

# 2021 State Employee Recognition Day

*Celebrate the Outstanding Work of Tennessee State Employees on May 5*

## Background and Context:

State Employee Recognition Day (SERD) was first initiated in 2001 by the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) in partnership with the National Governors Association to express appreciation to the thousands of hardworking, talented state employees across the County. **This year, SERD will be celebrated on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.** Recognition is a powerful motivator at a time when there is great need to value the passion and dedication that our employees bring to their work every day through the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond this day, recognition contributes to employee morale and organizational productivity, helping to foster authentic employee engagement.

As participants in this national event, the Department of Human Resources is pleased to encourage statewide activities to recognize state employees and their valuable contributions. In addition, we encourage agencies to implement their own activities during State Employee Recognition Day and National Public Service Recognition Week (May 2 – May 7). To assist agencies with their endeavors, DOHR has developed this toolkit with ideas and activities for agencies.

## Goal for State Employee Recognition Day:

From a statewide perspective, the goal of State Employee Recognition Day is to recognize and honor the outstanding service of TeamTN. Our employees serve as champions for Tennessee; their daily work and behaviors connect to the high- level outcomes envisioned by the Governor and needed by the citizens of TN..

Statewide activities seek to communicate the following messages:

- Link the daily work and passion of employees to the organization’s mission, vision and values
- Encourage a culture of appreciation amongst teams, co-workers, and colleagues particularly in work environments where employees rely upon each other to get the job done
- Promote state employees for who they are: passionate, dedicated professionals who provide essential services to the citizens of Tennessee, assisting countless residents on a daily basis in every county of the state

## Toolkit:

The activities presented in this toolkit are but a sample of resources and best practices, and DOHR is encouraging agencies to personalize this experience for your agency’s personality, and safety measures during COVID-19.

Activities can be organized in the following categories:

- Agency-wide: Activities have the potential to create a sense of connection between employees and the agency, and provide a chance to be appreciated by the agency director and executive teams.
- Division/Program: Recognition activities at this level focus on the efforts of the division or program as a whole as well as outstanding individuals.
- Manager to Direct Report: Opportunity for the most impact with employees through manager interactions with direct reports which are personalized and specific, and acknowledge that individuals respond to varying forms of engagement and recognition.
- Peer to Peer: Encourages employees to appreciate and acknowledge their co-workers which builds relationships and fosters a culture where teammates are responsible for and accountable to each other.

#### Activities:

##### Agency:

- Leadership Message
- Agency Town Hall/Virtual Recognition Lunch
- Make “virtual scrapbook” (can be in the form of PowerPoint) detailing agency and divisions accomplishment for the past year.
- Agency Word Search/Crossword Puzzle – Create an agency (featuring team members, or general facts) or Tennessee – specific activity. Submissions can be used for a prize drawing, or just for fun!
  - Create your own word search puzzle at <https://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/word-search>.
  - Create your own crossword puzzle <https://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/criss-cross>.

##### Division:

- Team Building events alongside management
  - Scavenger Hunt (virtual could be on your tn/teamtn site page, the TN Museum site, common things in the workspace, or, if agency is in-person, following CDC and TN COVID-19 safety measures)
  - Offer themed dress-up days – favorite sports teams, crazy socks, throwback days, etc. Share your outfits with the team!
  - Team lunch/coffee chats (virtual or COVID safe!)
  - Silly Awards for each team member
  - Recap the Wins of 2020 – Through the COVID-19 pandemic, state employees have worked to continue to provide top quality service to Tennessee citizens. Share the best wins and moments of 2020, and ask employees to reflect on their favorite team and personal moments from 2020.
- Managers to Employees
  - Personalized messages – drop a card in the mail for employees, or send a virtual card/email to individuals.

- Encourage employees to do the same with external customers.
  - One-on-Ones/Small Groups – set aside time to virtually chat with your employees in one-on-one settings, or with a small group. Get to know them a bit more, find out what they really like, what they'd be interested in, hobbies, what they want most, their favorite trend in quarantine, what they're latest binge show was, favorites, etc.
  - Ask your employees – Get suggestions right from your team on how they would best feel appreciated/seen on SERD.
- Peer to Peer
  - Peer Kudos - Create space for employees to give props to each other. For virtual teams, employees could submit anonymous (or identified!) comments, and then be compiled and distributed. In-person teams can have sheets of paper left out in a common area with pens for employees to write kudos to each other.