

Debrief and Action Planning Guide

2026 Employee Engagement Survey

Leaders and supervisors are expected to reflect on survey results, engage openly with their teams, and work with supervisors and employees to take steps to improve work experience. This guide provides support for discussing survey results with your team and developing practical, measurable actions in response.

Important Considerations

The purpose of the post survey debrief is to listen to team members, learn about factors that affect their workplace experience and engagement, and work together on actions that advance the team.

Your unit's survey results are intended to spark meaningful conversations. The current priority is conducting team level debrief meetings, but conversations about engagement should continue beyond a single meeting. Results can and should be referenced in ongoing dialogue to reinforce a culture of transparency, learning, and continuous improvement.

Principles

- Transparency: Share all results openly.
- Future Focus: Use results to shape improvements, not revisit past decisions or experiences.
- Shared Responsibility: Everyone plays a role in building a positive workplace culture.
- Active Listening: Focus on listening more than speaking.

Conversational Tone

- Welcoming and safe.
- Respectful and inclusive.
- Genuine interest and curiosity.
- Caring, empathetic, and authentically engaged.

Post-Survey Objectives

- Understand the context behind the results.
- Learn about the experiences that shape the feedback.
- Identify opportunities for improvement and preserve strengths.
- Set priorities for action.
- Demonstrate long-term commitment to a positive workplace culture.

Step 1: Access and Review Survey Results

Supervisors or the identified report recipient, as designated by the unit, with **at least five survey responses** will have access to their reports in [Gallup Access](#). High-level university results will also be shared broadly and posted online.

Your report provides a snapshot of the team's engagement at a specific point in time. Each of the 12 engagement items reflects essential needs employees have within the workplace that influence performance and wellbeing. As you review the results, remember that your initial thoughts are a hypothesis; deeper understanding will come from talking with the team.

Step 2: Debrief Conversation

Discussing your engagement survey results helps you better understand the data, foster open dialogue, and ensure team members feel heard.

The debrief conversation is an opportunity to:

- Engage as a group and hear different perspectives.
- Validate feedback.
- Build shared understanding.
- Identify strengths and opportunities.
- Create shared direction for improvement.

The debrief conversation is not:

- A time to defend or justify decisions.
- A debate about the validity of someone's experience.
- A presentation of leadership's interpretation of results.

Preparing for the debrief conversation

Meeting logistics

- Select a meeting time that supports maximum participation. Decide whether one session is sufficient or if you should hold multiple meetings.
- Support different work modes:
 - Provide a virtual option for remote staff.
 - Clarify expectations for on-site and hybrid employees.
- Decide whether an external facilitator would be helpful
- Identify a note-taker so the lead can stay fully present.

Invite the Team to the Debrief Conversation

- **Distribute results and allow time for reflection.**

Share results with your team within 2 to 3 days of receiving them. Give team members time to read the results before the meeting so they can come prepared with thoughts and questions but not so much time that side conversations take on a life of their own before the debrief.

- **State the purpose of the debrief conversation.**

- Example:

“I’m inviting everyone to this debrief so we can look at our results together, understand what they mean, and talk about what’s helping us thrive and where we might want to improve. This isn’t about evaluating individual results; it’s about learning as a team and deciding where we want to focus our energy moving forward”.

- **Include reflection questions and the resource on how to read survey results.**

- Share resource handout on How to Read Results

- Suggested reflection questions:

- What stood out or surprised you?
- What areas of engagement are strong for our team? What are we doing that contributes to those strengths?
- What areas of engagement present opportunities? What might be missing or not happening consistently?

- **Be Intentional and transparent**

- In your invitation, express appreciation for those who participated in the survey and for the conversations that will take place.
- During the meeting, share the full set of data. Using the heatmap can help the team quickly see patterns and engage more meaningfully.

Conducting the Debrief Conversation:

Create a collaborative conversation focused on understanding experiences behind the numbers. Survey questions 1-5 reflect basic, individual needs. These needs have the most significant impact on engagement, so consider focusing on questions 1-5, first.

Key Considerations

- Establish ground rules for mutual respect and open dialogue.
- This is the time to gather input. You do not need to have all the answers.
- The numbers are a starting point; the conversation brings meaning.
- Do not avoid difficult topics or shift away from negative feedback.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- What stood out or surprised you?
- What are our strongest areas and what contributes to them?
- What might be missing in areas identified as opportunities?

- Discuss specific Q12 items:
 - What would a “5” look like here?
 - What would help us get there?

Step 3: Action Planning

Expectations for action planning

- Identify two to three actions to institute based on the survey results and discussions over the next year.
- In late fall 2026 and early winter 2027, Human Resources will gather information on the actions units and teams have implemented or started. This will support the sharing of best practices and enable progress to be communicated to the university community.

Action planning discussion:

- Begin by identifying the engagement item that, if improved, would make the biggest difference for your team.
- Explore specific actions that could drive improvement and identify who is best positioned to own each.
- Examples of post survey actions:
 - Establish a monthly check-in question: “Any tools or processes slowing you down?”
 - Create peer-to-peer recognition moments or teaching practice share-out.
 - Identify opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.
 - Start meetings with “wins of the week” that highlight specific, meaningful actions.
 - Hold quarterly development conversations separate from performance evaluations.
 - Regularly highlight connections between faculty work and student success, civic impact, research contributions, and community partnerships.
- Narrow the list to the 2–3 highest impact actions.
- Agree on how you will monitor progress, discuss what success looks like, and determine how you will adapt if the plan needs refinement.

Suggested discussion questions:

- What matters most for us to focus on right now?
- What actions would move us forward in this area?
- Which actions should we begin with, and who is best positioned to lead them?

Remember: Action planning is an ongoing process embedded in daily activities, one-on-one meetings, and team discussions.

Step 4: Continue the conversation:

Ongoing dialogue helps maintain momentum and reinforce daily experiences that drive engagement.

Questions to quickly check in with team members:

- What are you focused on? What's going well?
- Is there anything getting in your way that I can help you with?
- As you think about what you've been focused on, what would you have done differently?
- Is there anything I can do to help you build on successes or manage issues in your work?
- What parts or activities of your current role energize you?

Questions to spark ongoing conversations about engagement:

- How do you track your performance? How do you know if you are doing a good job?
- What do you need that you do not have?
- What gets in the way of you being your best every day? How can we as a team prevent this from happening?
- As you think about what you've been working on, what are you proud of?
- Tell me about a recent success you had. What did you do that contributed to that success?

Resources:

- [Ducks Engage website- FAQs](#) and other detailed information about the survey and employee engagement
- [Creating Engagement](#)
- [Reading Your Results Report](#)
- [Gallup Q12+ Resource Guide- insights and best practices](#)
- [Q12 Item-Specific Questions to Guide Discussion](#)
- [Engagement Champions](#)