



Department for Children and Families – Workforce Improvement Efforts

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DCF Workforce Priorities

Inclusive Hiring Practices
Onboarding
Employee Life Cycle

2024 Employee Engagement Survey

How we use it to make decisions

Communication

AHS Priority: **Question 7**

Management and senior leadership in my department communicate important information effectively.

DCF: Weekly email from Commissioner, anonymous electronic suggestion box, 3 communications positions in the CO

ESD: Supporting supervisors around challenging conversations and overall effective communication (written into their strategic plan), weekly newsletter, electronic suggestion box

FSD: Quarterly all staff meetings and survey about effectiveness of those meetings, office visits, weekly newsletter, electronic suggestion box, division-wide conference

Professional Development

AHS Priority: Question 26:

I have a clear understanding of how to advance my career

DCF: Trainings and other resources, Individual Development Plans, train supervisors on IDPS

ESD: Individual Development Plans, are requiring supervisors to meet regularly with their employees to discuss professional development. Supervisors have a series of trainings they are required to attend through VT LEAD.

FSD: Highlighting trainings and leadership opportunities monthly in newsletter, re-recruiting for mentors, completed training needs assessment, support attendance at conferences for advanced learning

Psychological Safety

AHS Priority

Question 54: “People in my agency/department are able to bring up problems and tough issues.”

DCF: Suggestion Box, Listening Sessions, Implemented department wide stay and exit interview processes

ESD: Suggestion Box, District Listening Sessions, Stay Interviews, Exit Interviews

FSD: Psychological Safety Check-ins and concerted communication, Debriefs have changed in focus, Peer Support Networks, District Listening Sessions

Our Approach to Telework

Working with DHR Guidance/Policy

Family Services Workforce and High End System of Care Status Update

Department for Children and Families (DCF)
Family Services Division (FSD)

2025 Workforce Goals and Status

1

Lower vacancy from 11.4% to 8%

➤ Status: **Improvement made**, 10% point in time rate

2

Increase job satisfaction and intent to remain in child welfare work to 65%

➤ Status: **Metric 1 met** 61% for EES and 66% for IRICW

3

Decrease time to fill District Family Service Worker positions

➤ Status: **Improvement made, metric improved**, 74 days average.

4

Decrease annual turnover rate from 16% to 13%

➤ Status: **Improvement made** 6% (latest HR data)

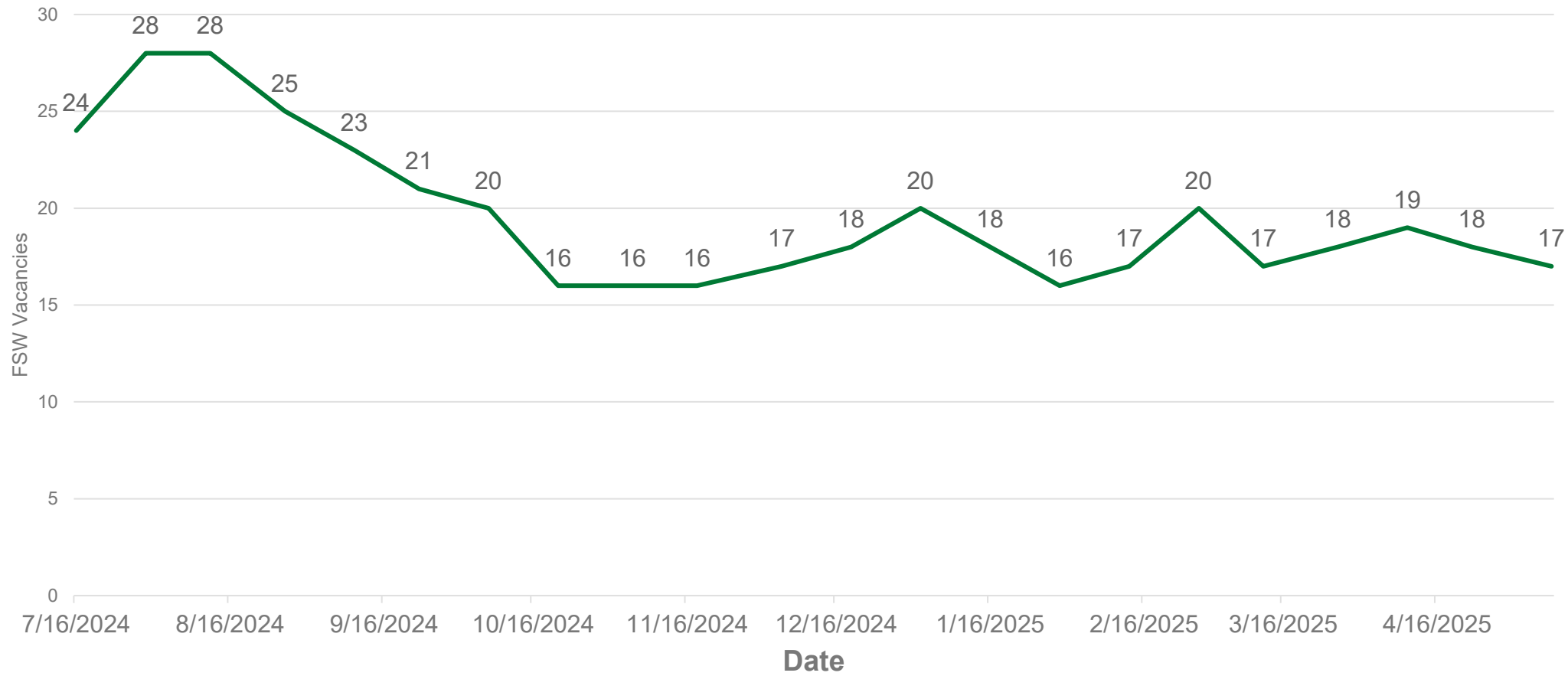
Strategies to Support Recruitment & Retention/ Morale

1. Pilot mentoring program launch
2. Quarterly all staff meeting launch
3. Review of hiring bottle necks to support faster time to fill
4. New and or improved workforce partnerships with organizations/colleges
5. Multiple new positions have been created to support optimal infrastructure
6. Wellness campaign to support work life balance
7. Celebration of National Social Work Month and Public Service Recognition

Vacancy Data

Family Services Worker (FSW) Vacancies Statewide

July 2024 to May 2025



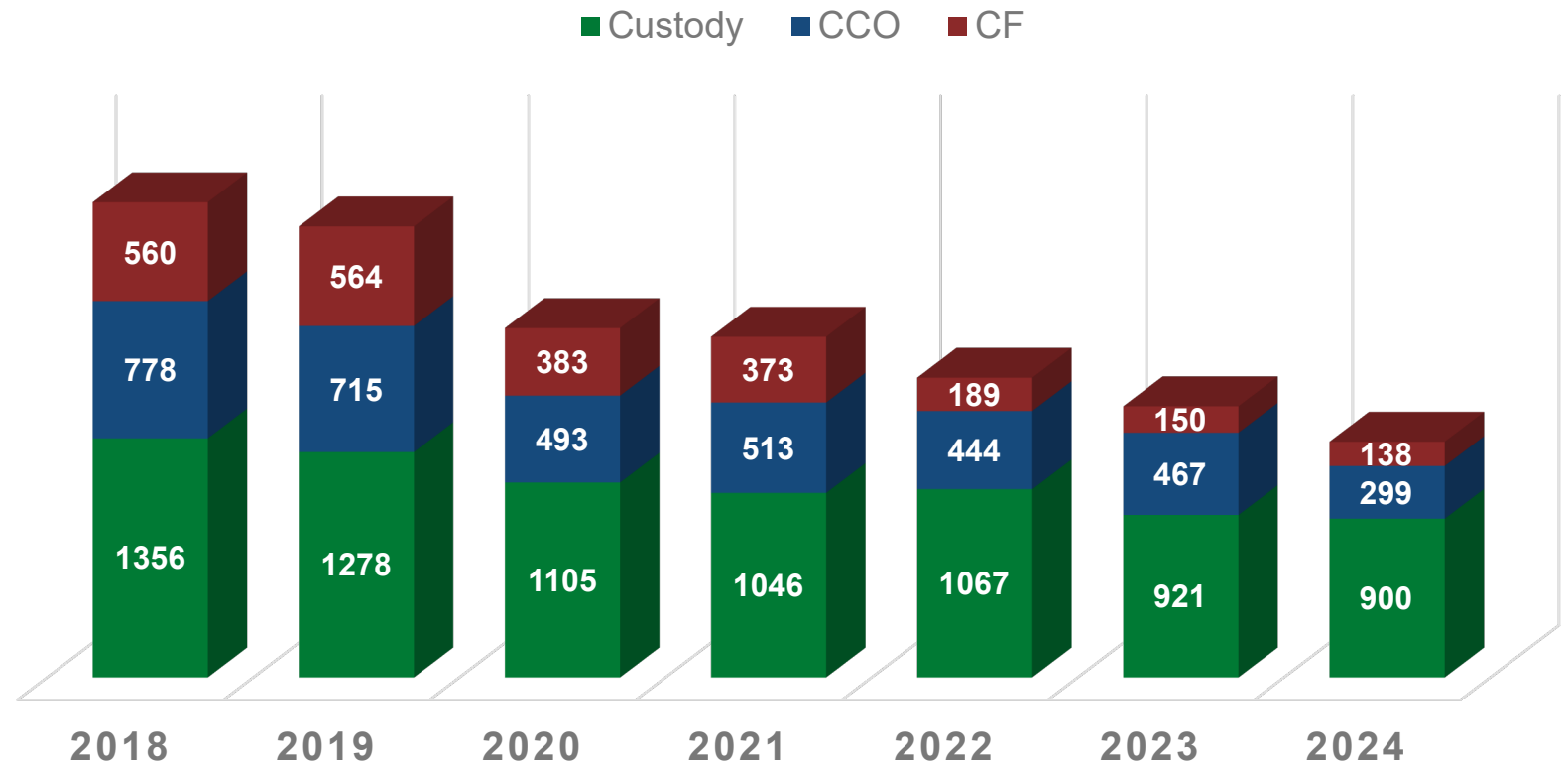
Workforce Outcomes

Focus on Job Satisfaction and Staff Safety Culture:

- In 2025, our **Vermont Safety Culture Survey** demonstrated that per staff report, FSD has sustained and improved our safety-oriented culture as an organization. This includes significant score increases in workplace connectedness, mindful organizing, and psychological safety at a rate that is 5-10 points higher in these categories than the national average.
- 62% of staff had an intent to remain in child welfare per our 2024 Staff Safety Culture Survey. **In 2025, this increased to 66%.**
- District Family Service Workers have been reclassified to a higher paygrade.
- Our last Employee Engagement Survey (conducted before the implementation of major HESOC and paygrade resource increases) showed that 61% of our staff who participated endorsed feeling general job satisfaction.

Children/ Youth Involved with FSD

DCF Custody,
Conditional
Custody (CCO),
Family Support
(CF)



Data Source: FSD Quarterly Mgmt. Reports; Data Pulled On/Around 12/1, 2018-2024

High End System of Care (HESOC) Expansion

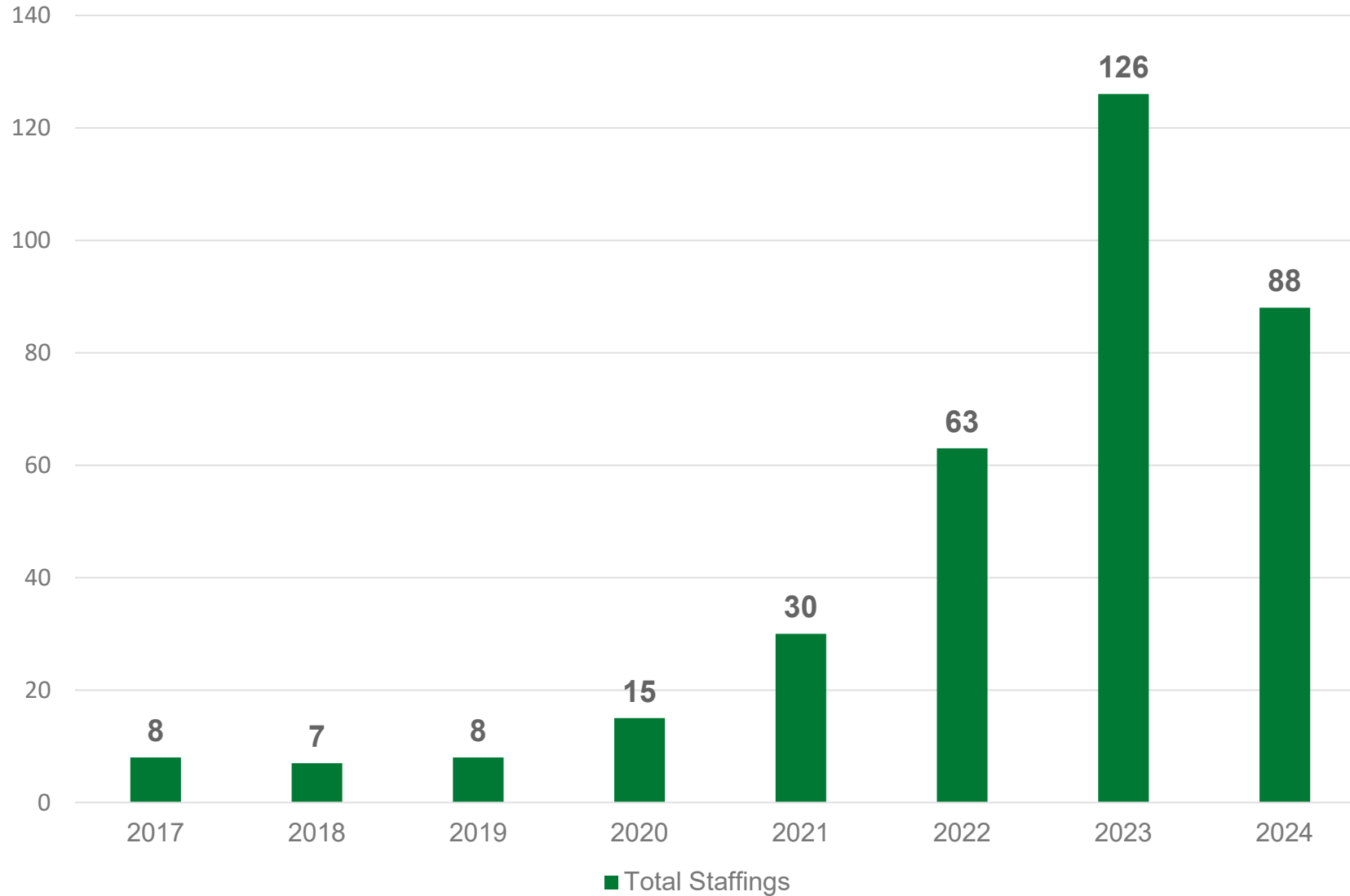
Newly Developed HESOC and Crisis Response Programming:

- Red Clover Treatment Center
- Vermont Crisis Intervention Network (VCIN) Stabilization Program
- Child and Adolescent Transitional Staffing Team (CATS)
- Staffing Supports Contracts

HESOC Programming Under Development:

- Windham County Crisis Stabilization Program
- Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility
- Green Mountain Youth Campus (GMYC)

Number of Staffings



- Hospital Settings
- Police Departments
- Hotel Rooms/Suites
- DCF District Offices
- Leased Staffing Locations
 - Yellow House
 - Rest Stop
 - Horizons Apartment
 - Chelsea Apartment

Information about HESOC Staffings

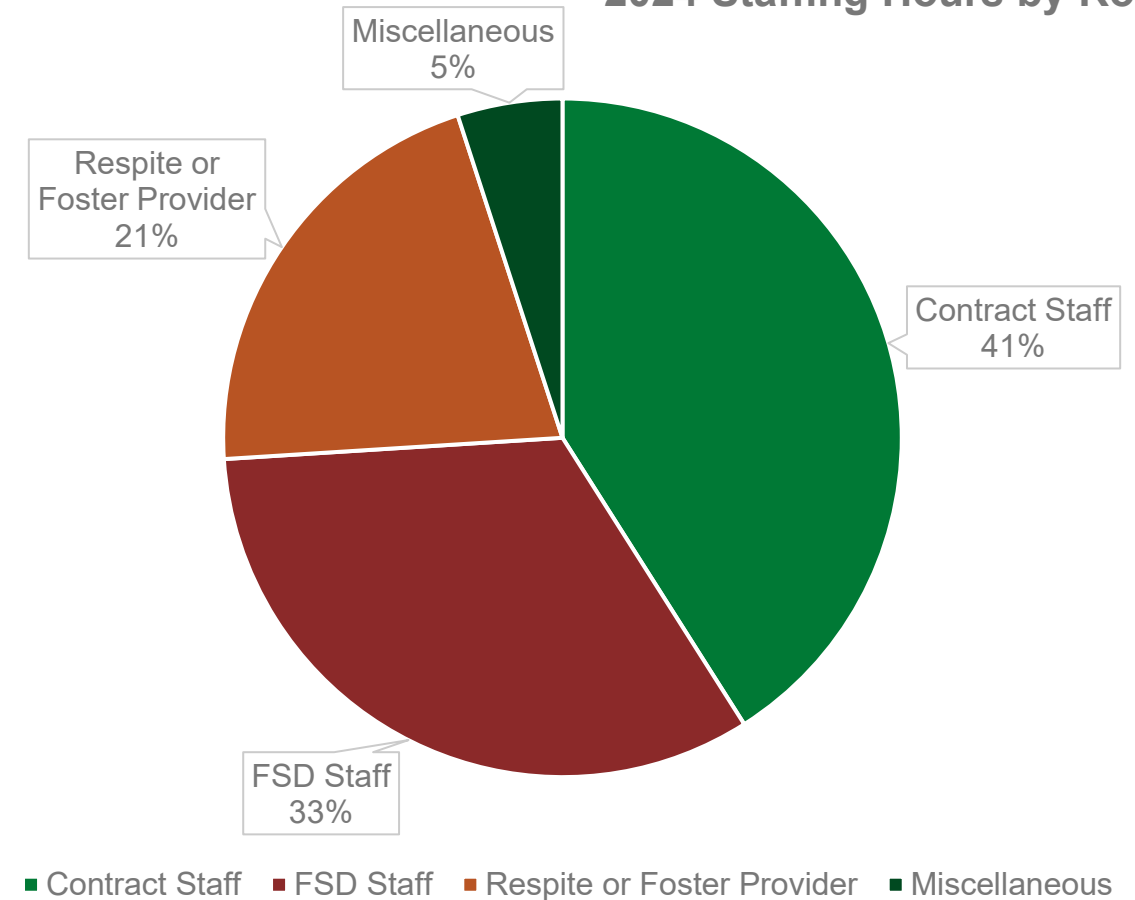
“HESOC Staffing” refers to the use of an alternative setting for a temporary placement where youth have acute, high-risk needs.

HESOC Supports

- Full-Time Centralized HESOC Coordinator Position
- Policy/Protocol Development
- Weekly HESOC Debrief
- Staffing Contract Expansion
- CATS Team
- Expansion Of Respite Foster Care List

FSD staff reflected here are almost entirely voluntary overtime hours. In the past 6 months, there have only been a handful of HESOC staffings where FSD standby staffers were called upon, and only for a few hours each time.

2024 Staffing Hours by Role



Economic Services Division Changes

Reason for Changes

Initial Shift to Remote Work (2020):

- ESD transitioned to telework at the onset of COVID-19.
- Faced with new federal programs and increased funding.
- Benefit issuance eased in some areas due to waived rules and increased benefits.

Post-Pandemic Transition:

- Hybrid model adopted (50% in-office / 50% remote).
- Gradual rollback of pandemic-era waivers and funding.

Operational Challenges Emerged:

- Increased difficulty meeting timeliness and accuracy standards (FNS requirements).
- Backlogs, extended call wait times, and delays in application processing.
- Efforts to implement new processes often failed or were rolled back.

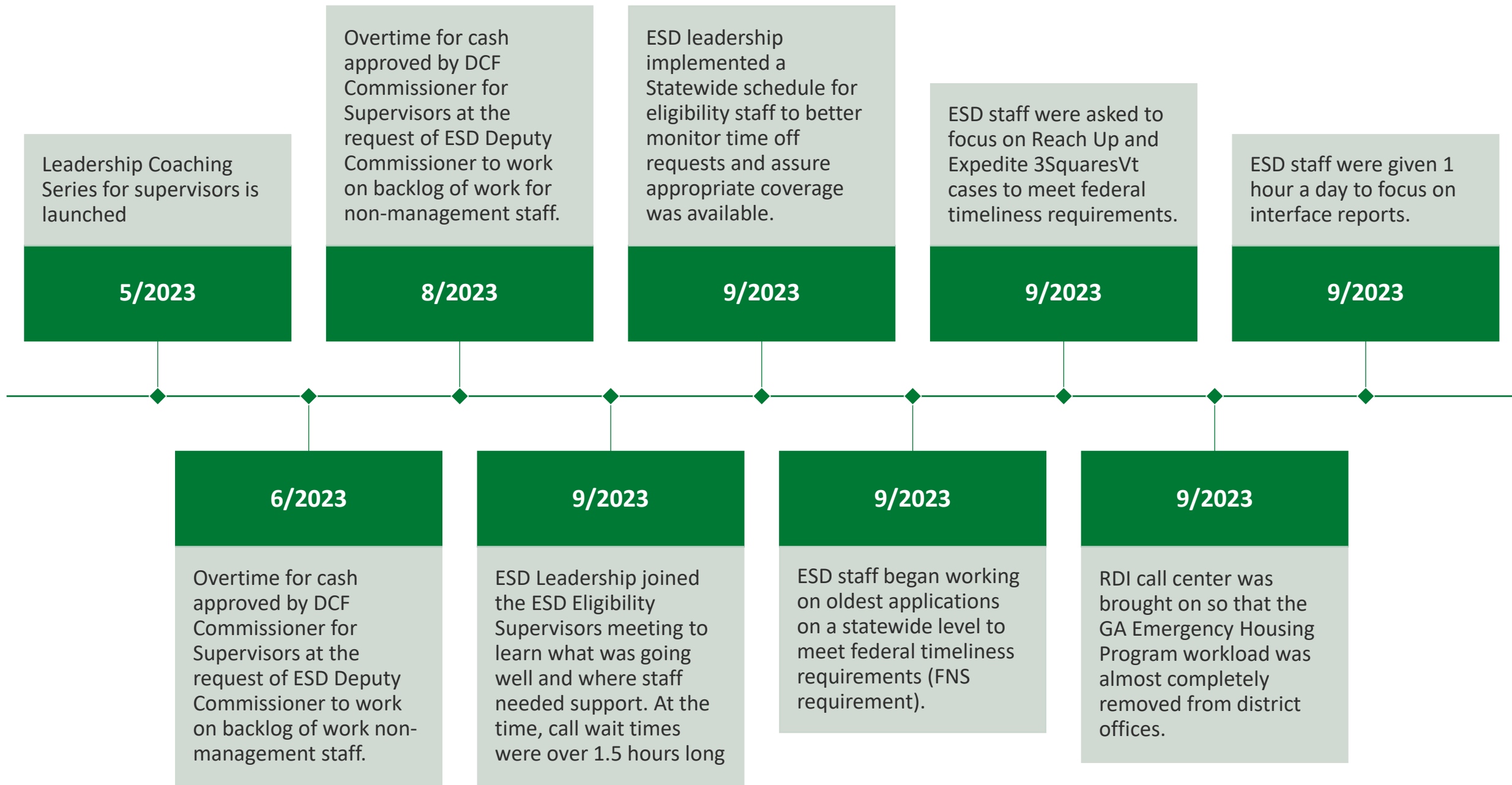
Key Data Monitored:

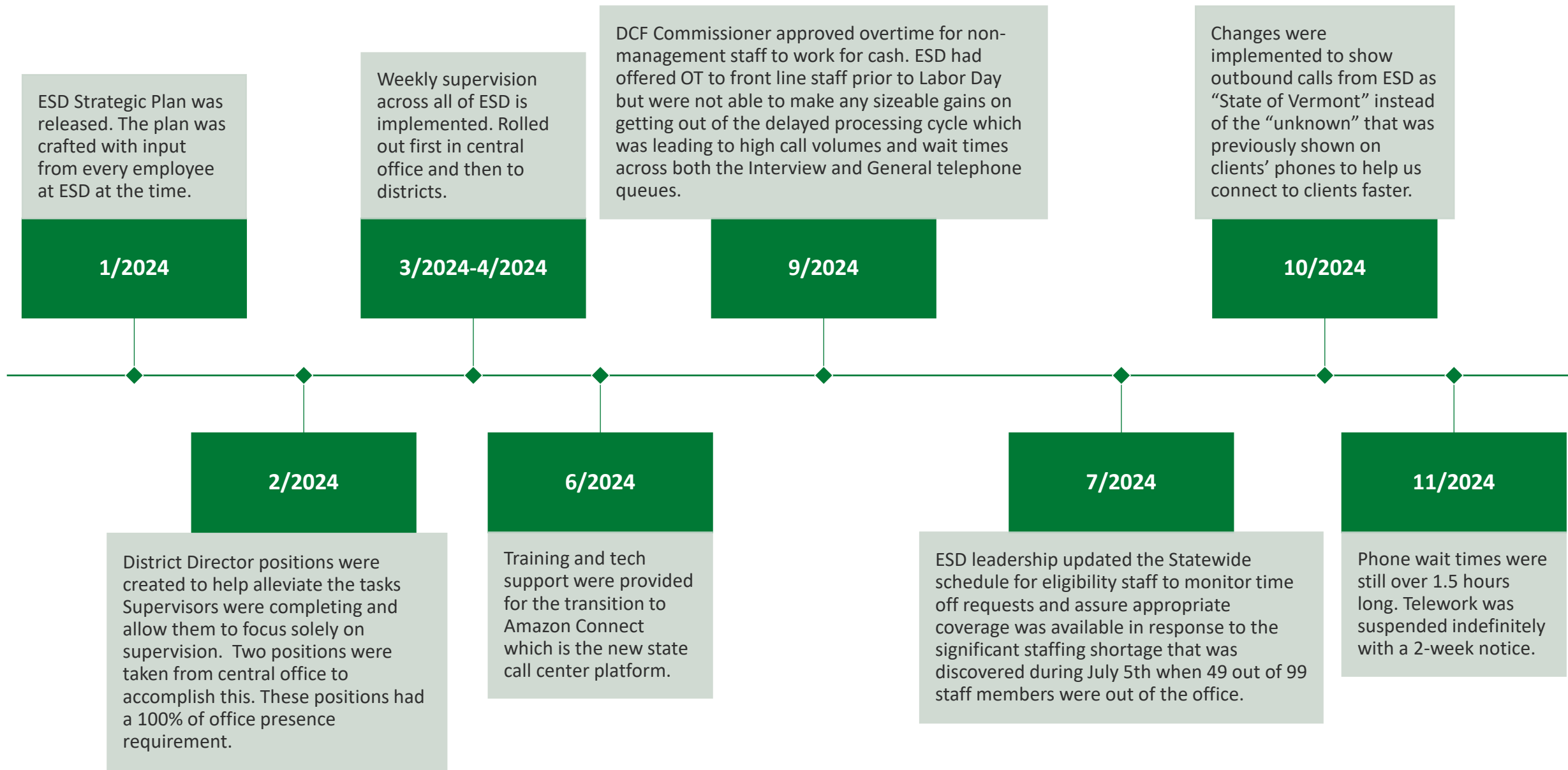
- Application processing times (FNS requirement)
- Average and maximum call wait times
- Staff retention rates
- Timeline of attempted solutions (successful and unsuccessful)

Leadership Realization:

- Overtime alone could not resolve systemic issues.
- Sustainable solutions required—not just temporary fixes.

Timeline of Changes from 2023 through now





ESD began moving positions to the ESD Call Center to bring clarity to roles thereby reducing the mental strain of staff having to pivot from processing cases, taking phone calls, and taking walk-ins. This stress was expressed by staff repeatedly to the Deputy Commissioner and other members of ESD leadership. Staff now had clarity that working at the call center meant they would be on the phones all day and staff working in a district office would have minimal phone coverage requirements. District-based staff were tasked with serving Vermonters who walked into the office and on processing applications.

11/2024 – 1/2025

Expedite Calculator was introduced to help staff identify cases that required expedited attention, which is mandatory to maintain federal compliance. Call wait times were about 54 minutes at the time.

2/2025

Call wait times were about 15 minutes.

4/2025

1/2025

Color strips were added to envelopes to distinguish reviews for clients to help clients submit the necessary paperwork timely. Call wait times were about 45 minutes at the time.

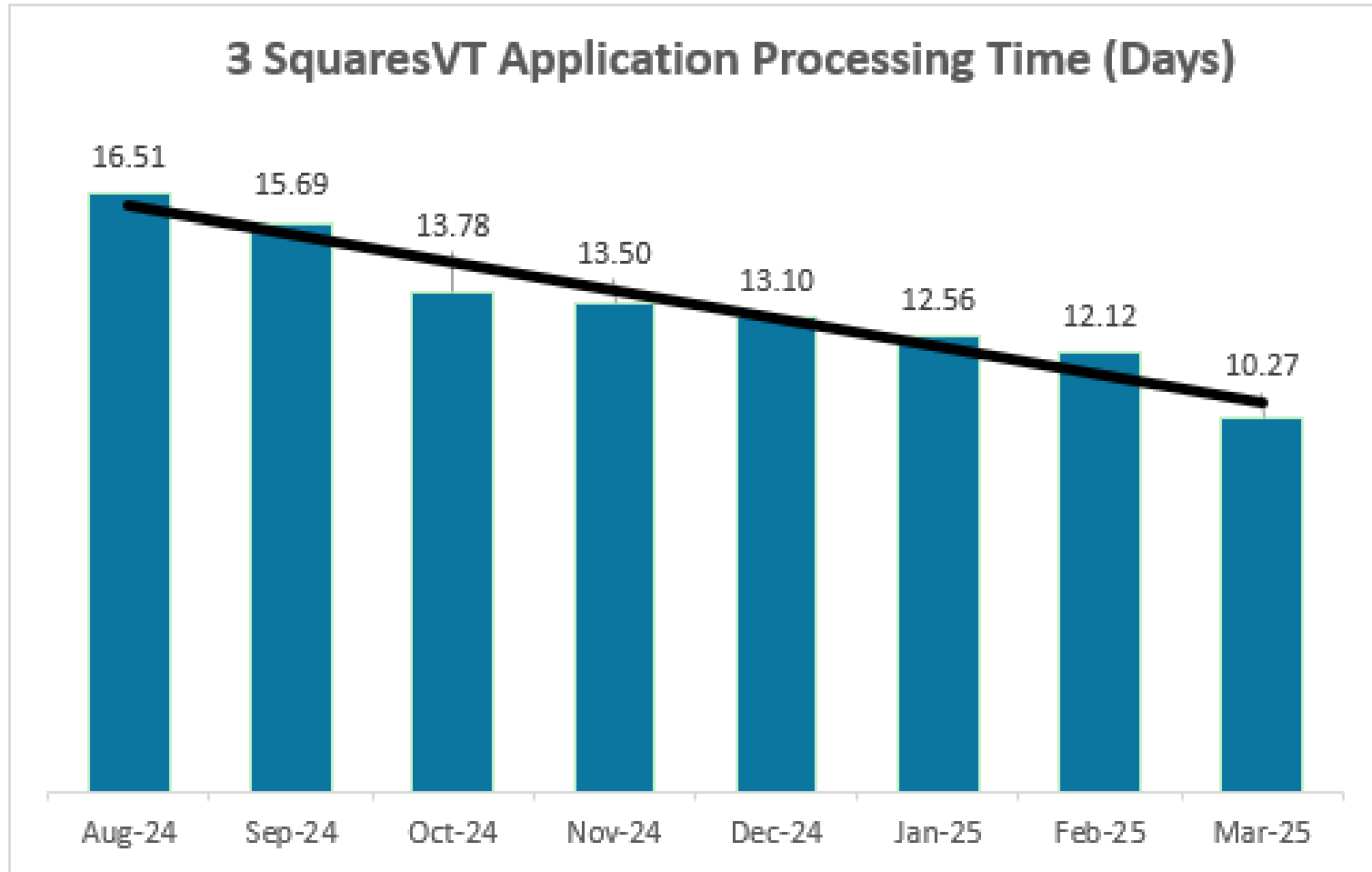
3/2025

ESD Call Center is fully staffed and began taking all calls except General Assistance Housing Applications, which are processed by a separate call center. Call wait times were about 28 minutes at the time.

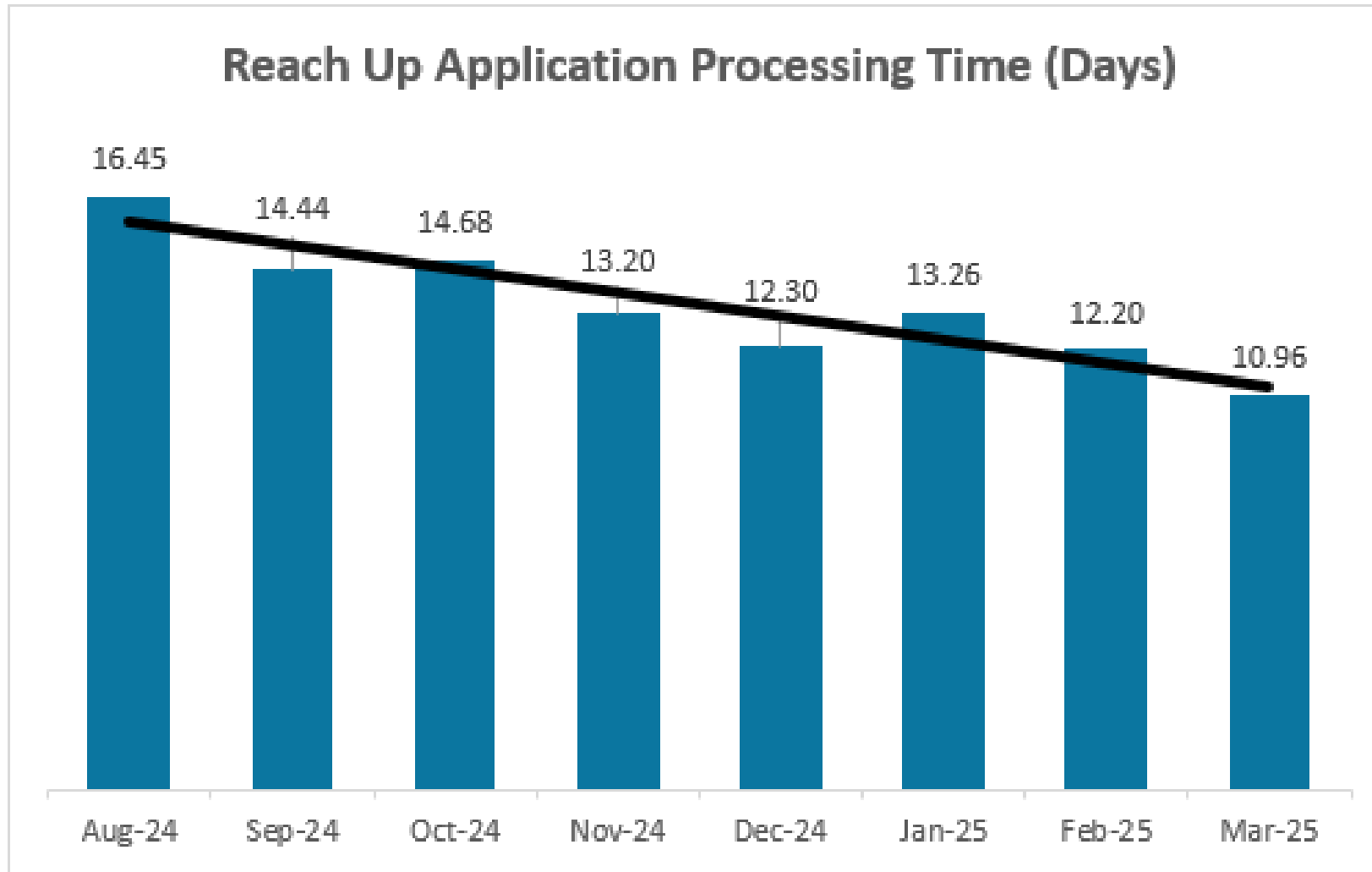
Outcomes of the Changes

Application Processing Times

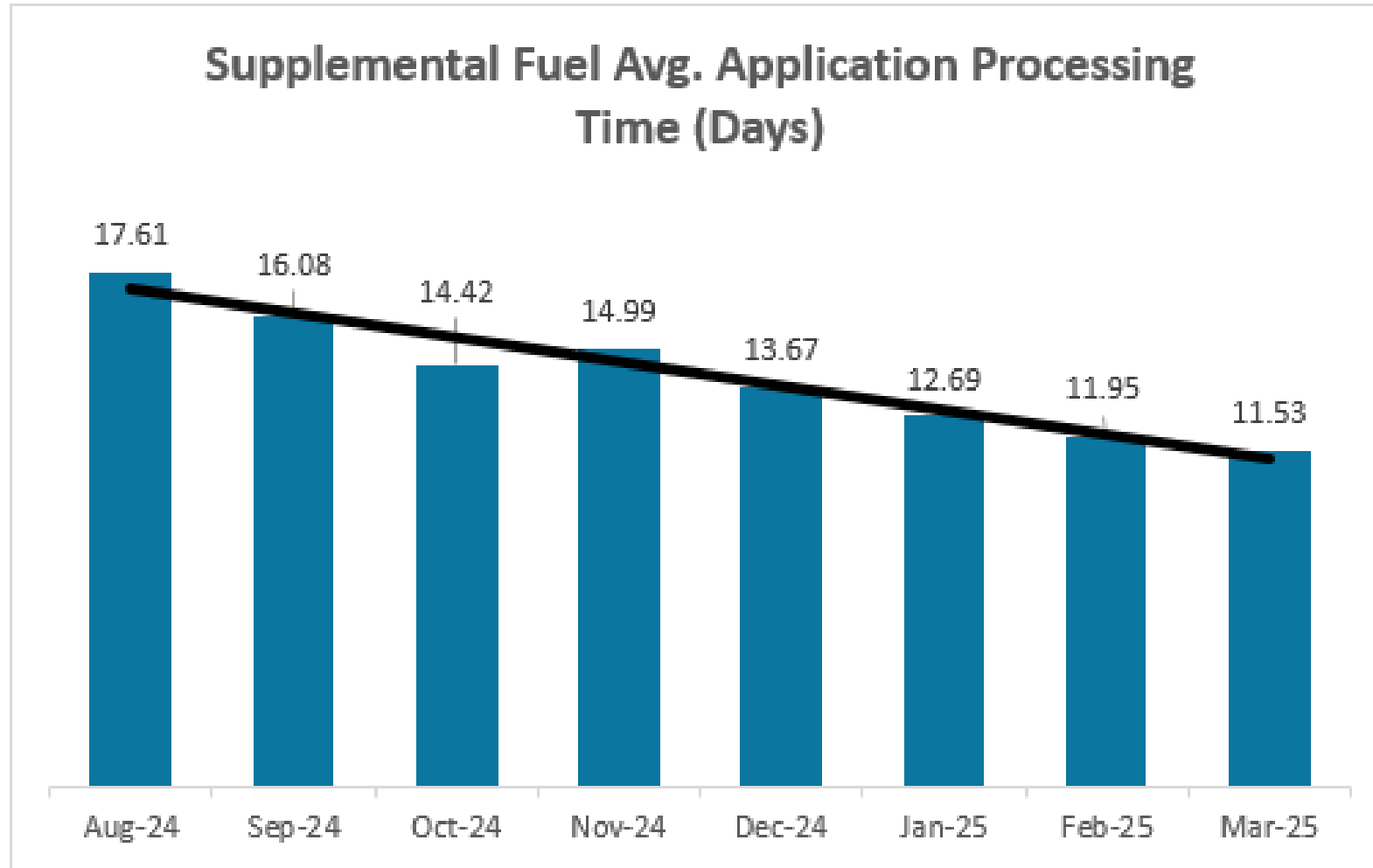
Application processing times for 3SquaresVT have improved, with a noticeable reduction in errors



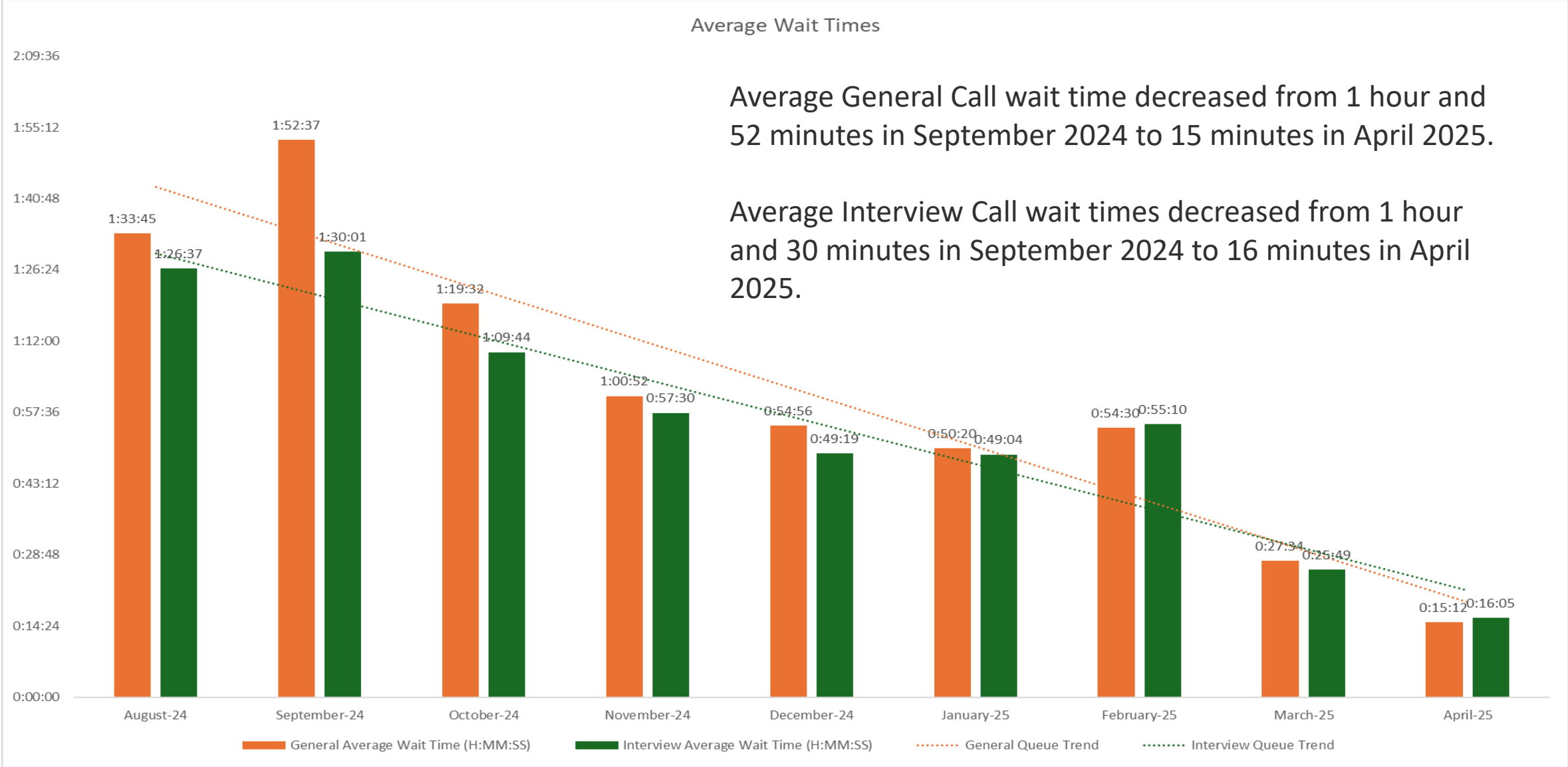
Application Processing Times for Reach Up



Application Processing Times for Fuel Assistance



Call Wait Times for Services Have Significantly Decreased



Maximum Call Wait Times Significantly Decreased



ESD Retention Data

Turnover Analysis (Oct 18, 24 – Apr 30, 25):

- **No overall increase in turnover** linked to reduced telework.
- **19 resignations total** during this period:
 - 14 district staff
 - 6 staff (43%) cited the telework shift as one factor
 - 8 staff (57%) did not cite telework as a factor

Voluntary Position Changes:

- **5 staff** voluntarily relocated to the Benefit Services Call Center remote role.
- **9 staff** applied and transferred to Benefit Services Call Center remote roles.

Turnover Trends:

- Turnover rates **unchanged** compared to the same period in the previous year

New Hire Experience:

- **Improved onboarding** and team integration
- **Notable improvement** from challenges reported during full telework

Alternative schedules

- Currently in ESD, 63 out of the 151 Benefit Program Specialists and Case Managers in the District Offices have an active and approved alternative work schedule.

Ongoing Staff Engagement Efforts

Listening & Feedback Opportunities

- **Annual In-Person Listening Sessions** with Executive Leadership
 - Staff Q&A + goal-setting activities tied to the Strategic Plan
 - Bi-annual progress updates shared with all staff
- **Suggestion Box** (Launched June 2024)
 - Over 100 staff suggestions submitted
 - Responses shared in the weekly newsletter

Transparency & Data Sharing

- **April 2024: Workforce Data Shared**
 - Employee Engagement Survey results
 - Themes from Stay & Exit Interviews
 - Resulting workforce initiatives

Initiatives Informed by Staff Feedback

- Professional and leadership development
- Improvements to hiring, onboarding, and SharePoint access
- Outcome data regularly shared in the COW
- Monthly Division Leadership time dedicated to learning from data
- Open-door policy from Deputy Commissioner (available for visits & feedback)

ESD All Staff Meetings

- Virtual meetings are held to share important updates with staff.
- Mentimeter tool introduced to enhance engagement
- Staff reminded to email agenda suggestions ahead of meetings