



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eva N. Santos Communication Award

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template within the form.

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated communications efforts should demonstrate a positive impact on the administration of state human resource programs.

Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

NOMINATION INFORMATION

Title of Nomination: Virginia Department of Human Resource Management State of the Commonwealth HR Annual Publication (Inaugural Issue) State: VA

Contact Person: Natalie Brannon

Contact's Title: Director, Compensation and Workforce Analytics

Agency: Virginia Department of Human Resource Management

Mailing Address: 600 East Main Street, 17th Floor Richmond, VA 23219

Telephone: 804-292-6462

E-mail: Natalie.brannon@dhrm.virginia.gov

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Stacy Pendleton Title: Deputy Director

State: VA

Agency: Virginia Department of Human Resource Management

Telephone: 804-837-1776

E-mail: stacy.pendleton@dhrm.virginia.gov

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
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DETAILS

You may include links to websites and snapshots as part of your nomination. Narrative responses should generally not exceed 4–6 pages (12-point font, double-spaced).

1. Please provide a brief description of the submission.



The State of the Commonwealth HR Publication is a new annual publication that blends the formats of a narrative professional magazine, such as SHRM quarterly, with a traditional data driven “state of an industry report”. It was created to share our insights from a comprehensive workforce analysis (done annually) and strategies to address specific challenges uncovered, all while wrapping the information in

narrative driven articles to better illustrate the underlying story. This hybrid format enabled us to create not just a new communication tool, but also a reoccurring resource that Commonwealth agencies can utilize to be more proactive in exploring solutions to their top challenges and elevating the strategic value of HR within their own agency.

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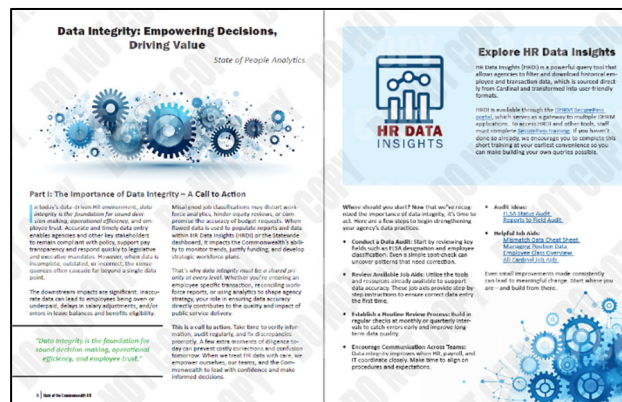
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The 2025 State of the Commonwealth publication has an overall theme of “One Commonwealth: Changing the Game from Competing for Talent to Growing and Strengthening Talent”. It centers around the idea that inter-agency collaboration can strengthen and grow talent internally.



This theme is weaved throughout the publication in the six main “state of” articles, which are (with photos of the article’s first page):

1. Data Integrity: Empowering Decisions, Driving Value (State of People Analytics)



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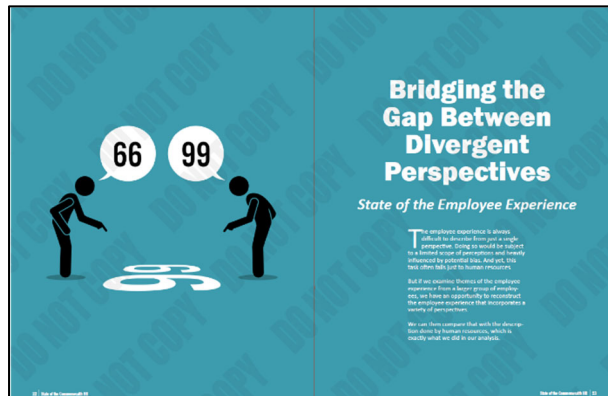
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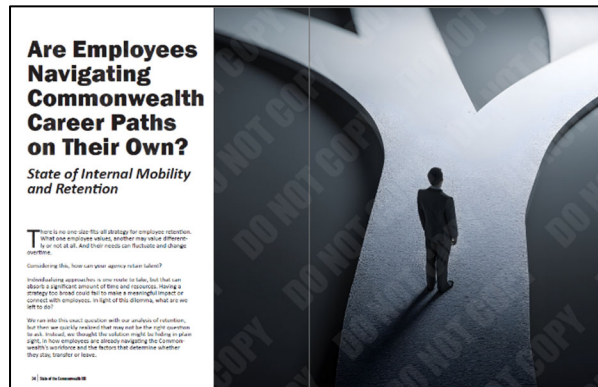
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2. Expanding our Ability to Reach New Talent (State of Recruitment)
3. Bridging the Gap between Divergent Perspectives (State of the Employee Experience)



4. Are Employees Navigating Commonwealth Career Paths on Their Own? (State of Internal Mobility and Retention)



5. Creating the Right Environment for Employees to Thrive (State of Leadership and Engagement)

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6. Stepping into the Role of a Strategic Partner (State of Strategic Human Resources)



Each of these main articles provides three data-driven strategies. Analysis insights are highlighted through detailed explanations and custom graphics to paint the story and connect each strategy to a “why”. In addition, several supporting articles are included to bridge the main articles and provide additional information regarding compensation, the exit survey responses, and employee engagement to ensure there is something of value for all HR professionals in the publication. The publication is 65 pages in length.

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2. How long has the submission been in existence?

The inaugural publication was released in December 2025. DHRM plans on future annual releases each December.

3. Why was this submission created?

DHRM identified an opportunity to fill a communication gap and provide feedback to Commonwealth agencies related to their workforce planning efforts. The State of the Commonwealth HR publication was designed to strengthen the Commonwealth's strategic human resources capabilities by providing greater insight into state workforce analytics, promoting strategies and initiatives, and upskilling the Commonwealth HR community. Specifically, it was created to be a resource for agencies, expand their current workforce planning efforts to be more strategic, and increase their ability to identify gaps and forecast future needs for recruitment, retention, and engagement.

4. How does this submission support the goals and objectives of your agenda/department?

DHRM is a trusted strategic partner for all Commonwealth agencies and continually seeks new and innovative ways to support our HR community. The State of the Commonwealth directly supports this part of our mission by sharing important insights from our workforce analysis

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through a new format (narrative articles) and by upskilling HR to lead Commonwealth agencies into the future. It serves as a catalyst for elevating the focus of strategic workforce planning and people analytics by providing information that can be leveraged by agencies. It also demonstrates we are listening to agency feedback, which can inspire conversations for collaboration with DHRM.

5. Have you been able to measure the effectiveness of this submission? If so, how?

The publication was released in December 2025 and has already received over 450+ views. Initial reactions have been overwhelmingly positive but since this is a new publication, the impact of the information and strategies may not be fully visible yet.

6. What resources (staff time, budget, technology, or other investments) were required to develop and maintain this communication effort? How do the results compare to those costs?

DHRM used internal resources to create the State of the Commonwealth HR publication. It was a significant effort, with the biggest investment being staff time. We leveraged the expertise across DHRM Office Areas to balance the workload. Existing resources (e.g. software and image licensing) were leveraged to minimize costs for publication. The entire process lasted roughly 8-9 months. Though the full impacts have not been realized yet, any degree of positive impact

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(e.g. improving communication, enhancing workforce planning, or building collaborative partnerships) will offset any cost for the publication.

7. Can this communication approach be adapted or replicated by other states or agencies? If so, how?

Absolutely. The information, format, graphics, articles, and design can be completely customized to meet any need and audience. It is recommended to use a similar hybrid format (between narrative and “state of” report) as it can help to break down complex data analytics into easy-to-understand stories. It can be customized as a balance between the two formats or lean slightly towards one or the other. Our key learnings from this process include:

1. Allow the data to tell the story.
2. Collaboration between expertise in data/people analytics, HR, and communications is required.
3. Creativity is a necessity! There is no wrong approach to this type of publication.

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