

THE NESTM

The National Employee SurveyTM

Los Alamos County, NM

Workplace Report

2020



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The NES is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

This report of The National Employee Survey™ (The NES™) for Los Alamos County provides the opinions of employees regarding their satisfaction on the job and other key characteristics of a quality work environment: communication, organizational ethics, employee fit, wages and benefits, the physical work space, supervisory relationships, the job feedback system, professional development and self-reported performance. A periodic sounding of employee opinion on these critical work climate issues offers management, staff and elected officials an opportunity to identify challenges, plan for and evaluate improvements and sustain organizational effectiveness for long-term success.

The National Employee Survey™ (The NES) report is about the work environment of Los Alamos County. A quality work environment is a workplace that is not simply acceptable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do work, but where they want to work.

Great workplaces are partnerships of employees, management and the residents they serve. The NES captures employees' opinions within the six aspects of organizational climate: Job Satisfaction, Supervisor and Work Group, Executive Leadership, Workplace, External Customers and Support Services.

A total of 274 completed surveys were obtained, providing an overall response rate of 40%. Because the survey was intended to be taken by all employees and no statistical weighting was performed, no traditional margin of error was calculated. However, because not all employees responded, NRC recommends using plus or minus five percentage points as the “range of uncertainty” around any given percent reported for the organization as a whole. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

Highlights

Los Alamos County is a great place to work.

Overall, a majority of employees provided favorable ratings for almost all of the +100 items assessed on the survey. Almost all employees would recommend working for the County and 9 in 10 felt the County was a good employer. In many areas, such as Employee-Supervisor Relationship and Work Group Performance, most items had ratings higher than the national average for other local governments. Employees also provided above-average ratings for Executive Leadership (department directors), however ratings employees' level of confidence in Executive Leadership varied by agency or department as well as employee tenure (see *The NES Employment Crosstabulations Report*, under separate cover).

Job Satisfaction is driven by Contribution and Fit and Wages and Benefits.

Employee Contribution and Fit and Wages and Benefits were the aspects most highly correlated with overall Job Satisfaction, meaning, as employees appreciation of these aspects of their job increased, their overall satisfaction with their job also increased. On average, items comprising Wages and Benefits (e.g., employee appreciation, compensation, benefits) tended to receive ratings higher than the national average while items within Employee Contribution and Fit (e.g., taking on a heavier workload, having good friends at work, values matching with the organization) tended to receive ratings similar to the national average. Additionally, more than four in five employees felt the support service of Benefits Administration provided excellent or good service, in terms of both quality and timeliness; these ratings were higher in Los Alamos than in other municipalities across the nation.

Support services are well-regarded with some room for improvement.

Overall, support services, the internal groups that make external services possible (e.g., fleet maintenance, recruiting, networking) received positive assessments from about 7 in 10 employees, on average. Most support services' ratings were on par with Los Alamos's national peers, though some services stood out for their above-average ratings. Employees recognized custodial services, fleet maintenance, and benefits administration for their high quality and timeliness, and were more critical of repair services, facilities management, desktop/help desk, and general IT services. These latter services, while still receiving favorable ratings from about 7 in 10 employees, were below that of other municipalities in the U.S. Circumstances surrounding COVID-19 could be impacting delivery of these internal services to employees. Additionally, opinions of support services varied by employee agency or department; employees in Elected Official Offices, Public Works, and Utilities tended to rate support services more favorably than employees on other departments.

Overall Employee Satisfaction

Knowing where to focus resources to improve employees' satisfaction with the workplace requires information that targets job features that are most important to employees. Employees were asked to rate more than 100 different aspects of the organization, which have been grouped into the larger job features shown in the figure below (the individual items making up each job feature can be found under separate cover in the *Technical Appendices*). The color of each indicates the comparison of its rating (the average across ratings given to each aspect included in that specific job feature) to NRC's national employee benchmark database.

In addition to a benchmark comparison for each job feature, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which job features were the most influential on ratings of employee job satisfaction. Key features found to be most strongly correlated with job satisfaction in Los Alamos County were:

- Employee Contribution and Fit
- Wages and Benefits

To impact employee job satisfaction, an organization typically will want to consider improvements to any key features that are not at least similar to the benchmark. In the case of Los Alamos County, no key drivers were below the benchmark. Therefore, Los Alamos County may wish to seek improvements in Employee Contribution and Fit, as this key driver received ratings similar to other benchmark jurisdictions.

Legend

- Higher than benchmark
- Similar to benchmark
- Lower than benchmark
- ★ Most influential on overall job satisfaction



Job Satisfaction

An organization of satisfied employees is an organization where employees feel motivated to do their best possible work and where they hope to continue working in years to come. In Los Alamos County, 90% of employees strongly or somewhat agreed that they were satisfied with their job, which was similar to ratings in other organizations across the nation.

Delving deeper into Job Satisfaction, employees evaluated specific aspects of their work experience including the size of their workload and the quality of work committed by co-workers. On average, about four in five employees felt favorably about their jobs with the county. Only one area – taking on a heavier workload – received positive ratings from less than a majority of employees, though this rating was similar to the national benchmark. Overall, employees’ ratings of their jobs were similar to or higher than those provided by employees in other communities.

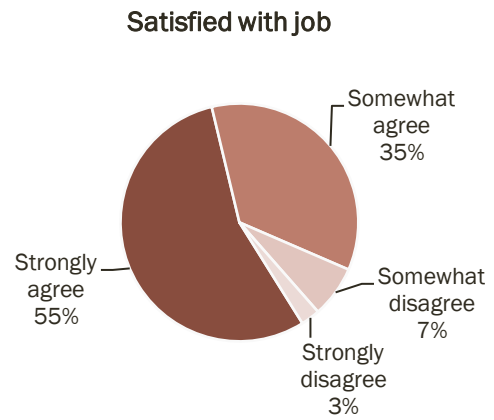
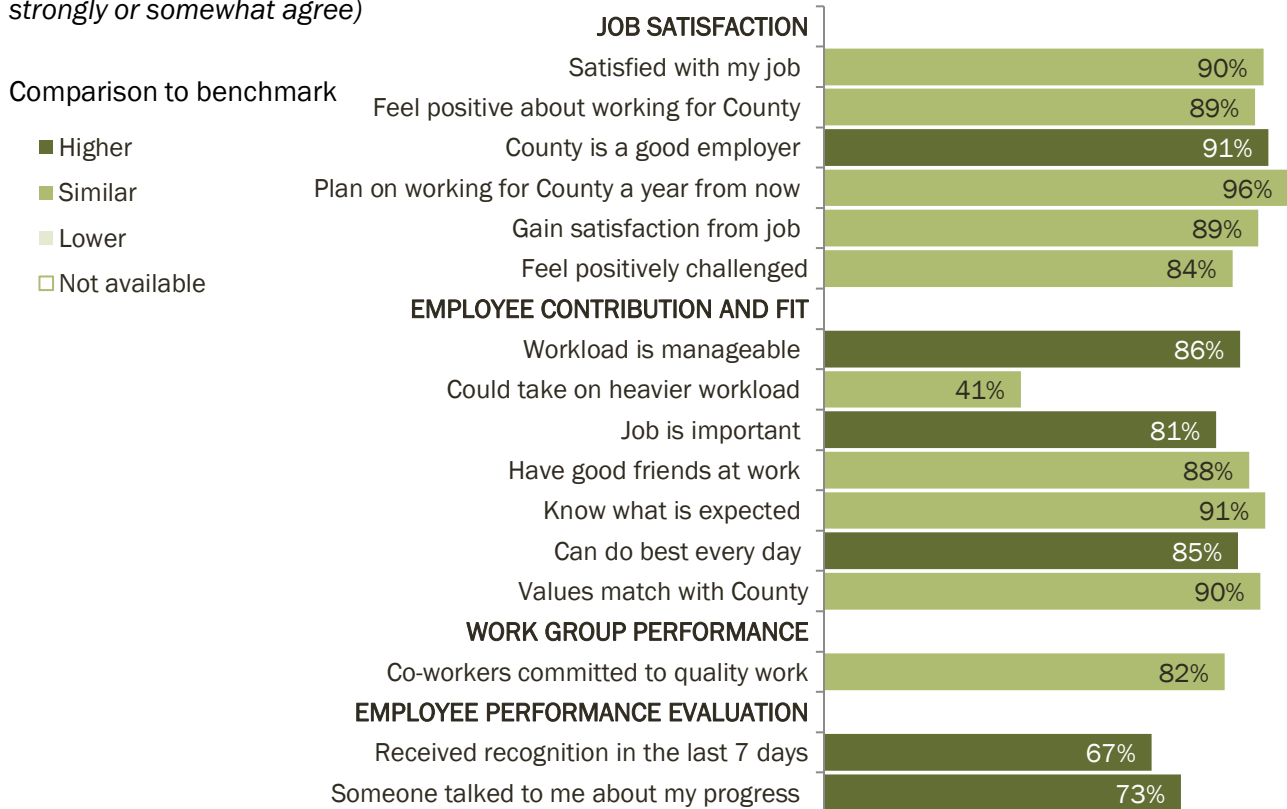


Figure 1: Aspects of Job with County

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, strongly or somewhat agree)



Supervisor and Work Group

Employees' relationships with their supervisor and work group are the primary colors that paint their everyday experience in the workplace. From communicating clear expectations to providing constructive feedback, the quality of these interactions directly affects staff morale and motivation.

When asked to rate various aspects of the employee-supervisor relationship, at least 7 in 10 Los Alamos County employees rated each aspect favorably. The highest rated aspects included treating employee with respect, fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence, and promoting a positive working relationship. All aspects received ratings higher than the national benchmark except for providing specific, constructive feedback, which received ratings similar to the benchmark.

In addition, survey respondents provided feedback on the quality of work group performance. Strong majorities of County employees felt favorably about their work group performance, resulting in ratings that were higher than the national average. Morale in the work group was relatively lower than other aspects of work group performance, though, again, still higher than the national average.

Figure 2: Aspects of Supervisor and Work Group Relationships

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, strongly or somewhat agree)



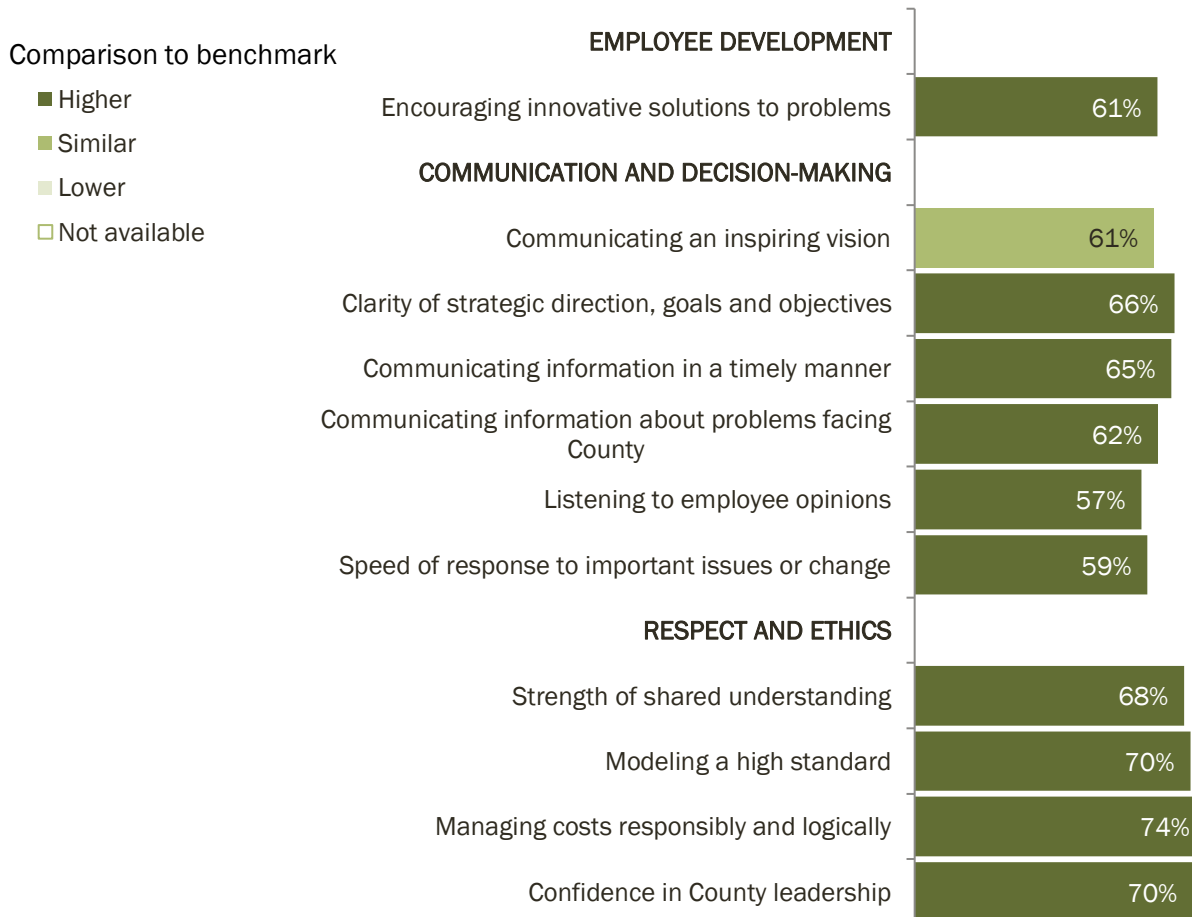
Executive Leadership

A County’s executive leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and steering the community in a positive direction. Los Alamos County employees provided feedback regarding the County leadership’s performance along the dimensions of Employee Development, Communication and Decision-making and Respect and Ethics.

On average, about 6 in 10 employees felt executive leadership did an excellent or good job in the areas of Employee Development and Communication and Decision-making and slightly more, about 7 in 10, felt leadership did well in the area of Respect and Ethics. Compared to other communities across the nation, almost all of Los Alamos County’s ratings were higher than the national average.

Figure 3: Aspects of County Executive Leadership

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, strongly or somewhat agree)



Workplace

County employees weighed in on the quality of their workplace. Of those surveyed, 94% would be very or somewhat likely to recommend working for County. The portion of employees that would recommend working for the County was higher than other municipalities across the nation.

Survey respondents also offered their views of the work environment, exploring such areas as Employee Contribution and Fit, Employee Performance Evaluation and the Physical Work Environment. Overall, all but two workplace items received favorable ratings from at least half of employees. Employees appreciated their benefits overall (84% positive ratings), their work spaces (84%), and overall skillset of staff (84%).

Employees were more critical of how the County dealt the low-performing employees (37% positive ratings) and opportunities for promotion (49%), although ratings for both of these aspects exceeded the national averages.

All items within the areas of Employee Performance Evaluation and Employee Development received ratings higher than the national average while other areas, including Employee Contribution and Fit, Wages and Benefits, Respect and Ethics, and Physical Work Environment, received ratings at or above the national average.

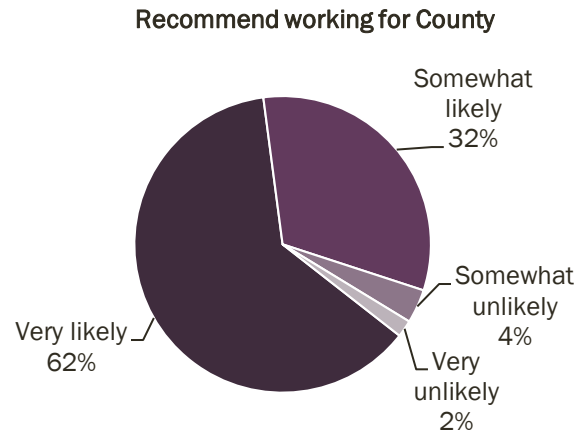
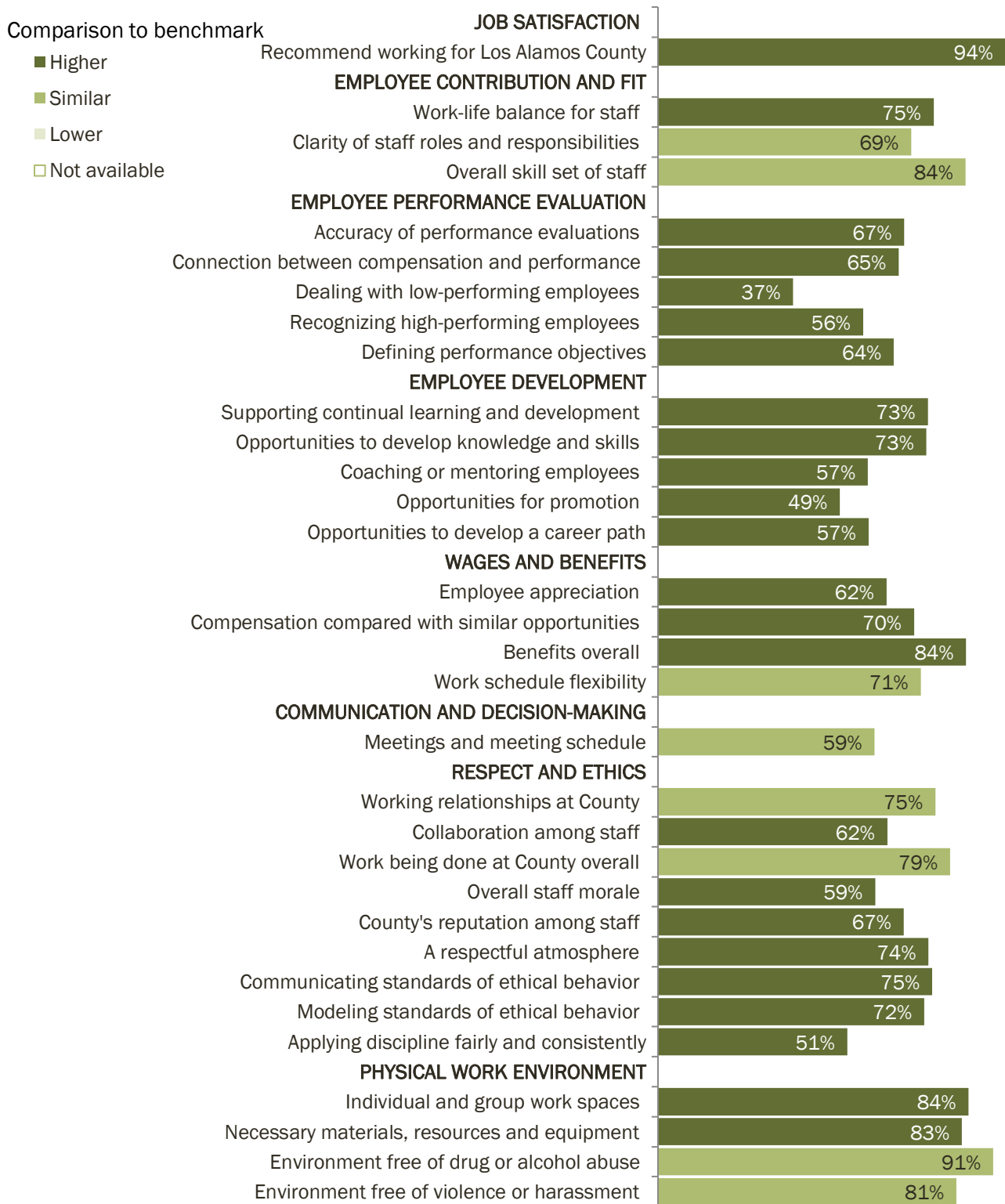


Figure 4: Aspects of County Workplace

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, strongly or somewhat agree)



Support Services

While residents are familiar with many of the services provided by local government, there are many other essential services that most residents never hear about. The “visible” services could not be performed without the support of internal groups that create the infrastructure to make external services possible. Since the consumers of support services mostly are coworkers in other departments, an employee survey provides a natural opportunity to learn and provide feedback about how customers of internal services perceive service delivery from those support groups. The results of these evaluations – assessing the quality and timeliness of work provided – should prove extremely helpful to regular improvement of support services.

On average, about 7 in 10 employees rated each service favorably. Most internal support services received ratings similar the national benchmark comparisons in both quality and timeliness. Custodial services, fleet maintenance, and benefits administration were recognized for their high quality and timeliness when compared to other municipalities, while maintenance and repair services, facilities management, desktop/help desk and IT services were viewed less favorably.

Figure 5: Aspects of County Support Services

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, strongly or somewhat agree)

