

# Culture & Climate

## TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

## November 2024 Culture and Climate Newsletter

### New Format for Culture and Climate Updates

There's a new format for receiving updates from the Culture and Climate Workstream. You'll be receiving updates from the Culture and Climate Workstreams once every quarter. The goal is to share not only updates in progress, but also measurable change efforts that are taking shape across VTA. Stay tuned for these updates by email, shared on the Hub, and for posters and information at each of the yards as well as at the River Oaks Campus.

The Culture & Climate Transformation Program is one initiative created with the help of a \$20 million state grant VTA received following the May 26, 2021, tragedy. The purpose of the grant is to provide funding for mental health services and support for VTA employees and their families, funding for necessary changes to VTA's infrastructure, and funding to support efforts to improve the work environment at VTA.

### What is the SB129 Committee, and how are they helping create Culture and Climate Change at VTA?

VTA's "SB129 Committee" (SB129 stands for Senate Bill 129, the legislation that authorized the grant funds), oversees this grant funding. The SB129 Committee is comprised of leaders of VTA's four labor unions as well as management designees. One of the Committee's tasks was to begin the work on needed culture and climate change.

### How is the Culture and Climate Effort helping to create change at VTA?

The Culture and Climate Workstream Groups – Employee Support and Leadership Development, Physical and Psychological Health and Security, and Communications – meet weekly and are working to implement quick wins and long term change for the benefit of all employees.

Each workstream commits to a set of core values, including seeking understanding of each other's viewpoints and assuming positive intent. The goals of the Culture and Climate workstreams is to serve as a catalyst for change at VTA, to communicate clearly and effectively to all employees across VTA and to create an inclusive environment. While the Culture and Climate Workstreams are committed to helping create this change, the goals is to encourage respect, communication and compassion throughout the organization. We provide a crucial service to the public, and each employee at VTA has an important part in serving the community.

### Here's what each of the workstreams have been up to.

The **Communications** workstream group is working on a number of quick wins, including establishing an employee hotline to help direct folks to the right departments for internal questions. Also accomplished was a communications audit that looked at the different channels that information goes out to employees and to examine what is working and not working. Work on other quick wins is on the way include posters and this newsletter and other ways to reach out to all employees as well as sharing the operator's journey to provide insight on how best to reach VTA employees that directly serve our public by providing transit service.

The **Employee Support & Leadership Development** Workstream has brought back the Employee/ Supervisor of the Quarter reserved parking spot. Your hard work is noticed and we hope that this small token of appreciation helps provide an easier start to your workday.

The **ESLD** workstream is also supporting the development of a Leadership Framework, which will be a guide that outlines the broad leadership values, skills, and competencies for all VTA employees at all levels (not just for supervisors or managers). It is a reference document that we can all use to define how we show up every day. It will also form the basis of other talent-related tools such as a career development program, training, and recognition programs. It is being designed to provide every employee with a clear understanding and roadmap for success. This Leadership Framework is nearing completion and will be available for all VTA employees soon.

**Physical & Psychological Health, Safety, & Security (PPHSS)** PPHSS is working hard to implement quick wins to improve the safety and security of employees across all yards. Planning and implementation efforts have begun around OCC response times, de-escalation training, bathroom improvements, and yard fixes. Stay tuned for more details!

## Did you know that you can learn about upcoming VTA events on the Hub? Trainings, town halls, and other events can be found at **The Hub Event Calendar** **Reminder: You can find information any time about the Culture and Climate Workstreams:**

You can see what the SB 129 Committee members and Executive Leadership Team are working on and know what changes to expect.

The three teams who will launch implementation plans and initiatives are also developing performance metrics with performance targets that will be tracked to understand if culture change has occurred. Those metrics and the related data collection processes will be defined so that the change is measurable, and can be communicated across VTA, to hold all of us collectively responsible.

In addition, the SB 129 Committee, comprised of union members, and the Executive Leadership Team, reporting up to VTA's Board, oversee the program. As a result, there are multiple layers of review and input, to help us include multiple voices and drive toward positive change.

We recognize that culture change does not occur overnight. We will have successes, and yes, we will make mistakes. We are committed to always moving in a positive direction and driving positive change, to create a healthy, welcoming, and positive working environment for everyone at VTA.

## **Mental Health and Wellness Moments**

We can't take care of the public, if we don't take care of ourselves! Creating time and space for your wellness and mental health is important, and establishing positive habits provides benefits beyond the workspace. Deep breathing, disconnecting from technology, and practicing gratitude are all ways to give your mental health a boost.

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*Stay tuned – The Culture and Climate Workstream groups meet every week to work on issues and items that help create a better, more inclusive and understanding workplace. The next newsletter will be out in October, and we'll be highlighting some of the great quick wins of the Culture and Climate Workstreams. We hope you can see these efforts in your day to day work and in your departments and divisions.*