# Center for Public Sector AI

## Category 2 Open Call Briefs: Workforce Support and Effectiveness

**April 2024**

# CPSAI

# CPSAI & the 2024 Open Call Process

CPSAI's 2024 open call strategy, developed with Health & Human Services (HHS) leaders nationwide, seeks to leverage emerging technologies to tackle key service delivery challenges within state HHS agencies. This strategy aims to accelerate learning and deployment by maximizing the number of thoughtful pilots and partnerships in state HHS agencies this year.

Since January 2024, CPSAI has collaborated with HHS agency leaders to identify and prioritize the most pressing issues their systems face. This effort has resulted in the creation of 'Prompts' - broad categories outlining areas where technological innovation can enhance HHS systems and the communities they serve:

| Enhancing Client Experience and Engagement | Workforce Support and Effectiveness | Systemic Efficiency and Effectiveness | Reducing Administrative and Compliance Burden |

These prompts, developed through extensive stakeholder discussions, aim to spotlight nationwide HHS challenges deemed urgent and applicable to technology-based solutions. They are divided into two types:

**Open Call Prompts**: Priority issues selected through the consensus of HHS leaders. Only technologies addressing these prompts will be considered in CPSAI's 2024 Open Call.

**General Prompts:** Issues not prioritized for the 2024 Call but will be cataloged for future exploration by HHS agencies.

The prompts intentionally offer a broad overview rather than specific technological requests. This approach encourages innovative applications of technology to meet HHS challenges without prescribing detailed solutions. CPSAI's goal is to foster creativity and support a variety of technology solutions tailored to the diverse needs of state HHS agencies.

For more information on the Open Call Process, including updates and timelines, visit cpsai.org.

# Category 2
# Workforce Support and Effectiveness

This category seeks innovative technologies to mitigate workforce shortages in HHS by enhancing employee experiences.

Historically, government jobs offered stability, fair pay, and good benefits but have become less appealing recently due to benefits cuts, lagging wages, and challenging work conditions. Particularly in HHS, positions are often traumatic, driving employees to better-paying, less stressful private sector jobs, leading to chronic understaffing and no vision for near-future improvement.

This category asks how HHS systems might leverage technology to improve the experience of working within HHS systems by using emerging technologies to empower and engage employees.

Employees feel empowered and engaged when they can influence their tasks work environment and feel their contributions are valued. This sense of ownership and personal investment in their work fosters hope, equipping them with the tools, support, and motivation to achieve and set new goals.

## Hope is both an individual and collective phenomenon.

To change workplace culture, we need to alter the systems and norms that affect it. This category seeks technologies that enhance individual work experiences and the broader workplace culture, asking how emerging technologies can empower HHS workforces to collectively achieve their goals. Expected outcomes include:

| Lower Employee Burnout | Reduced Post-Traumatic Stress | Increased Retention | Decreased Turnover Rates |
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Boosting employee hope involves equipping them with essential tools and support for their roles, offering clear pathways to success, and setting goals that promote progress and achievement. Employees also gain hope from seeing their work's positive impact on their communities. How can technology give HHS employees transparent insights into their work's social impact by providing access to metrics showing their individual contributions to the community and linking their efforts to the broader HHS mission?

This category focuses on a few key problem areas:

- Improving employee engagement with day-to-day workflows
- Providing HHS systems with the means to detect and proactively support employee burnout and overburdened employees
- Providing HHS agencies' human resources departments with the means to streamline hiring processes and improve regular employee performance reviews
- Providing HHS supervisors with improved training and support

These are the vital sites where the implementation of emerging technologies can meaningfully foster employee hope and empowerment.

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## Open Call Prompt 2.1 | Improved Workforce Experience
*'Open Call Prompts' will be carried forward through the 'Open Call Process.'*

**Prompt Title:**
Providing tools to allow for greater, more intentional, and effective **employee engagement,** addressing the structural workforce shortage through **improved workforce experience**, work/life balance, mental health, and employee satisfaction.

**Detail:**
This prompt is deliberately open-ended — it considers the workforce experience holistically, inviting innovations that can positively impact any or all aspects of the employee experience in HHS systems. To that end, a few key questions to consider are:

• How can emerging technologies provide employees with the tools for more intense, intentional, and effective daily workflow engagement?
• How can emerging technologies help employees improve their work-life balance, mental health, and overall workplace satisfaction?
• How can emerging technologies help employees develop ownership over their work, including helping them set goals, track their own progress, and understand their impact?
• How can emerging technologies help employees work cohesively and supportively in teams?
• How can emerging technologies support employees facing burnout or feeling overburdened?

From one end, emerging technology addressed to this prompt might try to equip HHS employees with tools that allow them to streamline onerous, day-to-day administrative tasks. From another, it might offer a tool that assists employees with goal setting and goal measurement, for example, by providing employees with a 'dashboard' that updates regularly with data and metrics relevant to the employee's individual work and impact as well as the employee's broader institutional impact within their HHS agency.

# Open Call Prompt 2.1 | Improved Workforce Experience continued
*'Open Call Prompts' will be carried forward through the 'Open Call Process.'*

This prompt primarily asks how employees might be assisted in identifying pathways to success in their work function and, moreover, how they might be assisted in taking ownership of their own impact and success. This prompt focuses on employee engagement, asking how technology might improve and streamline day-to-day work processes to increase employees' sense of mission, impact, and purpose.

From another end, emerging technologies addressed to this prompt might focus on employee empowerment, providing HHS systems with tools crucial to supporting employees struggling under the strain of a job in health and human services.

Many jobs within HHS systems repeatedly put employees face-to-face with traumatic situations that leave employees feeling depressed, disheartened, and as if their work has little to no impact on their broader community. Such repeated negative experiences with HHS work create workplaces dominated by a sense of hopelessness. In turn, employees within HHS systems often experience relatively high rates of mental illness and workplace dissatisfaction. They also struggle to separate their work and their personal life, as the trauma they experience at work is difficult to leave at the office.

Viewed from this angle, technologies addressed to this prompt could assist HHS systems by enabling them to (A) identify workers who are burnt out or losing hope and (B) enable HHS supervisors and leaders to provide struggling employees with meaningful support and the resources necessary to recover from trauma.

Such technologies could allow HHS systems to 'survey' their workforce to improve sensitivity to individual employees' needs and experiences. They could also allow HHS systems to address individual employee's concerns early and, in turn, to administer proactive interventions — such as employee assistance plans, offering counseling sessions, or providing in-patient support options. This prompt focuses on empowering employees who are losing hope by providing both HHS systems and HHS employees with support systems that can proactively support employees who are struggling.