

2021 NASPEs AWARD

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination *Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

Additionally, please attach a one-page summary of the program and prepare a narrative answer for the questions listed below. Do not send supporting documentation. Provide a narrative answer for each of the following questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Title: Oregon Positivity Project State: OR

Contact Person: Summer Warner

Contact's Title: Workforce Planning Strategist

Agency: Oregon Department of Administrative Services

Mailing Address: 155 Cottage St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Telephone: 503.504.0694 Fax: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

E-mail: summer.warner@oregon.gov

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NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Madilyn Zike Title: Chief Human Resource Officer

State: OR Agency: Oregon Department of Administrative Services

Telephone: 503.569.8283 Fax: Click or tap here to enter text.

E-mail: madilyn.zike@oregon.gov

DETAILS

1. Please provide a brief description of this program:

The Oregon Positivity Program: www.oregonpositivity.org

The Oregon Chief Human Resource Office (CHRO) recognizes the importance of positivity, when organizations expect positive outcomes, employees can turn a bad circumstance into a new opportunity, giving a chance to learn from experiences and investigate new ideas. Workplace attitudes not only affect the individual, but they affect the entire atmosphere of the organization. In order to facilitate Positivity, the CHRO created the **Positivity Project**. The goal of this project is (1) to teach state employees about Positivity- both the science behind Positivity and how to infuse Positivity into the work environment, (2) to encourage and implement Positive Organizational Practices, and, *here's the big one*, (3) to generate a Positivity movement. The goal of this movement was not to flip a switch and expect everyone to emit instant positivity, but to invite positivity to gradually (albeit deliberately) weave into our meetings, our conversations, and the way we treat one another. The CHRO's new motto for state government became: *Come for a job, stay for a career, and make a difference for a lifetime.*

Prior to launching the Positivity Project on November 13, 2020 (World Kindness day), the project team sent the email below to over 40,000 executive branch employees, to gather momentum and to spark interest.



Coming soon...a change to the way we view kindness.

If we told you that simple activities could change the workplace experience for the better...would you believe us?

Join the movement beginning November 13. More info to come from the Chief Human Resources Office.

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Then on November 13, 2020, those same employees received the following introduction and challenge around random acts of kindness:

To all state employees,

Today is World Kindness Day – a time to focus on the positive power and common thread of kindness that binds us. In honor of World Kindness Day, the DAS Chief Human Resources Office (CHRO) is launching a positivity project to change the workplace experience for the better.

You might wonder why we are choosing to focus on positivity. Considering we spend more time working than doing anything else (except sleeping), we think you should enjoy your time at work. At the CHRO, it's our job to support this; to make state government a place where you come for a job, stay for a career, and make a difference for a lifetime.

To prepare for this project, we researched evidence-based practices for creating an organization that helps employees flourish. The research was clear: practicing positivity is the answer. Practicing positivity includes a variety of programs and processes, such as kindness, humor, creativity, innovation, teamwork, mindfulness, and resilience.

Positivity will slowly invade our meetings, our conversations, and the way we treat one another. You might notice it on a small scale: receiving an unexpected kudos on a project or someone sharing their umbrella when it rains. You might notice it on a grander scale: positivity ambassadors at your agency, kindness challenges for state employees or, if you don't already, starting to love where you work.

To get started, check out our positivity [website](#). The site has tools and ideas for how you can help spread positivity throughout your work environment, as well as information about the science behind positivity. Each month we'll focus on a different aspect of positivity and share with you how to use those aspects to spread positivity!

We're starting with a focus on kindness, and we want to hear from you. We invite you to tell us about a random act of kindness you've recently given or received. The first 300 people to submit their examples will receive a limited edition positivity project prize. Send your kindness examples to positivity.project@oregon.gov. You can also use this email for any questions or comments about the project.

There is much more to come in the months ahead. In the meantime, remember that a single act of kindness, no matter how small, can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Madilyn Zike
Chief Human Resources Officer

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." —Maya Angelou

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Within the first 20 minutes of sending the email, we received over 600 random acts of kindness that Oregon state employees either gave or received. Half of those employees received a positivity project bracelet, mood color-changing pencil, pin, and “pay-it-forward” card as a token of the state’s appreciation, not only for their submission, but to acknowledge the kindness they bring to Oregon State Government.

The Oregon Positivity Project has now been operational for over a year. Throughout this incredible year, where Oregon has experienced life changing events (COVID-19, devastating wildfires, political unrest), the message of positivity has remained on the forefront. Ongoing activities with the project include monthly emails to all executive branch employees providing a themed toolkit explaining the science behind positivity supported with a related themed blog and monthly calendar. Everyone is invited to participate in the month’s themed activity.

Visit <https://www.oregonpositivity.org/toolkit/archive/> for a complete toolkit archive with links to the toolkits and related blogs.

Through these communications, positive activities are performed and resources are shared for individuals to consider implementing at work and at home. Positivity is contagious and attitude affects everyone, with this program we’re inviting employees and managers to lead by example and weave positivity into their everyday interactions.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The Positivity Project launched on World Kindness Day, November 13, 2019, with a special positivity challenge issued to state employees the week prior.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

We spend more time working than doing anything else (except sleeping).¹ In Oregon, we think you should enjoy your time at work. Heck, we think you should **want** to come to work. In the Chief Human Resources Office, it’s our job to carry out this task; to make Oregon State Government a place where you come for a job, stay for a career, and make a difference for a lifetime.

Thus, we researched evidence-based practices for creating an organization that helps employees to flourish. The research was clear: Practicing Positivity was the answer.

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4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

Practicing Positivity means encouraging evidence-based organizational practices and individual activities that create a generative business setting and enhance human development. These positive practices are varied in content- ranging from managers encouraging their employees' strengths to telling a joke at a team meeting. As illustrated in the figure to the right, Practicing Positivity includes a variety of programs and processes, such as Kindness, Humor, Creativity, Innovation, Teamwork, Strengths, Meditation, Resilience, Mindfulness, etc.



This shift in the conversation has the potential to impact the employee, the team, the agency, and the State of Oregon. Key people-related outcomes from other organizations include:

- Practicing positivity by going through a resiliency training can decrease stress by 19%.²
- Employees with an empathic manager have less somatic complaints (e.g. fatigue, upset stomach, headache, etc.).³
- Applying humor for a week can increase happiness levels for six months.⁴
- A brief, strengths-based development program can increase employee productivity by 6%.⁵

5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

Purchase of www.oregonpositivity.org domain and the cost to host the website = \$109.15

Initial budget for challenges/prizes for themed events = \$2500

The Positivity Project team consists of seven staff who meet monthly to plan the themes. These meetings and content creation are absorbed in staff worktime.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Yearly hosting costs for the website are \$337. Staff work is absorbed in regular worktime.

7. How is this program funded?

From agency budget

8. Did this program originate in your state? Yes

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? No

If yes, how does this program differ?

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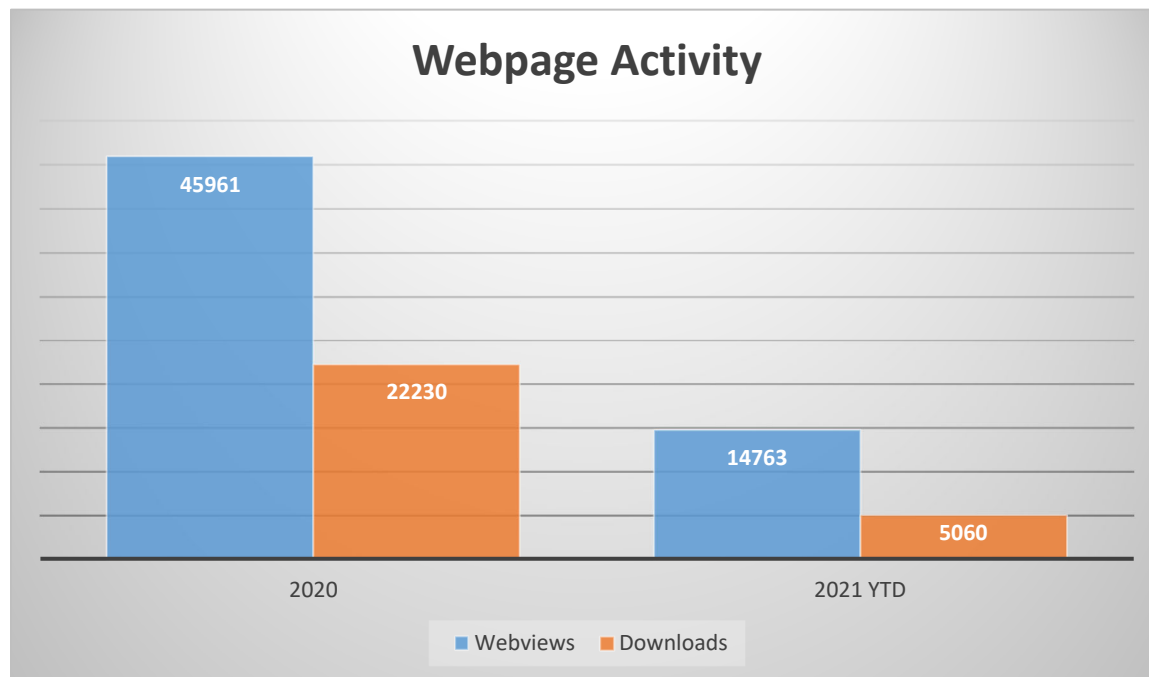
10. How do you measure the success of this program?

By tracking visitors to the Positivity Project website as well as downloads from the website, the project was able to analyze the effectiveness of the message of positivity.

Throughout 2020 the website had over 45,000 views and over 22,000 downloads. Page views include the toolkit, blog, about us, and contact us, while downloadable content is the monthly calendar and the toolkit exercises.

As we learned early on, external events outside of COVID continued to occur in the world and it was determined during a few months to hold off on releasing a positivity topic. Regardless of the months with no topic, the website was still viewed over 2,200 times with over 700 downloads during the four omitted months. Even though 2020 was a challenging year, our results show that people were still interested in hearing a positive message.

The data shows that employees who visited the website to view the current monthly topic also explored previous monthly topics/toolkits. While the monthly email from CHRO may have driven employees to the site, once there, visitors explored multiple topics from previous months.



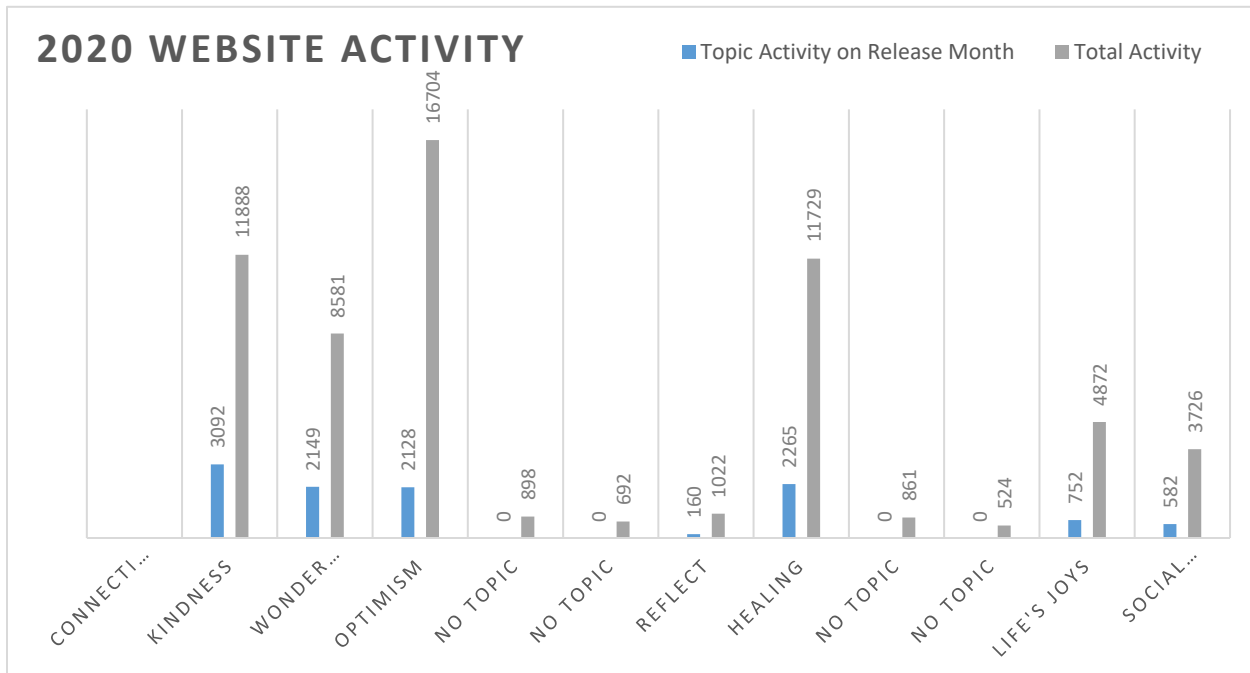
In the graph below, Topic Activity on Release Month refers to website activity, whether page views and/or downloads, of items directly connected with that month's theme. Total Activity refers to the viewing and downloading of any website content during that month.

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So far in 2021, the website has over 14,763 views and over 5,060 downloads. Again, page views include the toolkit, blog, about us, and contact us, while downloadable content is the monthly calendar and the toolkit exercises.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The Positivity Project continues to focus on pursuing positivity throughout the enterprise with the help of our webpage, resources, and employee feedback. A project like this cannot remain stagnant and is ever changing and growing based on input from our employees, current events facing our state and our nation, and new developments in the science of positivity. The ability of this project to pivot, grow, and evolve is what keeps it relevant to the state of Oregon.

References

1. American Time Use Survey – 2018 Results. (2019) Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Department of Labor. Released June 19, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>
2. Sood, A., Prasad, K., Schroeder, D., & Varkey, P. (2011). Stress management and resilience training among Department of Medicine faculty: a pilot randomized clinical trial. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 26(8), 858-861.
3. Scott, B. A., Colquitt, J. A., Paddock, E. L., & Judge, T. A. (2010). A daily investigation of the role of manager empathy on employee well-being. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(2), 127-140.
4. Wellenzohn, S., Proyer, R. T., & Ruch, W. (2016). Humor-based online positive psychology interventions: a randomized placebo-controlled long-term trial. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(6), 584-594.
5. Hodges, T. D., & Clifton, D. O. (2004). Strengths-based development in practice. *Positive psychology in practice*, 1, 256-268.

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WHY POSITIVITY?

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WHAT IS POSITIVITY?

Practicing Positivity means encouraging evidence-based organizational practices and individual activities that create a generative business setting and enhance human development. Practicing Positivity includes a variety of programs and processes, such as Kindness, Humor, Creativity, Innovation, Teamwork, Strengths, Meditation, Resilience, Mindfulness, etc.

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POSITIVITY IN OREGON STATE GOVERNMENT

In order to facilitate Positivity, the Chief Human Resources Office created the Positivity Project.

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POSITIVITY IN WORKPLACE CULTURE

The Positivity Project is housed under the Chief Human Resources Office for the Department of Administrative Services.

As part of the project communications, employees hear conversations about the Positivity Project at leadership meetings (e.g. HR Directors, Enterprise Leadership Team and All Agency Directors) and subject matter meetings (e.g. the statewide Classification and Compensation meeting). The majority of communication around the Positivity Project is disseminated through listservs and the Positivity Project website.

Through these avenues, positive activities are performed and resources shared for individuals to consider implementing and practicing at their own agencies.

The Chief Human Resources Office continues to examine organizational practices to see what applications could be made more effective by utilizing an evidence-based positive organizational approach.



(1). American Time Use Survey – 2018 Results. (2019) Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Department of Labor. Released June 19, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf> (2). Sood, A., Prasad, K., Schroeder, D., & Varkey, P. (2011). Stress management and resilience training among Department of Medicine faculty: a pilot randomized clinical trial. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 26(8), 858-861. (3). Scott, B. A., Colquitt, J. A., Paddock, E. L., & Judge, T. A. (2010). A daily investigation of the role of manager empathy on employee well-being. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(2), 127-140. (4). Wellenzohn, S., Proyer, R. T., & Ruch, W. (2016). Humor-based online positive psychology interventions: a randomized placebo-controlled long-term trial. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(6), 584-594.