

# CASE STUDY

## Gerald R. Ford International Airport



### Key Takeaways

- Making it easier for employees to get their retirement benefits questions answered ensures employees are well-informed and confident in their retirement planning.
- Automatic enrollment and high employer contributions can lead to full participation in retirement plans.



### Municipality Profile

- The Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority operates in western Michigan, with a mission to provide exceptional travel experiences and promote regional growth.
- The Authority provides retirement benefits to 135 employees.

### MERS Programs Used

- Defined Benefit Plan
- Defined Contribution Plan
- Hybrid Plan
- Health Care Savings Plan

### Situation

With 24/7 operations, the Authority saw a need to accommodate all shifts with enhanced retirement benefits education.

### Process

Called "Operation Education," the Authority partnered with MERS to help ensure its employees are set of for retirement success. This was done by incorporating elements of smart plan design, such as automatic enrollment, and leveraging a variety of ways to deliver retirement benefits education.

### Strategy

The strategy focused on comprehensive education and support for employees to maximize their retirement benefits. Key steps included:

- **Automatic Enrollment with High Employer Contribution:** Ensuring all employees are enrolled and benefit from significant employer contributions.
- **Educational Sessions:** Offering flexible session times to accommodate 24/7 operations, ensuring all employees have access to vital information.

- **Promotion and Integration of MERS Tools:** Encouraging the use of the MERS app and integrating beneficiary forms into the onboarding process.
- **Centralized Resources:** Creating a dedicated intranet section for easy access to MERS resources and support.
- **HR Team Training:** Equipping the HR team with the knowledge to assist employees effectively.

## Results

The implementation of “Operation Education” led to several positive outcomes including:

- **100% Enrollment:** All employees are now enrolled in a retirement plan (DB, DC, Hybrid, and HCSP).
- **Improved Access to Support:** Employees can now approach any HR staff member for MERS-related services and questions, rather than relying on a single point of contact.
- **Enhanced Employee Satisfaction:** The educational sessions and resources have empowered employees with better understanding and management of their retirement plans.



Best-in-class team accepting Impact Award at the MERS 2024 Annual Conference

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