



# Best Practices from the 2024 CARE Award Winners



*The CARE Awards celebrate exemplary companies in the DC Metro Region that excel in fostering outstanding workplace culture and employee engagement, creating the region's best places to work. This document showcases best practices from the 2024 CARE Award winners, offering insights into how these companies cultivate supportive, inclusive, and engaging environments where both employees and businesses can thrive.*

## Workplace & Culture

*Positive workplace cultures attract talent, drive engagement, and impact employee productivity. A healthy work environment increases employee dedication to the company mission; collaboration around expectations, goals, and ethics; and a united workplace that fosters success and innovation.*

**Consumer Technology Association** hosts various staff appreciation events throughout the year, including Taco Tuesday, hot breakfast, barbeque lunch, March Madness challenge, Tasty Treat Tuesdays, Family Day, and holiday events with contest prizes to show employee appreciation and provide connection opportunities.

**B&A** promotes an environment of open collaboration where no idea is too small, and no solution is worth overlooking. Ideas, drawn from employees' personal experiences, are respected and acknowledged, no matter their background or position.

**Comstock's** physical workspace is designed to inspire, with open areas for impromptu meetings and quiet zones for focused work. This environment cultivates a strong sense of camaraderie and shared purpose among colleagues.

**ENSCO** prioritizes new hires by utilizing pulse surveys for regular check-ins, implementing an Ambassador Program to pair them with experienced colleagues for guidance, and addressing concerns promptly.

One of **Eleccion's** values is Rampant Curiosity which is built into monthly and quarterly team meeting agendas encouraging learning and discussion between and within team members. Curiosity also plays out in their decision-making and conflict-management models.

## Innovation

*CARE companies innovate to stay competitive and meet changing customer and employee needs.*

Excited about change, **Apple Federal Credit Union** has implemented a new mobile app, ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) for staff, AI solutions for lending, and video appointment banking.

**Eleccion** operates in circles, transitioning from one to two circles in 2023 with designated roles like Facilitator and Talent Enablement. All team members have equal input and accountability, making decisions a

**Merritt Group** fosters innovation and experimentation that allows employees to develop their careers to their fullest potential and, in the process, deliver incredible service and value to clients.

## Employee Empowerment & Talent Development

*Creating an environment where employees feel heard and see a path for growth is critical to success. This encourages employees to be the best versions of themselves, leading to increased individual performance, company efficiency, and employee engagement.*

**Consumer Technology Association's** Mentor Program helps staff progress through three phases: welcoming newcomers in the first phase, focusing on skills development in the second, and preparing for senior roles in the final phase. More than two-thirds of the organization participates in the program, with many staff members serving as both mentors and mentees.

**Dev Technology** has developed job family paths, which outline skills, competencies, and certifications needed to transition between roles. Employees are encouraged to explore growth opportunities and often return after they have left the company.

**Evans Consulting's** employees can use up to 52 hours annually for professional growth, with employees using an average of 19.5 hours per employee each year. Employee-led sessions are also available for sharing expertise and enhancing facilitation skills, with over 20 sessions held last year.

**FMP Consulting's** newest employees are assigned a "New Hire Ambassador" for support during their first year. They participate in coffee chats, structured onboarding sessions, and engagement meetings to integrate into the organization. The FMP New Hire Podcast showcases new team members through Q&A style conversations.

**FranConnect's** monthly newsletter features a recognition section with quarterly award winners receiving a \$250 bonus. The "Cheers to Peers" program allows peer recognition with \$25 gift cards. Sales team contests offer special gifts like iPad, TV, and cash, promoting a competitive and fun environment.

**Highlight** is employee-owned through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, with every team member eligible to own equity. This structure fosters an ownership culture, aligning interests for exceptional performance and retention growth.

**NRUCFC's** CFC University delivered over 3,500 training hours in 2023 and launched various training programs. External professional training is also supported, with a quarter of the workforce attending company-sponsored events and completing over 700 hours of training on topics like leadership and data analysis.

**NetImpact's** in-house certification program, Earn that Cert (ETC), gives employees access to the latest industry certifications, enhancing their skills and marketability. Over 1,200 certifications have been earned since 2021, positioning employees and the company for competitiveness and knowledge advancement.

## Environmental Sustainability

*CARE companies care about environmental sustainability to reduce waste, conserve resources, and improve efficiency, ultimately benefiting the environment, appeasing stakeholders, and supporting longer-term profitability.*

**Comstock** incorporates eco-friendly practices for LEED certification and minimizes environmental impact. They also prioritize mixed-use developments to create vibrant communities.

**Fors Marsh** aims for net zero emissions by 2030. The company is embedding sustainability into their corporate DNA and will engage employees at every level to create lasting organizational, personal, and social change.

**JK Moving Services** prioritizes sustainability by utilizing sustainable materials, recycling, energy efficiency, and employee environmental education to reduce their environmental footprint and promote eco-conscious practices.

## Employee Wellness

*Investing in employee wellbeing encourages employees to be the best versions of themselves.*

**FlexProfessionals** offers a 'create your own schedule' for team members to choose where and when they work, and adjust their hours as needed due to personal issues. The company also provides unlimited PTO, encourages unplugged vacations, and provides back-up support for team members who need time off for caregiving, bereavement, or personal reasons.

**FranConnect** offers flexible schedules to prioritize family needs, with trust that employees will complete work effectively.

**USTA** covers the costs for employees to obtain their Tennis Pro or Pickleball Pro certifications through PTR or PPR. Additionally, employees can participate in workshops hosted by their parent company.

## Open Communication

*CARE companies use open communication with employees to foster trust, encourage collaboration, and ensure everyone is aligned with the organizational goals.*

**B&A** holds a semiannual all-hands meeting and sends corporate newsletters, sharing company news, new projects, and winnings. Having an open dialogue ensures that their employees feel heard, valued, and connected, fostering a sense of belonging.

**BBG's** COO holds a transparent State of BBG address twice yearly, sharing financials, growth, losses, and updates on policies, practices, and team initiatives in which employees can ask questions publicly or privately.

**pgEdge's** executive team, led by a transparent CEO, shares information about the technology, fundraising, sales, and pipeline status with employees through bi-weekly All Hands meetings and an AskUsAnything Slack channel. This transparency extends to the Board of Directors, ensuring support and guidance for the company's well-being.

## Diversity and Inclusion

*CARE companies believe in building a workforce reflective of their communities, fostering a culture of equity and belonging, and supporting professional growth for all employees.*

**Custom Ink** fosters inclusivity and diversity through initiatives like their Community Diversity Team, diverse hiring practices, and Inker Diversity Councils. This creates a workforce reflective of the community they serve.

**Dev Technology's** DEIA strategic plan focuses on equity, transparency, education, and cultural celebrations to maintain an inclusive work environment. DEIA Ambassadors organize events like museum visits and diversity discussions. Additionally, their Women in Technology at Dev+ Employee Resource Group supports women and non-binary employees focused on professional development.

**ENSCO's** employee newsletter promotes inclusion, community service, and acceptance through a variety of articles covering topics like Black History Month, Women's History Month, Veterans Day, and more. The company values employee input for a diverse publication.

**Fors Marsh** continued its successful Indigenous Internship Program in 2023 and launched HBCU/HSI internship programs, offering 6-month or more paid internships with on-the-job training and mentorship. Plans also include a program for veterans.

**NRECA's** Workplace Inclusion Networks gather feedback to plan events for LGBTQ+, Black Americans, working parents, and women in energy. These events promote DEIB through educational sessions and outings to cultural centers.