



# COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

*Karen Larsen, LMFT*  
Director

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Leah DiMarco  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Western Region IPMA-HR  
Sent via email to: [ldimarco@jeffco.us](mailto:ldimarco@jeffco.us)

**SUBJECT: Agency Awards for Excellence Nomination – Medium Agency**

Dear Leah,

I am pleased to offer this nomination to the County of Yolo for consideration for the Western Region IPMA-HR Agency Awards for Excellence for a medium agency. This nomination recognizes the excellent work by the County in the areas of employee engagement and talent development.

The work on employee engagement and talent development began in 2013. The County was reviewing results of a 2013 employee engagement survey that indicated that employee engagement was low, that staff desired opportunities for staff development and growth, and that those development opportunities were necessary to develop staff to take on leadership positions within the County, as 60% of our leaders were at risk for retirement.

As one way to begin working towards solutions and recommendations, the County formed an employee work group called “Employee Council” in December 2013. The Employee Council includes representatives from every County department, and meets regularly to meet the objective of the Council which are that employees are empowered and valued, and that employees proactively work to find solutions for customers. In order to meet the goal of employee empowerment, the Employee Council adopted the following strategies:

- Develop avenues to engage employees (individually and in group) in the creation of goals and values
- Institute employee satisfaction as a goal in every county department
- Create pathways for employees to become empowered to serve customers with minimum red tape

One of the first topics addressed by the Employee Council was the themes that resulted from the engagement survey. The Employee Council agreed that employee development and engagement was a top priority, and recommended a Talent Development task force be established to tackle these topics, with regular reports back to the Employee Council on progress and initiatives. As such, the “Talent Development Team” was formed. The Talent Development Team was facilitated by a department

director and county human resources staff, and was comprised of various department representatives from all levels within the organization.

In fall 2014, the Talent Development Team developed and conducted a Countywide survey to gauge employee interest in various development areas. The survey identified three main priorities from our employees' perspectives: improve the performance evaluation process & forms, enhance Supervisory Training offerings, and develop a Mentoring Program. Over the next year, the Talent Development Team delivered the following:

#### **Performance Evaluation process & forms**

The County utilized the feedback from employees regarding the need to improve our performance evaluation form and process to initiate discussions regarding moving towards a more competency based performance management system. Focus groups were held with hundreds of County employees to provide feedback and recommendations regarding the required competencies for all County employees. These six core competencies will serve as the foundation for the updated performance evaluation system.

#### **Supervisory Training offerings**

In 2015, several cohorts of supervisors participated in the ICMA Supervisory Academy, training nearly 100 supervisors on the foundational skills necessary to be a successful supervisor. These cohorts were facilitated by a County employee, and the cohorts were purposefully a mix of supervisors Countywide, to encourage authentic discussions.

#### **Mentoring Program**

The Talent Development Team also provided a framework for departments that were looking to develop a mentoring program. They provided a presentation of the mentoring program model to department leadership, inclusive of a guide on how to build a mentoring program at the department level. You can see more about the mentoring program [here](#).

After accomplishing these initial objectives, the Talent Development Team regrouped, and began looking beyond talent development to other areas of employee engagement. They have since rebranded as the YES (Yolo Encourages Success) Team, and are doing amazing work in the areas of engagement, talent development, mentoring, onboarding, recognition, etc. Our employees, supervisors, and leaders now have a wealth of resources at their fingertips via the new YES Team [website](#). Additionally, the YES Team continues to enhance engagement efforts, and recently administered an IPMA-HR Engagement Survey that will drive the efforts of the YES Team moving forward.

I believe that these efforts are so important to our organization and should be recognized, especially that the County is committed to continued progress on engagement. As Bob Lavigna said in his recent article *Political Transitions – A Unique Opportunity to Focus on Employee Engagement*, “The challenge isn’t the logistics of conducting the [engagement] survey. The real key is committing to acting on the results, and then following through.”

In addition to the fact that employee engagement is a human resources best practice, I believe that Yolo County should be recognized because this was/is an employee led endeavor! Employees asked for development. Employee groups helped determine development priorities. Employees are excited to

participate in the YES Team. Employees are owning this endeavor, which is what makes it continue to be successful. What a better way to increase engagement than to enlist and empower employees in such a meaningful way!

But the employees couldn't have done it without the support of Yolo County leaders. I applaud the County of Yolo executive and leadership staff, as well as the County of Yolo Human Resources department for wholeheartedly supporting the YES Team, and providing them with the necessary resources and expertise to facilitate this important employee engagement effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my nomination for this award, and recognize all of the hard work of the YES Team and County Human Resources.

Sincerely,  
Brody Lorda

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#### Nomination Details

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**Name of Agency:**

County of Yolo

**Number of Full Time and Part Time Employees:**

Full Time: 1,400 (approximately)

Part Time: 25 (approximately)

*Extra help employees are not included in the above numbers*

**Agency Head & Title:**

Patrick Blacklock, County Administrative Officer

Gina Rowland, Director of Human Resources

**Agency Address:**

625 Court Street, Room 101, Woodland, CA 95695

**Individual Submitting Nomination:**

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