

Virginia Executive Institute

VEI Spring 2026 - Leadership Challenge Topics

1. Effectuating Statewide Employee Engagement Surveys

Engaged employees are more focused, motivated, and committed to delivering on the initiatives of the Administration for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Employee surveys provide critical insight into topics impacting the engagement of the workforce. Leaders can gain awareness into what is working well and where improvements are needed. The Commonwealth is well positioned to reintroduce a statewide employee survey after over twenty-five years. This project provides information learned from the statewide surveys conducted by comparable state governments, which provide lessons for the unique parameters of public sector employment. The presentation will address key considerations to make a statewide survey a routine tool to help leaders make data-backed decisions and support continuous improvement.

Brahma Alaparthy, VITA; Chris Grab, DHRM; Matthew Hudson, CSOSA; Amy Pierce, SCC;

2. Strengthening Change Management to Improve Workforce Stability

The Commonwealth of Virginia is undergoing significant agency-wide transformation — from new technologies and updated processes to shifting organizational priorities. While change is necessary for modernization, many supervisors, managers, and directors are struggling to guide their teams through it effectively. This gap in Change Management capability has created uncertainty, reduced morale, and contributed to challenges in both employee retention and recruitment. Our project explores how strengthening Change Management practices can help leaders better support their teams, reduce resistance, and create a more stable, engaged, and resilient workforce across the Commonwealth.

Paul Battle, VA Lottery; Nikia Jones, DJJ; Crystall Pinkston, VA Tax; Jamey Stone, SCC; Heather Wheeler, VDACS

3. Strengthening the Commonwealth's Workforce Pipeline Through Career Access and Advocacy

This project seeks to increase the visibility and advocacy of state government career opportunities that do not require a college degree through the establishment of a Commonwealth Career Access Coordinator. This dedicated role would collaborate with agency recruiters, vocational and technical schools, work-study program administrators, and recent high school graduates to promote Commonwealth employment and educate potential applicants on the advantages of public service careers. By proactively engaging talent pipelines and aligning individuals with meaningful career pathways, the Coordinator would help address current workforce needs and reduce the recruitment burden on individual state agencies.

Andrew Blake, VA Tax; John Hall, DVS; Alka Lohmann, DFS, Megan Richard, APA; Mary Tacconi, VCU Health

4. Preserving Medicaid Coverage for Commonwealth Caregivers

Virginia must implement new federal Medicaid eligibility and renewal requirements that substantially increase documentation and verification demands. Although caregivers may qualify for exemptions, many risk losing coverage due to limited awareness of these protections, unclear processes for confirming caregiver status, and administrative delays. These preventable losses disrupt care for vulnerable recipients, increase program churn, and drive up state administrative and re-enrollment costs. With fixed federal timelines and caregivers already stretched thin by work and care responsibilities, executive leadership has a brief window to build proactive safeguards that preserve eligible caregivers' coverage and prevent avoidable system strain.

Mary Harper, DSS; Elizabeth Horton, VCU Health; Cletisha Lovelace, DSS; Richard Rhodemyre, Treasury, Kiersten Ware, DARS

