with 90.6% agreeing, including 73.9% who strongly agreed.

Table 9.**Supervisor Evaluation (reported as percentage of respondents by row)**

<i>Thinking about your immediate supervisor, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I receive regular feedback from my supervisor about my performance	54.4	28.3	10.6	6.7
I believe that I am treated fairly by my supervisor	73.9	16.7	4.4	5.0
I trust my supervisor to act ethically	72.8	15.0	6.1	6.1
My supervisor is accountable to employees in the department	65.4	16.8	11.2	6.7
My supervisor upholds the values of the organization	68.3	20.0	7.2	4.4
My supervisor encourages me to come up with new and improved ways to do my job	68.9	19.4	10.6	6.1

Trust in supervisors was also strong, with 87.8% of employees agreeing that their supervisor acts ethically, and 82.2% agreeing that supervisors are held accountable. Employees were also asked if their supervisor encourages innovation and continuous improvement, with 88.3% agreeing and 11.7% disagreeing, indicating that the organization as a whole is well positioned to foster innovation and process improvement.

Organizational Leadership

Zooming out to the organizational level, the survey also examined employee attitudes toward organizational leadership, particularly at the level of the County Administrator's office. Opinions about leadership at the highest levels of county administration were somewhat more mixed than those observed at the departmental and supervisory level. For example, 62.2% of employees agreed that county leaders listen to employee opinions, while 37.2% disagreed, including 14.4% who strongly disagreed (Table 10). Ethical leadership was rated more favorably, with 70.0% agreeing that leadership acts ethically, while 23.3% disagreed.

Table 10.**Organizational Leadership (reported as percentage of respondents by row)**

<i>Thinking about leaders in the County Administrator's Office, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:</i>	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Leaders listen to employee opinions	27.8	34.4	15.0	14.4	8.3
I trust leaders in the organization to act ethically	39.4	30.6	13.3	10.0	6.7
Leaders manage costs responsibly	31.3	38.5	10.1	10.1	10.1
Leaders uphold the values of the organization	37.8	36.7	7.8	7.8	10.0
Leaders act transparently	31.3	29.1	12.3	19.0	8.4
Leaders are accountable to tax-payers and other stakeholders	38.0	33.5	8.4	11.7	8.4

Accountability of leadership to taxpayers and stakeholders was also measured, with 71.5% of employees agreeing, while 20.1% disagreed. Transparency was identified as an area of concern, as only 60.4% agreed that leaders act transparently, while 31.3% disagreed. While these numbers are less positive than those observed at the departmental level, this pattern is consistent with that observed in other public sector organizations, where “distance” often equates to less positive and trusting assessments of organizational units and actors.

Strategic Planning

Finally, employees were given an opportunity to provide additional comments about their experiences working for Hernando County in order to help inform the strategic planning process. When asked to share general comments about their employment, the most frequently mentioned theme was pay and compensation, with 28% of respondents expressing concerns about wages being lower than in comparable jurisdictions (Table 11). Many employees cited difficulties in maintaining financial stability and noted that they could earn more elsewhere, particularly in the private sector or

in other counties. Some respondents also mentioned the lack of pay increases or slow progression through salary steps as a source of frustration.

Work environment and morale were the second most common themes, with 21% of responses discussing issues related to workplace culture, lack of recognition, and declining morale. Several employees stated that they feel their contributions are not valued and that the county does not do enough to reward or acknowledge hard work. Leadership and management practices were also commonly mentioned, with 15% of responses criticizing decision-making and a perceived lack of transparency. In particular, employees voiced concerns about leadership failing to act on feedback, making unilateral decisions without employee input, and inconsistent policies across departments.

Table 11.

Content Analysis: *In the space below, please provide any additional comments that you would like to share regarding your experience working for Hernando County.*

Major Themes	% of Respondents
Pay and Compensation – Complaints about wages being lower than in neighboring counties.	28%
Work Environment & Morale – Frustration about workplace culture, lack of recognition, and declining morale.	21%
Leadership & Management – Criticism of communication and decision-making by leadership.	15%
Benefits & Policies – Concerns over changes to holidays, floating holidays, and health insurance.	12%
Job Satisfaction – Positive responses about work-life balance, coworkers, and job duties	9%
Workload & Staffing – Overwork due to understaffing	9%
Growth & Development – Complaints about lack of career advancement	7%

Other concerns included changes to benefits and policies (12%), job satisfaction (9%) workload and staffing challenges (9%), and concerns over career growth and the lack of advancement opportunities (7%), with some employees feeling that internal promotions are limited or favor certain departments over others.

To further aid the County's strategic planning process, employees were also asked to identify what they believe to be the core values of Hernando County's government (Table 12). The most frequently cited value was integrity and ethics (25%), with many employees stating that they expect the county to operate with honesty, fairness, and accountability in all decision-making processes. Transparency and accountability were also significant themes, mentioned by 23% of employees. Respondents expressed a desire for greater openness in leadership decisions, clearer communication about organizational changes, and a stronger commitment to public accountability.

Table 12.

Content Analysis: In your opinion, what are the core values of Hernando County's government?

Major Themes	% of Respondents
Integrity and Ethics	25%
Transparency and Accountability	23%
Public and Community Service	20%
Efficiency and Innovation	12%
Negative Responses (i.e. complaints that the county doesn't follow these values)	20%

Public service and community engagement were identified as key values by 20% of respondents. Employees noted that their primary motivation for working in the public sector is a desire to serve the community and improve residents' quality of life. Efficiency and innovation (12%) were also mentioned, with some employees emphasizing the need for streamlined processes, modernized technology, and improved operational effectiveness to better serve both employees and the public.

Next, employees were asked to list what they believe to be the county's greatest strengths and weaknesses (Table 13). The most commonly cited strength was community and public service (29%), with employees praising the county's commitment to serving residents and maintaining a

strong connection with the local community. Many respondents also noted dedicated employees (24%) as a major strength, stating that their colleagues are passionate, hard-working, and committed to public service despite challenges within the organization.

Table 13.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Hernando County

Major Themes	% of Respondents
I believe the County's strengths are...	
Community and Public Service	29%
Dedicated Employees	24%
Leadership and Administration	16%
Natural Environment and Infrastructure	13%
I believe the County's weaknesses are...	
Pay and Benefits	33%
Employee Retention and Turnover	22%
Leadership and Decision-Making	17%
Growth Management and Infrastructure	15%
Negative Work Environment	13%

Other frequently mentioned strengths included leadership and administration (16%), with some employees highlighting effective department-level management and positive relationships with direct supervisors. The county's natural environment and infrastructure (13%) were also cited as assets, with employees emphasizing the benefits of living and working in a community with well-maintained public spaces and essential infrastructure.

On the other hand, the most commonly mentioned weakness was pay and benefits (33%), reflecting widespread concerns about salary competitiveness and the perceived inadequacy of the

county's benefits package. Employee retention and turnover (22%) was another major concern, with employees noting that high turnover rates and difficulty attracting talent create additional workload burdens for those who remain.

Leadership and decision-making were cited as weaknesses by 17% of employees, with criticism directed toward a perceived lack of transparency, inconsistent policies, and poor responsiveness to employee concerns. Growth management and infrastructure (15%) was another area of concern, with some employees stating that the county is struggling to manage population growth and infrastructure demands effectively. Finally, 13% of respondents mentioned negative work environment issues, including workplace politics, favoritism, and lack of recognition.

Finally, employees were asked to provide recommendations on what Hernando County should start doing, stop doing, and continue doing to improve workplace satisfaction and effectiveness (Table 14). The most common recommendation for what the county should start doing was increasing pay and benefits (32%). Many employees urged leadership to conduct salary studies, adjust wages to match market rates, and improve benefits such as retirement contributions and healthcare options. Another 18% of respondents recommended improving communication and transparency, with suggestions for more town hall meetings, open-door policies, and clear explanations of policy changes. Better training and development opportunities (16%) were also suggested, with employees calling for stronger leadership training, skills workshops, and tuition reimbursement programs. Improved employee recognition (14%) was also noted, with employees advocating for more formal recognition programs, bonuses, and promotions based on merit. Finally, 11% of employees suggested improving growth management and infrastructure, noting that county resources need to keep pace with population growth and increased service demands.

Table 14.**What Hernando County Should Start Doing, Stop Doing, and Continue Doing**

Major Themes	% of Respondents
We Should Start...	
Increase Pay and Benefits	32%
Improve Communication and Transparency	18%
Offer Better Training and Development	16%
Improve Employee Recognition	14%
Manage Growth More Effectively	11%
We Should Stop...	
Cutting Benefits and Pay	29%
Poor Hiring Practices	22%
Overdevelopment	20%
Bureaucratic Inefficiencies	17%
Political Decision Making	12%
We Should Continue...	
Employee Benefits and Support	28%
Community Engagement and Services	23%

Regarding what the county should stop doing, the most common concern was cutting benefits and pay (29%). Many employees expressed frustration over perceived reductions in benefits and wage stagnation. Another 22% urged leadership to stop poor hiring practices, including nepotism, favoritism, and inconsistent promotion policies. Overdevelopment (20%) was another

concern, with employees stating that growth is outpacing the county's ability to maintain adequate infrastructure and services. Bureaucratic inefficiencies (17%) were also mentioned, with employees calling for streamlined processes, faster decision-making, and less red tape. Political decision-making (12%) was another issue raised, with concerns that organizational policies and budget decisions are being influenced by politics rather than practical needs.

In terms of what the county should continue doing, 28% of employees praised employee benefits and support programs, stating that the existing retirement options, leave policies, and health benefits are strong and should not be reduced. Another 23% of respondents emphasized the importance of community engagement and public services, urging the county to maintain high standards for resident services and ensure that employees remain focused on their public service mission.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2025 Hernando County Employee Engagement Survey provides a comprehensive assessment of employees' experiences, perceptions, and concerns across multiple workplace dimensions. While the results highlight several strengths, including employees' commitment to public service and strong relationships with direct supervisors, they also underscore several opportunities for improvement, such as workplace morale, compensation, organizational communications, and career advancement opportunities.

The following recommendations are designed to address key concerns identified in the survey and to help Hernando County create a more engaged, motivated, and satisfied workforce. These recommendations focus on actionable strategies that can enhance employee retention, improve organizational transparency, and strengthen leadership effectiveness.

1. **Improve Workplace Morale and Employee Recognition:** While a significant percentage of employees enjoy their jobs, overall morale remains an area of concern. Less than 20% of employees strongly agreed that workplace morale is high, and nearly 40% disagreed. Additionally, 45.5% of employees rated Hernando County as only a "Fair" place to work, indicating room for strategies to boost engagement and satisfaction. To improve morale, Hernando County leadership should consider the following:

- a. ***Enhance Employee Recognition Programs:*** Establish a structured recognition program that acknowledges outstanding performance through awards, public recognition, or additional incentives. Regular appreciation events and peer-nominated awards could help foster a more positive workplace culture.
 - b. ***Strengthen Team Building Initiatives:*** Implement department-level and county-wide team-building activities that encourage collaboration, increase engagement, and improve interdepartmental relationships.
 - c. ***Conduct Morale-Focused Listening Sessions:*** Organize regular town halls or focus groups to provide employees with a platform to discuss workplace concerns and propose solutions directly to leadership.
2. **Address Compensation and Career Growth Concerns:** Survey results indicate that 39.5% of employees disagreed that they are fairly compensated, including 18.9% who strongly disagreed. Additionally, only 35.7% of employees strongly agreed that they see opportunities for promotion within the county, and open-ended responses highlighted dissatisfaction with wage progression and career advancement opportunities. To enhance employee retention and satisfaction, the county should consider the following:
 - a. ***Conduct a Salary Benchmarking Study:*** Evaluate salaries across similar jurisdictions to determine whether Hernando County's pay structure remains competitive. Adjust compensation where necessary to ensure equity and competitiveness.
 - b. ***Develop Clear Career Advancement Pathways:*** Implement structured career progression plans that outline potential growth opportunities, required skills, and training programs to help employees advance.
 - c. ***Expand Professional Development Offerings:*** Increase investment in leadership training, skills development, and mentorship programs to prepare employees for internal promotion opportunities.
3. **Strengthen Organizational Communication and Transparency:** While employees generally trust their immediate supervisors, feedback on county leadership was more mixed. Only 62.2% of employees believe that senior leaders listen to employee opinions, and 37.2% disagreed, including 14.4% who strongly disagreed. Additionally, 31.3% of employees disagreed that county leaders act transparently. To build trust and improve communication, Hernando County leadership should consider the following:

- a. ***Increase Leadership Visibility and Engagement:*** Encourage senior leaders to conduct regular site visits, attend departmental meetings, and interact directly with employees to better understand their concerns.
 - b. ***Enhance Transparency in Decision-Making:*** Establish clear communication channels for policy changes, salary adjustments, and strategic decisions. Providing employees with a rationale for leadership decisions can help reduce frustration and build trust.
 - c. ***Implement a Leadership Feedback Mechanism:*** Develop a structured feedback loop where employees can provide direct, anonymous input on leadership performance and county policies.
4. **Improve Interdepartmental Communication and Collaboration:** While most employees believe that they communicate effectively within their departments, cross-departmental communication remains a challenge. Only 58.4% of employees agreed that departments effectively communicate with one another, while 41.7% disagreed. To improve interdepartmental collaboration, the county should consider the following:
- a. ***Create Cross-Departmental Task Forces:*** Establish committees that bring together employees from different departments to work on joint initiatives, increasing communication and reducing silos.
 - b. ***Standardize Communication Practices:*** Develop county-wide guidelines for internal communication, ensuring consistent information flow across all departments.
 - c. ***Implement a Centralized Information Hub:*** Consider adopting a digital platform where departments can share updates, resources, and announcements to improve accessibility and transparency.
5. **Enhance Retention Efforts to Address Employee Turnover:** A notable concern among employees was high turnover and difficulties retaining skilled workers. 22% of employees mentioned retention challenges in open-ended responses, and 33% cited pay and benefits as a weakness. To improve employee retention, Hernando County should consider the following:

- a. ***Develop an Employee Retention Strategy:*** Conduct exit interviews and stay interviews to identify specific reasons for turnover and implement targeted interventions to improve retention rates.
 - b. ***Offer More Flexible Work Options:*** Where feasible, explore alternative work arrangements such as hybrid schedules or compressed workweeks to improve work-life balance.
 - c. ***Increase Investment in Employee Well-Being:*** Expand mental health resources, stress management programs, and wellness initiatives to support employees in managing job-related stress.

- 6. **Address Concerns Over Growth Management and Infrastructure:** Survey responses indicated that employees believe Hernando County is struggling to keep pace with growth. 20% of employees cited overdevelopment as a concern, and 15% mentioned infrastructure challenges. To address these concerns, leadership should consider the following:
 - a. ***Develop a Workforce Growth Plan:*** Ensure staffing levels align with increasing service demands, reducing workload imbalances and preventing burnout.
 - b. ***Strengthen Infrastructure Planning Efforts:*** Collaborate with planning and public works departments to ensure that county resources are effectively allocated to meet community growth needs.
 - c. ***Improve Transparency in Growth-Related Decisions:*** Clearly communicate how growth management strategies impact county employees and involve them in planning discussions when appropriate.

- 7. **Reinforce Organizational Values:** In open-ended questions, 20% of respondents stated that they do not believe the county upholds the values it promotes. To ensure alignment with core values, the county should consider the following:
 - a. ***Enhance Value Alignment:*** County effort to focus more on public service motivation and Hernando County's organizational vision, mission, goals, and objectives.
 - b. ***Regularly Assess Workplace Culture:*** Conduct annual surveys and focus groups to measure progress on inclusivity efforts and identify areas for improvement.

- c. ***Strengthen Ethical Leadership Practices:*** Demonstrate that county leadership is held accountable for upholding ethical decision-making and maintaining a workplace culture rooted in fairness and respect.

The 2025 Hernando County Employee Engagement Survey highlights areas of strength and opportunities for growth. While employees are dedicated to their roles and value public service, challenges related to morale, compensation, leadership communication, and career advancement should be addressed to ensure a thriving workplace environment. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, Hernando County can foster a more engaged workforce, improve employee retention, and build a stronger organizational culture that supports both employees and the community they serve. The survey results provide a foundation for ongoing dialogue and continuous improvement, ensuring that employee voices remain central to the county's future strategic planning efforts.