



Exploring the Implementation Gap: Staff Participation, Value, Impact, and Support

Using data from the Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI)

Quality services for people with disabilities rely on a workforce that is valued, supported, and empowered to influence their organizations. The *Staff Participation, Value, Impact, and Support* domain of the Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI) examines how well organizations create environments where all employees have a voice, are respected, and have access to the tools and guidance needed to succeed. The domain includes seven principles that collectively capture the ways organizations invest in and involve their staff: *Staff Participation in Decision Making*, *Comprehensive Training and Support*, *Flexibility for Staff*, *Staff Development*, *Staff Appreciation*, *Staff Participation in Financial Decision-Making*, and *Staff Knowledge Development*. Together, these measures reflect both organizational culture and practice how values of inclusion, learning, and respect for staff are translated into everyday operations.

This research brief draws from data collected through the OPPI, which includes responses from 1,171 professionals across disability service organizations nationwide. Respondents represent five organizational levels: Executives (10%), Directors (19%), Managers (30%), Frontline Staff (35%), and Other professionals (6%), providing a comprehensive look at how priorities and practices related to staff support differ across roles.

October 14, 2025

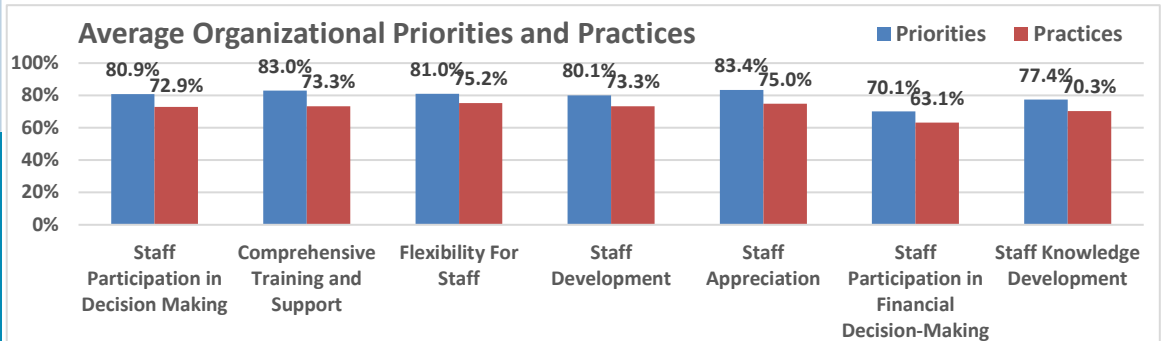
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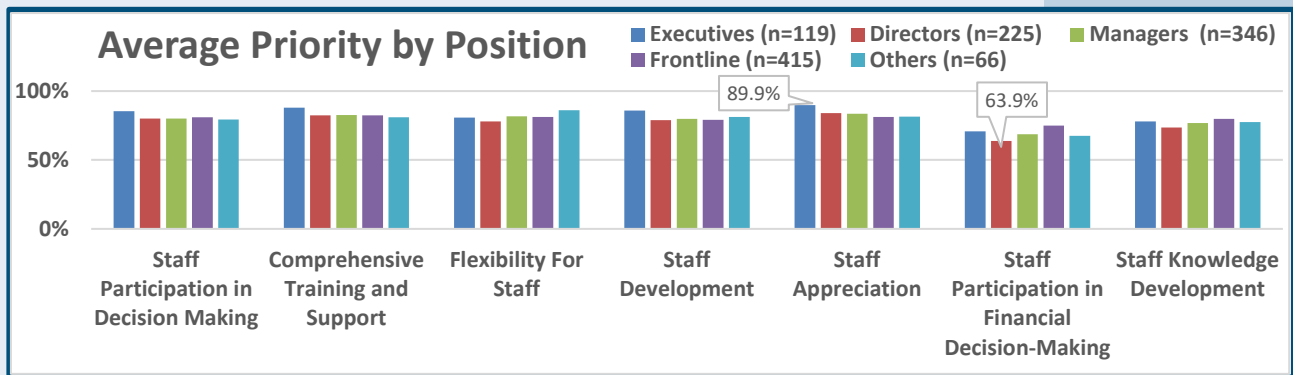
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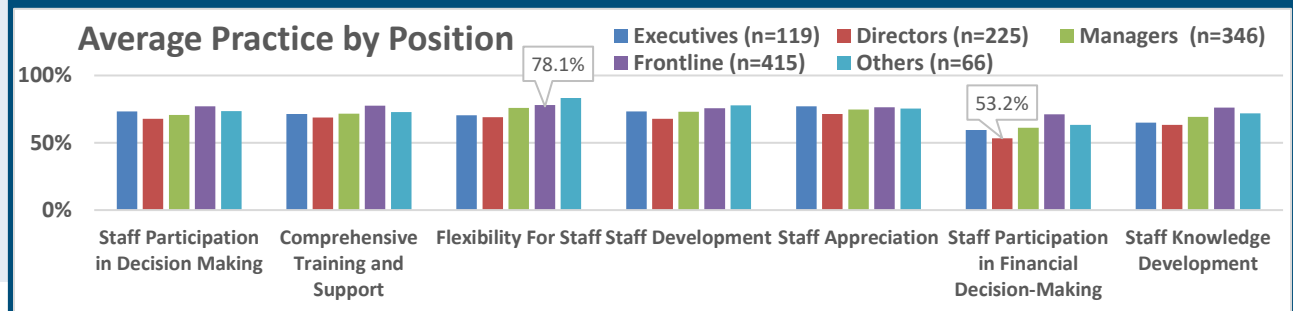
Contact Cory Gilden at cgilden@natleadership.org with questions related to our research.



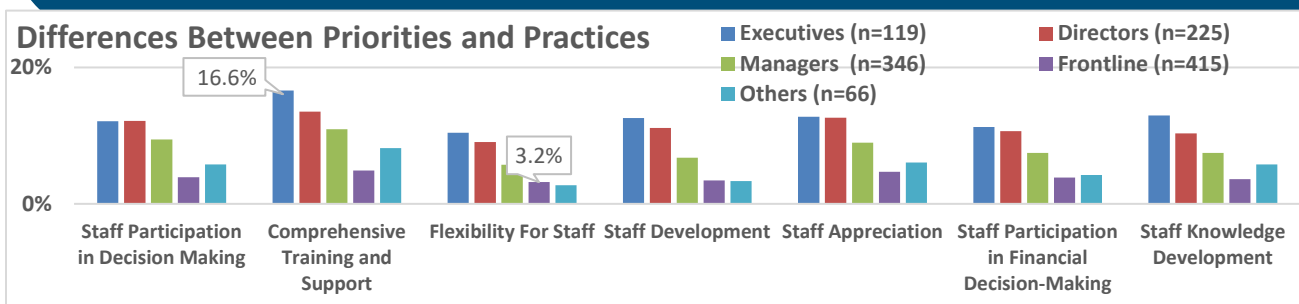
- **Strong Commitment to Staff:** Support Priorities were high across indicators, especially for **Staff Appreciation (83.4%)**, **Comprehensive Training and Support (83.0%)**, and **Flexibility for Staff (81.0%)**, showing widespread recognition of the importance of valuing and supporting employees.
- **Implementation Gaps Across Practices:** Practices lag behind priorities by 7–10 percentage points overall. **Flexibility for Staff (75.2%)** and **Staff Development (73.3%)** were the strongest practices, suggesting active investment in professional growth, though still below desired commitments.
- **Limited Inclusion in Financial Decisions:** The lowest ratings were for **Staff Participation in Financial Decision-Making (63.1%)**, indicating few opportunities for employees to engage in budget or resource-related discussions.
- **Opportunities to Strengthen Recognition and Learning:** Gaps in **Staff Knowledge Development** and **Staff Appreciation** point to areas where greater recognition and access to learning could help strengthen staff engagement.



The chart above shows strong prioritization of staff-related values across all organizational roles. **Staff Appreciation** received the highest overall priority (89.9% from Executives), highlighting a shared recognition of the importance of acknowledging and valuing staff contributions. In contrast, **Staff Participation in Financial Decision-Making** received the lowest average rating (63.9% from Directors), indicating that fiscal involvement remains limited for most employees. While ratings for **Comprehensive Training and Support**, **Flexibility for Staff**, and **Staff Development** are consistently high across roles, the overall pattern suggests broad alignment in valuing staff engagement and growth, with modest variation by position.



The chart above shows moderate variation across roles in the implementation of staff-related practices. **Flexibility for Staff** was the highest-rated practice overall (78.1% among Frontline Staff), reflecting strong organizational attention to accommodating employee needs and work-life balance. In contrast, **Staff Participation in Financial Decision-Making** received the lowest ratings (53.2% among Directors), indicating limited opportunities for staff involvement in budgetary or financial processes. Practices such as **Staff Development**, **Comprehensive Training and Support**, and **Staff Appreciation** show consistent ratings across roles, suggesting that day-to-day supervisory and recognition efforts are broadly integrated throughout organizations. Slightly lower ratings from Executives and Directors across most indicators may reflect differing perceptions of implementation between leadership and frontline staff.



The chart above shows that **Executives** and **Directors** reported the largest gaps between organizational priorities and practices, particularly in **Comprehensive Training and Support** (16.6% among Executives), suggesting that while leadership strongly values staff training, consistent implementation remains a challenge. In contrast, **Frontline Staff** reported the smallest differences across most indicators, with the lowest gap in **Flexibility for Staff** (3.2%), indicating stronger alignment between stated values and daily experience at the service delivery level.

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