



THE FUTURE OF
**HUMAN
RESOURCES**
in Government

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Critical to the success of any organization is its ability to recruit, hire and retain talented professionals, while also grooming the next-generation workforce. Forward-thinking officials at organizations in both the public and private sectors understand that successful execution of these functions requires a strong human resources (HR) support system.

No longer can agencies afford to treat HR as a back-office function focused solely on compliance and paperwork. Instead, the future of HR is about making it a strategic partner that works alongside other departments to build and maintain a thriving workforce.

The rise of cloud-based systems, analytics and other online tools is moving agencies away from paper-based processes into the digital era, and HR must keep pace. Many transaction-based functions, such as time and attendance and payroll are being optimized, and in some cases centralized, to improve efficiencies and reduce costs.

“We’re really looking at the HR directors and the HR executives to be more strategic and have a seat at the table to make sure that they’re really contributing to the mission and goals of the agency,” said James Honchar, Deputy Secretary for HR and Management for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (His story is featured in the onboarding section of this guide.)

Not only must HR professionals stay up to date on technology and how they enhance workforce management, they must also be in tune with the needs and sentiments of the very people they serve: employees.

To help the government HR community stay current, GovLoop interviewed more than a dozen federal, state and local leaders who represent the future of HR and the trends that are developing in the field. These leaders are applying innovative approaches to traditional processes, such as:



Recruiting



Hiring



Onboarding



Employee development



Retirement

At the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), for example, hiring managers are successfully using social media to attract younger professionals, while Maine state officials are gaining insight from interns to better understand and alleviate the challenges that job applicants face.

At the federal level, hiring is synonymous with USAJobs.gov. In 2014, more than 187 million people conducted about 1 billion searches on the website and submitted about 21 million applications. The hiring section of this guide delves into plans to improve the website and overall application experience.

In the onboarding section, you’ll learn how Pennsylvania saves \$1.2 million annually through automation and how the Housing and Urban Development Department has taken employee onboarding to new heights that extend far beyond paperwork and security training.

Employee engagement is also a big theme throughout this guide because it’s a team sport. HR officials must work alongside supervisors, senior leaders and employees to ensure everyone is engaged and satisfied with the work environment.

This guide will help you glean best practices and fresh ideas as you prepare for the future.

TRENDS IN RECRUITING

Finding the right employees to fill specific positions isn't easy, especially in government. Here are some innovative ways agencies are attracting talented professionals to government to meet their mission needs.





Recruiting

TAPPING MILLENNIAL EXPERTISE TO RECRUIT MILLENNIALS

Kelly Samson-Rickert doesn't spend her days wondering how millennials want to be wooed or what her office can do to better recruit them. Instead, she has gone straight to the source to figure out what's keeping more 20- and 30-somethings from applying for state information technology jobs in Maine.

The state didn't hire a team of consultants to figure out that it took applicants nine clicks to find the state's Office of IT (OIT) job site or that job seekers weren't sure of the difference between open hire and direct hire. Those were just a few of the issues a handful of OIT interns identified and presented to the governor in August 2015 as part of an Intern Challenge. The state is now working to address their findings.

"This is a smart group of folks that we're trying to recruit," Samson-Rickert, Director of Workforce Development for Maine's OIT, said of millennials. "They're very tech-savvy."

Similar to other government agencies, the state is working to recruit, groom and retain this group of workers. About 25 percent of OIT employees will be eligible to retire in the next three to five years. "We're working on multiple things to address that issue," Samson-Rickert said.

Improving the recruitment process for potential employees, especially millennials, is part of her office's multipronged approach. The ultimate goal is to reduce the time it takes to apply for a job and make the hiring process easier and more efficient internally. OIT is

developing a pilot study to streamline the recruitment process.

Currently, the 12-step process for HR and hiring managers to find and hire talent is manual, which inevitably affects the applicant's experience. For example, Samson-Rickert had to mail in her job application when she applied to OIT. Today, applications must be printed, signed and scanned. It's an upgrade from snail mail, but people — especially younger job seekers — expect these transactions to occur online.

Through the Intern Challenge, Samson-Rickert also learned that millennials were hesitant to provide their Social Security numbers on the eight-page application form, which is the same document used for full-time employees (but that's changing). The form warns applicants that all information, including Social

schools to get them and to recruit them. And they definitely wouldn't have filled out their Social Security number online."

The challenge she posed to the OIT interns was straightforward: Assume the role of a job applicant and try to search and apply for a job. The interns reported on all the challenges they experienced and suggested improvements. The ultimate goal was to identify a solution to modernize recruitment and attract qualified IT professionals.

"We're taking some of their suggestions and we're trying to implement that into our pipeline," Samson-Rickert said.

When it comes to millennials, it's about more than recruiting them for state internships. The larger goal is to recruit, retain and help them. But one challenge OIT faces is that state jobs aren't seen as cutting-edge.

That's where storytelling and talent branding come in. Through the use of social media, videos, infographics and eye-catching, mobile-friendly job advertisements, Samson-Rickert hopes to update OIT's image and better tell her office's story.

"We don't make ourselves known out there as having these wonderful, exciting, successful careers

that we do," she explained. "It's almost like the best hidden secret, and the state government work shouldn't be the best hidden secret."



Security numbers, must be provided if they want to be considered for a position.

"They were fearful," Samson-Rickert said. "Most of the interns who took part in the challenge said they wouldn't have had the internship if I wouldn't have gone out to the



Recruiting

DATA-DRIVEN RECRUITING

In November 2014, former Office of Personnel Management Director Katherine Archuleta announced a new governmentwide initiative to improve workforce recruitment, engagement, diversity and inclusion. Known as the REDI initiative, it's "a data-driven, forward-looking human capital management strategy that reflects our work on behalf of the People and Culture pillar of the President's Management Agenda," Archuleta said.

The initial details were sparse, but OPM released the REDI roadmap in March 2015, laying out the administration's key priorities for improving recruitment and other workforce issues. But some wondered whether those efforts would stick following Archuleta's July 2015 resignation from the agency.

"Acting Director Beth Cobert is moving forward with the Recruitment, Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) initiative," according to OPM. "The cornerstone of REDI is the use of data-driven expertise and collaborative thinking to continue to build, develop and retain a purpose-driven federal workforce. Under-scoring this initiative is a commitment to provide hiring managers and human resources specialists with the tools and resources needed to ensure we recruit and hire from all segments of society."

In terms of recruitment, the administration is measuring success by:

- ▲ The percentage of hiring managers who actively recruit and do outreach for job vacancies.
- ▲ Hiring managers' satisfaction with the quality of job applications.

- ▲ The percentage of managers involved in workforce planning.

It's no secret that government faces stiff competition from private-sector firms and other agencies that are vying for the same talented professionals. But government has other challenges. For starters, the lengthy and nuanced hiring process is a turnoff for some professionals, and the negative rhetoric about government work and threats of shutdowns certainly don't help, either.

Hiring managers can't control all of those variables, but they can use one thing they already have to improve recruiting: data.

Job Opportunity Announcement Traffic

Where did the applicants come from? Did my recruitment strategy work when I posted my job announcement on Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.?

Survey Data

Why are applicants abandoning the application process? Are certain demographics falling out of the process? What parts of the process are people who complete the process most satisfied with?

Data Insights

Use data to determine whom and where to recruit. What does the federal landscape (agencies and occupations) look like in a geographic region? What educational institutions and academic programs are in the area?

Diversity of the applicant pool is another recruiting issue OPM is focused on improving. Through USA Staffing, OPM's hiring software solution for government, agencies have

access to a reporting capability that allows them to understand how the demographics of the applicant pool shift at each of the major stages in the federal hiring process: application, qualification, referral and selection.

"Agencies across government are using applicant flow data to help focus recruitment initiatives and understand where barriers exist and what steps to take to address them," Earley said.

Federal Recruitment Initiatives

The Office of Personnel Management will continue offering "Recruiting Boot Camp" sessions for hiring officials and staff to teach them how to build talent pipelines, improve job postings to attract the right workers and better use recruiting data.

In fiscal 2015, OPM launched two "Hiring Excellence" workshop sessions to provide agencies with the latest information in areas such as improving assessments, recruiting, hiring authorities, USAJobs enhancements and the Pathways Programs. The streamlined, developmental Pathways Programs are tailored to promote employment opportunities for students and recent graduates in the federal government. These initiative will continue in fiscal 2016.

OPM is also partnering with several agencies to leverage technology, including video and accompanying information technology solutions, to design additional modern recruitment and hiring innovations.

"The USAJobs Program Office will make available to hiring officials dashboards that can be used for recruitment purposes," said Michelle Earley, Program Director of USAJobs. "As these tools are deployed, we plan to provide briefings for agencies on how to utilize the data and technology available to be more strategic in their recruiting efforts."

The dashboards will include data collected through USAJobs.gov, surveys and web analytics at a minimum, Earley said. She explained that data is visualized through interactive dashboards to answer questions such as:



Recruiting

USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RECRUITING

Social media is no fleeting trend when it comes to recruitment. The next generation of public-sector employees is tech-savvy, and they're social media power users. To attract a wider pool of young applicants, some government agencies are expanding their reach beyond USAJobs.gov and using social media to improve recruiting.

CFPB's approach is an example of how agencies can effectively use social media to recruit top talent, including the oft-elusive millennial age group. Bringing in younger people is integral, considering that about 31 percent of the government's permanent career employees will be eligible to retire by September 2017, according to a [2014 Government Accountability Office report](#).

CFPB is already targeting younger people and effectively setting a model for other federal agencies. [With more than 32,000 followers on LinkedIn](#), it has one of the largest followings among small federal agencies. The agency also seamlessly integrates multi-media efforts that target a younger workforce, [featuring videos](#) that provide a firsthand look into the purpose and benefits attached to working at CFPB.

GovLoop interviewed Jeff Sumberg, Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) at CFPB, about the agency's efforts to attract and recruit

millennials via social media. The bureau's strategy is simple, Sumberg said: "We use social media to attract people with the drive to help us accomplish our mission. The more people know about us, and the more they learn about the substantive work we do for the American people, the more appealing the opportunity for potential talent to help contribute to that mission."

CFPB has successfully customized campaigns to meet the target audience for specific opportunities by posting recruiting material on professional networking sites, Sumberg said. For example, during the recruiting campaign for a Consumer Compliance Examiner position, the agency used LinkedIn to bring the

Rather than relying on past recruiting techniques and content, CFPB has undertaken millennial-friendly recruiting to beef up its reach and accessibility. "Transparency is key," Sumberg said. "We develop digital content that gives a realistic view of what it's like to work for the Bureau, what to expect when you arrive and what sets us apart as an employer. We also ensure that our jobs are visible to all via social media."

With recruiting, Sumberg said, "we take a progressive approach, which may be a little different from what other agencies may have for their applicants. By developing a targeted digital recruitment strategy, we are able to create pipelines of diverse applicants we can

pull from. We also leverage social recruiting, join specific target category groups and supplement with traditional outreach events."

Social media is here to stay, and it's up to federal officials to figure out how they can incorporate robust digital strategies into their recruitment processes. Rather than standing on the sidelines hoping that younger candidates make

When it comes to hiring through social media, there are dos and don'ts to keep in mind. Here are tips that can make your hiring process through the digital medium smoother.

DO

- ✓ Post all jobs on USAJobs.gov, which satisfies the requirement for fair official public notice, before sharing the position through social media. This levels the playing field for candidates who might not have access to social media.
- ✓ Decide which social media platforms make the most sense for your agency instead of trying to join as many as possible.
- ✓ Use social media when your agency is finding it difficult to attract well-qualified candidates.
- ✓ Check with your agency's terms before using a new social media platform to make sure your agency has negotiated the proper terms of service.

DON'T

- ✗ Give "insider information" to applicants via social media. Promoting the open position is different from telling a person how to get hired.
- ✗ Persist even if you receive negative comments on your platforms — seek counsel from your public affairs office on how best to respond.
- ✗ Violate the Merit System Principles. If it is not legal off social media, then it is not legal on social media.
- ✗ Post positions on social media sites that require candidates to pay fees.

SOURCE: Partnership for Public Service; LinkedIn

digital recruiting content to a target audience. The agency also worked with the Partnership for Public Service to host webinars that provided an overview of the agency and a realistic preview of the position and required duties.

their way through the convoluted hiring process, agencies have a better chance of gaining optimal prospects by actively recruiting through the channels millennials use. Take it from an agency that knows — CFPB has tried social media, and it works.

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THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT IN GOVERNMENT

An Interview with Don Pagel, Vice President of Public Sector Services at Kronos

The sheer size and diversity of the public-sector workforce have forced governments to rethink how they manage their most valuable asset — people.

At a time when agencies must do more with less, maintaining the status quo may seem like the only option. But the truth is agencies can't afford to perpetuate inefficiencies that cost more time and money in the long term.

Among the areas ripe for change are workforce management processes. These include recording time and attendance transactions and managing employee absences, which many agencies still do manually today.

"Customers are finding that by using paper timesheets or timekeepers to keep track of dozens, if not hundreds of employees at a time, errors are being made in those entries," said Don Pagel, Vice President of Public Sector Services at Kronos. The company is in the business of providing the right tools to minimize compliance risk, control labor costs and improve workforce productivity.

"Anytime human entry is involved you have a potential for loopholes and inaccuracies, but automating that process pushes out the responsibility for the actual transaction to the employees themselves," Pagel said. "This allows for better compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)."

The FLSA, which establishes minimum wage, overtime pay and recordkeeping requirements, was enacted in 1938, but it took several years and a Supreme Court ruling before it was implemented by government agencies. But even today, it's possible for agencies to unknowingly violate FLSA policies.

"Employers often think that compliance of the Act simply means that they collect timesheets and enter data in a system," Pagel said.

But manual data entry is not synonymous with compliance. That's why a growing number of agencies are turning to automation tools to mitigate compliance risks and provide better checks and balances. The city of Houston, Pima County Superior Court and Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department are among the agencies that have partnered with Kronos to make that leap.

"Most computer systems in government use what's known as an exception pay system," Pagel said. "That means employees start the week with all of their work hours. Time is decreased based on exceptions that are entered in the system, whether it's time off for vacation or a sick day. Positive pay systems do the exact opposite. Employees start the week with zero hours, and time is added as the employee clocks in and out or enters their work hours or paid leave."

With exception pay systems, employees typically fill out a form to request time off, and their supervisor approves it and gives the document to a timekeeper. Because the employee has some interaction in that process, a lot of government managers believe they are compliant with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

But the Department of Labor has made clear that exception based systems are generally noncompliant. The reason is when managers assume employees are going to work 40 hours, and only enter exceptions, either the employee or the manager will likely forget to enter those exceptions.

"If employees work 38 hours in a pay period, they should be paid for 38 hours," Pagel said. "If they work 52 hours, they should be paid for 52 hours. In an exception-based system, you have too many opportunities where there's potential manipulation of the employee's time."

Operating this way could also create a situation where employees feel bad about entering exceptions. It also puts control of an employee's time and attendance in the hands of the supervisor.

"Instead, the Department of Labor would rather have that control in the hands of the employee, and that's what automation does," Pagel said. "By the employee clocking in and out, or entering their time on a terminal, it's considered compliant because the employee has actually entered the transaction."

Another benefit of electronic timekeeping systems is they provide agencies with an automated audit trail of their labor data versus a paper audit trail. With an automated system, auditing occurs after data is entered into the system, and it's clear which employees and supervisors made changes to the data and why.

For agencies, the path to full compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act starts with automation and putting employees in charge of their time entry.

"By having the employee enter their time, and then flow that through a series of payroll and work rules in the system, employers can automate that process to ensure all employees are being treated fairly," Pagel said.

TRENDS IN HIRING

Identifying top talent is only half the battle. The selection and hiring process can be grueling, but some agencies are finding ways to keep hiring times below the governmentwide average through the use of technology, better metrics and routine evaluations of hiring data and best practices.



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Hiring

IMPROVING HIRING TIMES WITH DATA

On average, it takes federal agencies 94 days to hire a new employee. That's according to fiscal 2014 data — the most recent available — that agencies reported to OPM.

Time-to-hire data measures how long it takes from the time a hiring manager validates the need for a position to the time of entry on duty, or when an employee reports to work. Since fiscal 2014, agencies have been required to report their time-to-hire data annually, rather than quarterly.

Agencies must also break down hiring data to focus on governmentwide mission-critical occupations and their specific, commonly filled positions, according to OPM. "Previously, agencies were only submitting aggregated agency data, limiting their ability to isolate particular occupations that may take excessively long to hire, or others that are fast and efficient, potentially able to be used as a benchmark for other occupations," OPM explained.

At the Agriculture Department, hiring times are lower than the governmentwide average, which William Milton Jr., USDA's CHCO, credits to several factors, including defined metrics, routine tracking, awareness among senior officials and the use of technology. About five years ago, before hiring reforms were implemented, it took USDA more than 130 days on average to hire an employee.

"Our last report indicated that the average time to hire is 85 days," Milton said, referring to the department's August 2015 report. "When we trend upwards, we take steps to look into where the process can be improved, work to resolve the issues and share lessons learned. Some of our subcomponents routinely achieve time-to-hire results that are below the 80-day [governmentwide] goal, including the Forest Service, which is our largest agency. We ask those groups to share their best practices across USDA. The bottom line is that time-to-hire is a business process that relates to costs, and it is one that we are constantly looking to improve."

Milton said the use of technology is vital in helping his team determine what areas of the hiring process most need improving. Here's how: Through the One USDA HR IT Enterprise initiative, the department has consolidated 15 HR systems, saving about \$4 million annually. Now everyone is on the same platform and using a common language to discuss HR issues.

The system tracks employees' HR data throughout their employment lifecycle. As a result, the consolidation has also yielded indirect savings for USDA in terms of "reduced paperwork, faster entry on duty and earlier security screening, allowing employees to perform their positions' work sooner," Milton explained.

USDA is also implementing an e-recruit system that automates and streamlines major portions of onboarding so that new employees can be productive and engaged in mission work on their first day. (Onboarding trends are covered more in depth in a separate section of this resource guide.)

Although agencies are required to report their time-to-hire data to OPM annually, USDA tracks hiring times and other HR metrics on a monthly basis. Milton leads the department's Human Resources Director's Council, which meets and provides reports once a month to the department secretary and agency heads on the performance of their respective sub-agencies in key areas, including hiring times.

"Every month, [agency] leadership is made aware of how they are performing on time-to-hire," Milton said. His advice to others in government: Communicate openly and often so that everyone is aware of how they are performing and how they can improve.



Hiring

REVAMPING USAJOBS.GOV

With few exceptions, all hiring roads in the federal government lead to USAJobs.gov.

For years, Monster.com had been running the website under contract on the government's behalf, but that changed in 2011 when OPM brought it in-house. And with that massive undertaking came serious glitches. There was no shortage of user complaints following the troubled launch of USAJobs 3.0, which left applicants frustrated with website crashes, missing data and hit-or-miss search results for job openings.

At the time, former OPM Director John Berry said the agency had underestimated the volume of traffic to the site and assured Congress and the public that it would make changes. Four years later, the website isn't without faults, but under new leadership, OPM has made improvements to the USAJobs.gov experience.

"Many people's first, and sometimes only, impression of the federal government is made through their experience with USAJobs," said USAJobs Program Director Earley. "It is also the primary portal through which the government can bring in new talent that is vital to America's progress. Due to the high demand for the opportunity to serve in the federal government, now is the perfect time to design and implement an improved user experience on USAJobs."

In 2014, more than 187 million people conducted about 1 billion searches on USAJobs and submitted about 21 million applications.

Earley said OPM will change the website to build a USAJobs that:

- Clearly guides applicants to the information they need to make confident job search and application decisions.
- Provides a thoughtfully crafted, personalized experience that a user can trust.

- Conveys information in a language that every applicant can understand.
- Sets clear application expectations.
- Serves as the most trusted resource for federal hiring information.
- Reflects how diverse populations find out about and apply for jobs.

"USAJobs partnered with the Innovation Lab at OPM to use a human-centered design (HCD) approach to re-imagine the user experience on the website," Earley said. She offered this timeline to explain the work:

USAJobs.gov User Data

	2012	2013	2014	2015 (as of 8/31/15)
# of Visitors	151M	183M	187M	153M
# of Searches	887M	1B	1B	816M
# of Applications Initiated	14.6M	16M	21M	16.1M

Fall 2014

The integrated design team began collecting meaningful data from job seekers, hiring managers, HR specialists and agency CHCOs through a series of qualitative interviews, behavioral observations and empathy experiences. The team collected 2,400 data points that showed the challenges people have in applying for federal jobs, challenges hiring managers experience when looking for the right talent and the roadblocks HR specialists have when using the backend of the USAJobs system.

Using this approach, USAJobs uncovered emotions people feel when applying for a job with the federal government or hiring people for government work. One key example Earley and her team found was that unnecessary and confusing hiring information often overwhelms users on USAJobs.gov. Several people will make random guesses about the best way to apply and what information to include out of frustration. This causes many people to

either apply for jobs they aren't qualified for, though they may not realize it, or abandon the application process all together.

Winter 2015

In February, the design team printed out the quotes and observations it collected during the research process, put them on Post-it notes and stuck them around the room. Because these data points were in their direct line of sight and near one another, the team could move the notes around and glean insights from relationships among the data that they otherwise would not have identified. Often data seemed unrelated, but when the team clustered interesting and some-

times seemingly contradictory data together, they experienced "aha" moments.

Summer 2015

In May, the ideation phase of the lab's HCD process engaged the team's creative nature

to re-imagine not only what is possible in people's interaction with USAJobs.gov, but also what is possible throughout the hiring process. Using multiple tools, this phase of highly divergent thinking allowed the team to rapidly develop ideas that address users' needs.

Because USAJobs depends on the robust civil service hiring process, some of the challenges users experience on the website are really driven from behind the scenes. An example is the relationship between hiring managers who are looking to bring in top talent and HR specialists who are responsible for helping the hiring managers find the right people. Because there are many paths and rules to hiring, the stronger the interaction between those two people, the better the inputs will be into the USAJobs system.

"We have already begun implementing changes starting in August of 2015," Earley said. "We anticipate we will iteratively implement changes over the next 24 months."



Hiring

HIRING DIGITAL SERVICE TEAMS

Mikey Dickerson's measure of success is simple: If the disability claims backlog isn't a backlog, if open enrollment on HealthCare.gov goes well, and if more immigration services are online before Jan. 20, 2017 — President Barack Obama's last day in office — then his team has done its job.

As head of the year-old U.S. Digital Service (USDS), Dickerson is part of a White House movement to bring in highly skilled designers, product managers and engineers to tackle the government's high-profile tech challenges. Dickerson played a key role in breathing new life into HealthCare.gov, and the White House wants to replicate that success across other departments.

Unlike the General Services Administration's 18F, which also focuses on improving the government's digital services, USDS is not reimbursed for its work. Dickerson said his team is recruiting employees interested in doing a detail at USDS from their sponsoring agencies or from the private sector.

As a result, Dickerson has amassed a strong team, but he's had to address concerns that his group of digital experts comes off as being overly confident.

"It doesn't work to get people defensive," Dickerson said at GovLoop's Next Generation of Government Training Summit in July 2015. "They won't share, they won't be willing to cooperate, which is critical."

This isn't a model in which USDS employees move everyone out of the way and try to do it all on their own. "We're not big enough for that," he added.

Dickerson recalled his first day on the job in August 2014. He was at a noon press conference. He had been a government employee for all but three hours, and the questions began rolling in. Mainly, reporters wanted to

know how the administration would institutionalize his organization.

Dickerson's thought on that is if USDS delivers on its digital promises, then there's a better chance it will withstand the transition to the next administration. He would rather USDS not exist in five years if it isn't successful than have the organization become part of bureaucracy.

The good news is USDS is seeing fruit from its labor, and agencies such as the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), [Veterans Affairs Department](#) and most recently the Homeland Security Department are now replicating digital teams at the department level.

Eric Hysen, a founding member of USDS, [announced in October 2015](#) that he was leaving his White House role to become Digital Service Lead and first member of the DHS Digital Service team. In that role, he will use the USDS model to modernize the immigration system, improve information security and more.

In May 2015, former OPM Director Archuleta authorized the use of excepted-service appointments to [bring more digital services experts into government](#) for limited terms. Some agencies are using this flexibility, and they are able to get candidates on board quicker. But, again, these positions are only for a limited time.

"Agencies may use this authority to fill, on a temporary basis for up to one year, technical positions needed to directly carry out provisions of the [administration's] [Smarter IT Delivery Initiative](#) at the GS-11 through GS-15 levels," Archuleta said in the 2015 memo authorizing the hiring authority. "These technical positions would involve in-depth knowledge of and experience in creating modern digital services, gap analysis expertise in understanding where shortfalls exist in capacity to design, develop, deploy and operate custom-

er-facing services, specialized knowledge in digital service consolidation and migration, cloud service utilization, and business process standardization to support a wide variety of mission requirements."

The appointments can be extended in increments of up to one year, but not beyond Sept. 30, 2017.

If agencies have this and other hiring authorities to fill critical positions, including IT, why aren't more of these positions being filled quickly?

One issue is that most agencies still post vacancies and sort through hundreds of applicants, according to HR experts. That defeats the purpose of having hiring authorities to bypass normal processes. The main barriers to expedited hiring authorities are:

- ▲ Lack of trust
- ▲ Risk-averse attitudes
- ▲ Discomfort with change
- ▲ Already-established process, staffing and software

It's one thing for hiring managers at headquarters to know about hiring flexibilities, but it's another for them to actually use them. Personnel officials must step outside their comfort zone of applying traditional civil service hiring procedures to take full advantage of special hiring authorities.

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HOW TECHNOLOGY IS REDEFINING THE GOVERNMENT HIRING EXPERIENCE

An Interview with Susan Fallon Brown, Vice President of Global Strategy and Business Development at Monster Government Solutions

The biggest challenges facing federal hiring managers today are finding candidates with the right skills, getting them on board as quickly as possible, and retaining the best talent.

“Reducing time to hire is essential, but government workforce strategies require tools and insights for every stage of the employment lifecycle,” said Susan Fallon Brown, Vice President of Global Strategy and Business Development at Monster Government Solutions. “Agencies need solutions for identifying skills gaps, creating accurate position descriptions, reaching and engaging the best candidates, managing the hiring process and developing their workforce.”

It Starts Before You Post

Before agencies can engage the right candidates, they have to understand which skills they need.

The reality is that more than 70 percent of federal HR leaders still rely on informal methods for workforce planning, including handwritten notes, white boards and spreadsheets, according to a recent workforce management survey sponsored by Monster Government Solutions. Thirty-four percent of respondents said they weren't gathering data on competencies at all.

“Identifying competencies is the foundation of agency recruiting strategies,” said Fallon Brown. “The power of technology can help answer the tough questions: what job skills are high-priority to acquire? What skills do agencies currently have? What skills will they need in the future? Job analysis and position classification tools are absolutely essential to creating job descriptions and recruiting efforts that clearly and consistently define the competencies agencies need.”

Once agencies articulate exactly what they are looking for, it's time to get proactive about engaging the best candidates where they spend their time. Increasingly this engagement is happening online, especially when attracting hard-to-find STEM talent and mil-

lennials. The power of social media's instant reach is critical to any agency's recruiting strategy. Social job ads reach candidates online where they're active, based on the skills and experience that agencies need, and advanced search technologies empower HR leaders to take a more targeted and proactive approach to uncovering the right talent.

“Monster's social recruiting solutions reach hundreds of millions of individuals across the country,” said Fallon Brown. “Recruiters can use these precision tools to pinpoint and engage the talent they need at every stage of the hiring process.”

Making Better Hires, Faster

Monster's hiring management suite illustrates how technology is redefining the government hiring experience. Integrating with existing HRIS systems and USAJobs, it was built from the ground up for government hiring, and screens large applicant pools against critical job competencies and efficiently identifies the best-qualified candidates.

The goal of these tools is to provide compliance without complexity. “At Monster, our developers work to simplify the job of an HR specialist and the people with which they work. We achieve that by providing easy-to-use, intuitive tools such as a step-by-step vacancy builder and automated workflow management. These solutions are essential to keeping the right candidates informed at every stage of the hiring process, so they don't move on to other opportunities,” Fallon Brown said. “Our ATS makes that easy.”

“Our expertise, passion about what we do, and more than twenty years of experience enables us to help government agencies and job seekers find better. Our focus on scalability, availability, reliability, quality, and security is the reason that 14 of the 15 cabinet-level agencies rely on Monster.”

The Work Doesn't Stop at Hiring

Just as HR professionals are embracing new technologies to drive recruiting and hiring strategies, they need to be thinking about the critical role technology can play in workforce development as well.

Development starts with helping personnel navigate their own professional growth, outlining a clear career path within their agency. This is particularly critical for attracting and retaining the next generation of government leaders. A recent PWC study found that 65 percent of millennials said that the opportunity for personal development was the most influential factor in accepting their current job.

For example, Monster worked closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs to roll out My Career at VA, a program designed to improve employee retention and engagement. It allows individuals to create an inventory of their skills, competencies and interests, and visually explore potential career paths within VA.

In addition, fostering a diverse and inclusive (D&I) culture is critical to employee retention. The government workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, but attitudes and opinions still vary on the effectiveness of D&I programs. Recent Government Business Council research found that less than a third of federal HR leaders felt their organization is effective at leveraging diversity.

“It surprises some people to think that technology can make a major contribution to agency D&I programs, but it truly can,” said Fallon Brown. “Our WIN Insights by Monster tool facilitates engagement and open communication among colleagues, helps managers understand employee differences and uses that insight to build inclusive workplaces and high-performing teams.”

TRENDS IN ONBOARDING

The first day on the job is usually unproductive for new employees because they are bogged down with paperwork and unfamiliar with agency processes. But agencies are starting to take advantage of automation and other IT innovations to ensure a smoother onboarding process. They are also helping employees adjust to their new work environment long after the first day.





Onboarding

AUTOMATION OF ONBOARDING

Employee onboarding. The term reminds many government workers of the inefficiencies they faced when starting their jobs. The reality is clear: Something needs to be done about onboarding in government, and quickly. The first few weeks at a new job are critically important indicators of whether an employee will successfully adapt to the workplace.

When it comes to onboarding, Pennsylvania has been ahead of the game for years now. Honchar, Deputy Secretary for HR and Management there, has championed streamlining the onboarding process by going digital. In an interview with GovLoop, he shared the state's experience to ease onboarding. Under the old process, a new hire would sign up for health care benefits, 401(k) accounts and pensions within the first couple days of starting the job — in addition to reviewing work policies and generally learning the ropes.

Honchar believes that's an inefficient process. "We've moved away from that, instead choosing to take care of most of the process prior to an employee's first day on the job," he said.

Pennsylvania teamed with a contractor to develop a digital onboarding process that gives new employees an overview of the workplace and allows them to select benefits, fill out I-9 paperwork and review necessary policies. It was the perfect way to streamline an otherwise bulky process.

The whole goal is to automate onboarding to take place before the first day on the job, so that new employees can hit the ground running, Honchar said. They will be most attentive before they start their job, so most, if not all, of the paperwork and general policies should be taken care of before the first day, when supervisors can simply brief employees about the work for which they were hired.

By automating the onboarding process, Pennsylvania has saved "conservatively, in terms of man hours, about \$1.2 million each year," Honchar said. Other significant savings come from the fact that most of the work is now in an electronic format, which means that personnel files are stored on in-house servers.

"We've leveraged our own technology here," Honchar explained, "and allowed those forms

to be digitized and housed on our Software-as-a-Service portal, part of our HR personnel solution." By consolidating to a single HR system, personnel files are more easily accessed and used, and the entire process is streamlined. The SaaS portal is part of that transition.

An HR professional in the commonwealth since 1988, Honchar offers a unique perspective to the changes the HR industry has gone through over the years. He explained that transaction-based functions, such as time and attendance and payroll are being optimized within public sector for two reasons: to become more efficient and to leverage cost-saving technology.

Of course, digitization is not without risk, especially of information breaches, but with good leadership and policies, those risks can be properly mitigated. Rather than resisting digital progress, HR officials should consider the positive ramifications of automating processes. For Honchar and Pennsylvania, the use of automation reaped huge benefits, and they have the savings to prove it.



Onboarding

ONBOARDING BILL OF RIGHTS

When you think about the Bill of Rights, what comes to mind? Freedom of speech or freedom of the press? Maybe you think about a patient's bill of rights when receiving medical care.

All of the above are common answers, especially from people who don't work at NASA Goddard. The Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., has given the term "bill of rights" an entirely new meaning and redefined the way new employees are treated on their first day at work.

Goddard's Onboarding Bill of Rights entitles new employees to a functional workspace, a computer, an onboarding ambassador and a meaningful work assignment on their first day.

"When you tell somebody on their very first day that we're ecstatic they've accepted our offer to be a part of our bigger NASA Goddard family, but then we don't have the tools in place, it really gives mixed messages," said Pamela Barrett, HR Development Specialist at Goddard.

The onboarding process can be initiated as many as 30 days before a new employee's start date, which gives agency officials plenty of time to ensure they're prepared to properly welcome a new hire.

The first few days are critical. Half of new hires consider quitting after a bad first day, and nearly 80 percent go home early because their employer was not prepared, said Regina Keegan, a Program Analyst in Goddard's Office of Human Capital Management. Eighty percent of them decide within the first six months whether to stay.

If you take ownership of a process and follow it through, you're ensuring that employees have what they need, said Keegan, who serves as the Onboarding Program Manager.

Keegan has been instrumental in revamping the onboarding process at Goddard. She implemented the Director of Onboarding Representatives program, which ensures that each organization at the agency specifies someone to be responsible for helping with onboarding new employees. In many ways these representatives are the welcoming committee. They ensure the center's Bill of Rights is met and that employees have the resources they need.

Others at Goddard play important roles in onboarding, too. For instance, supervisors and

representative and the supervisor via email that a new employee is coming. It also instructs the supervisor to appoint an onboarding ambassador to help the person feel welcome.

"They're not your technical mentor," Barrett said about the ambassador. "They are assigned to that individual for the first month, and it basically just helps that individual get their feel around." The Goddard campus covers 1,600 acres, so knowing how to find the cafeteria, the restrooms and the shortest route to a particular building are important details.

Before their first day, employees can access much of their HR paperwork and find details about the onboarding process online. The [employee orientation website](#) also has details for NASA employees transferring from another center.

Additionally, the agency encourages supervisors to reach out to new hires before their start dates.

"We know that somebody else could be trying to sway them to come to their organization," Barrett said. "We know we need to keep them engaged from the time they sign that acceptance letter.

We encourage our supervisors to keep in touch with them, tell them about some of the good things that are going on in [their] organization and let them know that although they haven't come in for their first day, they're still very much part of the NASA Goddard family."

new hires have onboard checklists. "We make our new employees take some responsibility in terms of things that they should know in the event somebody doesn't tell them," Barrett said. They are encouraged to seek out individuals to help them.

"What we don't want them to do is to be frustrated," she said.

Before an employee's first day, the Talent Acquisition Office notifies the onboarding rep-

Tips for a Smooth Onboarding Process

- i It's critical for one organization or department to own the onboarding process and keep everyone informed.** At NASA, the Office of Human Capital Management owns the process.
- i Get buy-in from supervisors.** Human resources professionals play a big role in keeping leaders informed and ensuring that smooth HR processes are top of mind for everyone.
- i Build excitement internally and with new staff before they come onboard.** You get only one opportunity to make a first impression.



Onboarding

ENGAGING MILLENNIALS EARLY & OFTEN

When an agency hires a new employee, the to-do list is long: review HR paperwork, administer critical trainings and give access to necessary files and computer systems. But then there are the not-so-obvious things that are often overlooked but critical to making employees feel welcome and more inclined to stay the course.

“A huge part of it is about building community,” said Michael Lawyer, a Program Analyst who has worked at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for six years. “You have to understand where new employees are coming from, and it’s very difficult for tenured federal employees, who have an established career, an established life, an established family and an established set of work relationships to remember what it’s like to be a 25-year-old walking in straight out of grad school with none of that.”

Lawyer’s part in building that community came in 2011 with the launch of HUD’s Under 5 initiative. “People were tired of having lunch alone,” he said. “So if we only did one thing well, it was just getting those folks to have lunch together so they weren’t so alone anymore. And out of that starts to come all of this amazing stuff, and they discover that they just might be the bright young things who are going to save America — because they are.”

Overall, millennials in government like their jobs, and they’re slightly more engaged at work than baby boomers (people born between 1946-1964) and Generation X (people born between 1965-1980), according to the [2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey](#) (FEVS). Agencies are getting better at selling their missions and the importance of govern-

ment work to young professionals, but they are falling short in key areas that matter most to millennials: career advancement opportunities and recognition of innovative and creative work.

Federal data makes clear that the first five years of an employee’s government tenure are critical. In fiscal 2014, 51,376 permanent employees left government. Of those, 27,830 left before reaching the five-year mark. A total of 7,171 employees left before their first full year. OPM defines them as quits, or “voluntary resignation by an employee, abandoning one’s position, joining the military or failing to return from military furlough. Quits also include separations by the agency if an employee declines a new position or relocation.”

For some agencies, the process lasts an entire year because managers want to ensure that new employees have a consistently positive experience. Bringing employees into the fold and making them feel part of the mission is important.

Informal projects and meetings are also an important tool for connecting with new employees. Rebecca Prybell, an Attorney in her first year at HUD, is part of Under 5’s new leadership and helps coordinate monthly calls with field offices nationwide. These calls connect employees and support efforts such as improving maternity rooms and reducing HUD’s environmental footprint. “Working on volunteer projects with Under 5ers across the country has allowed us to build our networks that we will need to do the work of the agency in the years ahead,” Prybell said. Under 5 members work hard to engage with new employees nationwide, not just in D.C.; being a new federal employee has its challenges no matter the location.

There’s also “Take 5 with Under 5,” in which employees have a chance to learn virtually from one another on various topics, such as improving a skill, specific programs or the role of individual offices.

“Two-thirds of our staff is in the field,” said Laura Kunkel,

a HUD Program Analyst who has worked at the department for five years. “They don’t have the opportunities that we do to knock on somebody’s door and say, ‘Hey, I have this great idea,’ and convince people to listen. It’s much harder. So [we’re] finding those ways to get their ideas here [to headquarters]. And part of that is keeping them connected so they know who to call.”

The data also shows that millennials are leaving government at faster rates than Gen Xers and baby boomers. And although the outlook seems bleak, agencies should use this data to fuel change and new ideas that keep all employees, especially newly hired millennials, engaged and inclined to stay on board.

Agency officials must remember that onboarding is more than a single-day event.

Engagement by Key Characteristics

	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change from 2014
AGENCY TENURE					
< 4 years	69%	68%	67%	69%	+2
4-10 years	63%	62%	62%	63%	+1
> 10 years	65%	64%	63%	64%	+1
GENERATIONS					
Millennials	66%	65%	63%	65%	+2
Generation X	65%	64%	62%	63%	+1
Baby Boomers	65%	64%	63%	64%	+1
Traditionalists	69%	70%	68%	68%	0

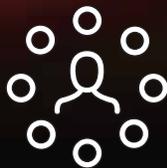
Source: OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Key: (Millennials: Born 1981 or later; Generation X: Born 1965-1980; baby boomers: Born 1946-1964; traditionalist: Born 1945 or earlier)

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING IS HERE.



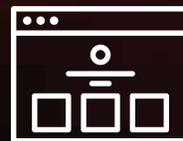
High Impact,
Interactive
Learning



Social
Learning
Experiences



On-Demand
Micro-Learning
Modules



Modern
Learning
Platform



Content
Promotion

LEARN MORE

<https://academy.govloop.com/learning-services/>

LEARNING ISN'T WHERE YOU ARE, IT'S WHAT YOU DO

An Interview with Andrew Krzmarzick,
Vice President of Learning and Development at GovLoop

What comes to mind when you hear the words “job training?” It’s a loaded question for sure, because there are multiple thoughts and feelings we’ve all associated with the training experience.

Maybe you immediately thought of a classroom setting, complete with an instructor and a sea of somewhat-engaged students. Or perhaps you thought of a PowerPoint presentation shared with a room full of conference attendees.

These experiences have no doubt shaped the way we define and view job training. “We have to actually go to a place and learn something, and that’s often called training,” said Andrew Krzmarzick, Vice President of Learning and Development at GovLoop. “But we can no longer rely solely on these single points in time where we have scheduled training.”

Imagine a series of dots on a whiteboard. Those single points represent scheduled trainings for employees. Now imagine those dots being connected with a series of lines. Krzmarzick and his team at GovLoop are focused on those lines, which represent the experiences happening outside of scheduled trainings.

They call these short, practical and engaging experiences “micro learning.”

“When we say learning, what we’re trying to suggest is that it’s not just about a point in time where you may get what you need either in a classroom or from a page turner module, it’s something that’s more ongoing,” Krzmarzick said. “It’s something that happens in a community. Learning is gradual, and it never stops. It happens in moments of need, on a day-to-day basis, so you can’t really wait until the next scheduled training.”

Krzmarzick has always viewed GovLoop’s growing knowledge network of federal, state and local government employees as a

learning community. “I saw the potential for people to answer one another’s questions or to share their experience in the trenches, via blog posts and discussion forums, to help one another to learn how to do their jobs better,” he said. “What we’re doing at GovLoop — providing real-time, relevant information through online content and trainings — is the future of learning.”

GovLoop Academy is an extension of that work. It’s essentially a new format of the online content that government employees have come to expect from GovLoop. GovLoop Academy provides more than 30 free, interactive online courses that cover a range of topics, including career, citizen engagement, human resources and procurement. Participants can earn digital badges and certificates upon completing the courses. Seeing this modern, mobile-ready website, several agencies are working with GovLoop to customize a version of the same platform to facilitate engagement with their online learning content.

Krzmarzick and his team have also designed and delivered innovative learning experiences for agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration, Office of Personnel Management and the Small Business Administration.

These learning experiences provide short bursts of information, using videos with interactive components to apply what you learn, as well as knowledge checks that test that you’ve actually acquired knowledge.

Through the power of technology, this online learning model can be scaled to reach many more people, while also saving agencies time and money.

What agencies appreciate about the learning platform is it provides a simple, clean and modern learning environment that can be accessed anywhere from any device.

“The technology is really the enabler of getting that information in real-time,” Krzmarzick said. “The more that we can create libraries of good content that are short, relevant and engaging, I think the more we’re able to support government professionals with the learning experiences they need to achieve their agencies’ missions.”

GovLoop is partnering with agencies to explore innovative ways of developing courses using an agile approach. Below are a few of the other trends in government that are redefining the future of learning:

Micro learning is about moving from deep attention to hyper learning. It allows learners to digest information in short time blocks, in between meetings, during lunch or while commuting to work.

Flipped classrooms allow learners to get good content in advance. Participants consume the content and come prepared to share their knowledge at a live in-person or online training session. This creates a dialogue and boosts participation and knowledge sharing among the group.

Minimally viable courses are an alternative approach to content development. Rather than build out an entire course, which can take months or even a year, with this approach you build just enough content. You can use real-time evaluations (both knowledge checks and satisfaction surveys) to determine effectiveness and then adjust the learning experience in subsequent weeks based on participant input.

“You don’t have to spend a lot of money,” Krzmarzick said. “Approaches like flipped classrooms and minimally viable courses can help agencies reach a wider audience and do a lot more with a lot less.”

TRENDS IN EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Employee development is about more than upward mobility. It involves keeping employees engaged through open communication with their managers, providing opportunities for employees to be innovative and excel professionally, and empowering them to share new ideas and see them implemented.





Development

INTERNAL CAREER FAIRS

Government agencies at all levels are exploring new ways to better identify, hire and retain stellar employees. Sometimes those employees are hired away from outside agencies and private firms. Other times the best candidates are down the hall or at a field office, and they're searching for new opportunities to grow professionally within the agency.

But it isn't uncommon for existing employees to be unaware of in-house job opportunities, and that puts them and hiring managers at a disadvantage. What if the right candidates are there already, but hiring managers have no idea those employees have the skills and passion to fill open positions?

This issue was the topic of discussion at a 2014 Census Bureau luncheon, and one of the ideas that emerged was an internal career fair for Census employees. The agency hosts luncheons regularly for leaders of its [workplace affinity groups](#) to meet with senior leaders about issues and challenges their members face.

"We had senior-level management that bought in and was on board and had given their support," said Rodney Miller, President of the agency's NextGen Network affinity group and a Policy Analyst at Census. Support from the agency's Chief Financial Officer was especially invaluable. It created a synergy with the HR division because the CFO controls the division's budget.

"It was already understood that the resources would be devoted to this project," Miller said.

The agency's career fair was held at the Census building in Washington, D.C., in March 2015, and drew attention from more than 100 hiring managers representing 40 program areas. Employees were excited to interact with hiring managers, and managers were excited to get the word out about their programs, Miller said.

Each branch director posted the jobs they wanted to fill in 2015 for all employees to see. In the weeks leading up to the event, employees had access to nearly two dozen free training courses on topics such as interviewing techniques and resume development.

"It was definitely a morale boost," Miller said. "It gave people the opportunity to feel empowered...because a lot of folks felt like if you weren't in the loop, you were missing out on opportunities. [The fair] gave them the opportunity to see what was out there and engage hiring manager directly."

Nicole Turner, Chief of the Strategic Analysis and Planning Office at Census, said the fair gave managers the chance to see employees whom they otherwise would not have seen. For jobs posted online, usually only the top 10 resumes matching the job description and qualifications make it to hiring managers via USAJobs.gov.

At least 42 positions were filled as a result of the career fair, Miller said.

That's great news for the people who found new jobs and for the hiring managers, but what about the programs that lost star employees? And what about employees who feared their managers might see them at the fair talking to another program office?

Miller said these concerns were addressed early on. For starters, the program areas would have been hiring regardless of the career fair, which meant employees would have been able to compete for those jobs. He also referred to the best-selling book "Good to Great," in which Author [Jim Collins explains](#) how good companies became great ones. One point Collins makes is that great companies not only have the right people on the bus, but they are also in the right seats.

Programs may have talented individuals who aren't reaching their full potential, and they would be a better fit in a different program or role, Miller said. This benefits both the employees and Census as a whole.

Turner, who participated in the fair as a hiring manager and keynote speaker, agreed.

"That's just a natural progression," she said of employees moving on to new opportunities. "I tell my employees, 'I'm grooming you to leave me or kick me out.'"



Development

USING DATA TO IMPROVE WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is more than just an annual pulse check of employee sentiments about their work environment, agency leadership and overall job satisfaction.

The ultimate purpose of the OPM-administered survey is to serve as a management tool to drive change and increase employee engagement and productivity. "This year OPM is providing an even broader audience with access to the FEVS results through the [UnlockTalent.gov dashboard](#)," OPM Director Beth Cobert said in October, following the release of the 2015 survey. "This innovative tool, which allows agency leaders and employees to drill down into their data, will now be universally available."

Cobert said the goal is to help managers dissect and improve performance. OPM wants agencies to use the data to understand where things are working well, find pockets of excellence in their agencies and figure out how to expand them. (See Page XX to learn how HUD increased its engagement scores over time.)

"One of the things we've done this year in working with agencies that's been a big part of the President's Management Agenda is to have every agency designate a senior accountability official to think about employee engagement," Cobert said. The focus on boosting engagement seems to be working — according to this year's FEVS results, federal employees feel slightly more engaged at their agencies than they did a year ago.

More than 400,000 employees at 82 federal agencies participated in FEVS this year, with about 49 percent of respondents identifying as baby boomers, followed by Generation X at 39 percent and millennials at 11 percent of respondents.

Overall, employee engagement rose 1 percentage point to 64 percent this year after dipping slightly in 2014. OPM defines employee engagement as "an employee's

the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Federal Labor Relations Authority, and Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service saw the highest engagement scores.

Although the government's overall engagement score is up, some agencies still lag far below the governmentwide score. For example, DHS has seen its overall employee engagement score steadily decline from 60 percent in 2011 to 53 percent this year.

Addressing Poor Performance

Dealing with poor performers who cannot or will not improve is an area that still needs improvement in government, according to the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. "The federal government is also emphasizing employee engagement as the critical key to improving and maintaining performance," according to the Office of Personnel Management. In general, the best way for supervisors to handle poor performance issues is to take steps to avoid performance problems before they occur. For example:

-  *Communicate clear performance standards & expectations to employees.*
-  *Provide regular and frequent feedback on performance.*
-  *Reward & recognize good performance, informally and formally.*
-  *Make full use of the probationary period for new employees.*

When asked about engagement scores at DHS, Kimya Lee, Senior Adviser on Research and Evaluation at OPM, said there are pockets within the department that have seen their scores improve, and "you can't move the full ship at the highest level without moving the individual offices."

In 2014, the Obama administration set a top-line goal of raising the engagement index score from 63 percent in 2014

sense of purpose, manifest in the level of dedication, persistence and effort that he or she puts into the work and into the overall commitment to an agency and its mission."

"While the change is small, it is statistically significant," Cobert said of the score. "An agency that engages its employees and ensures a work environment where each employee can reach his or her potential, in turn has a strong impact on the agency's ability to achieve its mission goal."

NASA, the Federal Trade Commission and the Office of Management and Budget had the highest engagement score — 78 percent — among large agencies. For small agencies,

to 67 percent in 2016. Considering the modest gain of 1 percentage point this year, that seems ambitious but not impossible.

"We set a goal about where we wanted to be, [and] we've seen individual agencies of different sizes make real progress against that goal, and so we're going to continue to work on driving that improvement," Cobert said. "And I think one of the core things we've done in helping get us there is to make this an overall agency leadership commitment. It is not the responsibility solely of the human resources department; it is something that agency leadership has embraced."



Development

IMPLEMENTING A SKILLS-SHARING MODEL

For managers and employees alike, it often seems there aren't enough hours in the day to tackle every priority project.

As the weeks and months roll by, projects end up on the backburner. What if there was another option, a way to complete those projects and solicit the help of enthusiastic employees working in other parts of your agency?

That's the idea behind OPM's GovConnect Initiative, which is currently being pilot tested at the Social Security Administration.

"The goal of GovConnect is to develop federal workforce skills through cross-agency collaboration and teamwork, to enable more agile response to mission demands without being unnecessarily limited by organizational silos," said Melissa Kline Lee, GovConnect Program Manager.

At SSA, "we developed a [GovConnect] model, [and] we call it our homegrown version," said Reginald Wells, Deputy Commissioner for HR and CHCO. "It's called Skills Connect."

The pilot launched in fiscal 2015 and, so far, appears to be the answer to a chronic challenge for SSA component organizations that haven't been able to complete some projects because they don't have the right talent or enough talent to move forward, Wells said.

Skills Connect launched with 125 projects in need of employee expertise. Of the 700 people who applied, 263 were chosen to participate. The youngest was 24, and the oldest was 88. SSA tracks the demographics of its applicants and whether they are bargaining unit members to measure interest in the pilot and involvement across the workforce.

"We have an 88-year-old employee who's still interested in doing new things," Wells said. "I think it's a really nice snapshot for us that we have a very engaged workforce."

The agencywide pilot was launched in SSA's smallest region — Boston — and its largest region — Atlanta, and at headquarters. "It's really project-driven, and it allowed employees who might be on the other side of the country to get involved with the initiative," Wells said. "It's really a skills-sharing model," and supervisors are encouraged to be generous in sharing their talent with other parts of SSA.

SSA Commissioner Carolyn Colvin wanted a program that would let employees get varied and cross-component experiences without having to physically move. For employees with disabilities, moving around the country for new opportunities may not be feasible, so being able to work virtually has been a huge benefit for them.

Participating employees can use up to 20 percent of their workweek, pending supervisory approval, to work on Skills Connect projects.

The results of the pilot test are still coming in, but Wells is pleased with what he sees so far.

"Anecdotally, I can tell you that both the participants considered it amazing that they had this opportunity to step outside their normal responsibilities and get involved in the project, a meaningful project, and bring real value to it," he said. "And the people who posted the projects, we heard absolutely nothing negative. In fact, in some cases, what they're reporting back to us is that they're getting more out of it than they envisioned."

Wells shared the story of a claims representative in Greenville, Miss., who worked with SSA's Baltimore office to test new automation capabilities in the field. The employee was in need of that kind of technology and was able to test it before it went into production on a larger scale, he said.

Although the projects launched in fiscal 2015, they run for six months, so some won't be completed until fiscal 2016.

"All of these [Skills Connect] projects are geared toward better service to the public or support of the workforce that is delivering service to the public," Wells said.



Spotlight **WHY JOB ROTATIONS ARE VITAL TO THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE**

Both current and former federal employees argue that SESers need job rotations to grow professionally and prepare to meet the government's most pressing needs. Elizabeth Kolmstetter, Chief Human Capital Officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development is one of those proponents. Her story is one example of the valuable opportunities that come from job rotations.

When Elizabeth Kolmstetter took a detail to the newly forming Transportation Security Administration in the wake of 9/11, no training manual or peer advice could've prepared her for the road ahead.

At the time, TSA was in its infancy, without divisions or an established infrastructure. Kolmstetter was tapped to run the selection and workforce development program for all airport screeners nationwide. What helped prepare her more than anything was past experience, including her role as Senior Director for Standards, Assessment and Certification at the National Skill Standards Board and the FBI's first Chief of Personnel Assessment and Research and Industrial-Organizational Psychologist.

"I learned early in my SES career that it's not really about a job, but it's about your service and your executive skills, and being able to apply them as the mission [and] the organization needs change," said Kolmstetter, who was certified into the Senior Executive Service in 2004.

In many ways, Kolmstetter embodies the vision for the Senior Executive Service, which was established by Congress to ensure government executives are responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the nation and are of the highest quality.

Both current and former government employees argue that SESers need job rotations to grow professionally. Failure to do so puts both executives and government agencies at a disadvantage. Senior executives miss out on gaining valuable and varied perspectives that equip them to tackle the government's most pressing problems.

Some have called for these rotational programs, which are not used regularly government-wide, to be mandatory for senior executives. Another suggestion is starting with a cadre of mobile senior executives, who rotate to different agencies and bring diverse experiences and perspectives. That hasn't happened either, but the topic of job rotations is expected to be included in SES reforms due out in the fall of 2015.



"The focus really was on all things in our executive service," said Reginald Wells, SSA's CHCO and Deputy Commissioner for HR. Wells is on the 24-member panel formed by the White House to develop the reform proposal. The group looked at how the Senior Executive Service is perceived, how SES members feel about their work in government and to what extent the government is providing them appropriate onboarding, training and development to adequately tackle major responsibilities.

"I'm such a proponent of SES mobility, as was envisioned when the SES was started," Kolmstetter said. "It wasn't supposed to be stay in the same job, the same division, office, or even same agency for 10, 15, or 20 years once you're in the SES. Your ability to serve the government is limited by having only one office or one agency view and experience. You have to walk in the shoes of a leader in another agency, mission or role to gain that broadening perspective."

Kolmstetter, a career senior executive, has worked at seven federal agencies since starting her government career in 1993 at the FBI.

But there are personal concerns among senior executives who are hesitant to move around and accept details. Some are concerned about derailing their careers or being out of sight, out of mind. It's easier to stay in the same organization where you know how the politics and the systems work. In many ways it is easier to get things done and even the performance management and reward system is structured to incentivize longevity and tenure in one agency. It's much harder to go into an organization at a high level and have to re-learn those things. Kolmstetter knows that all too well.

Since 2013, she has served as Chief Human Capital Officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development. In early October 2015 she started a six-month detail to OMB's Office of Performance and Personnel Management, where she is helping the administration implement HR reforms. At the same time she is

sharpening her resource management chops through an up-and close experience with budget planning, processing and decision making for the government.

But she's still a USAID employee at heart.

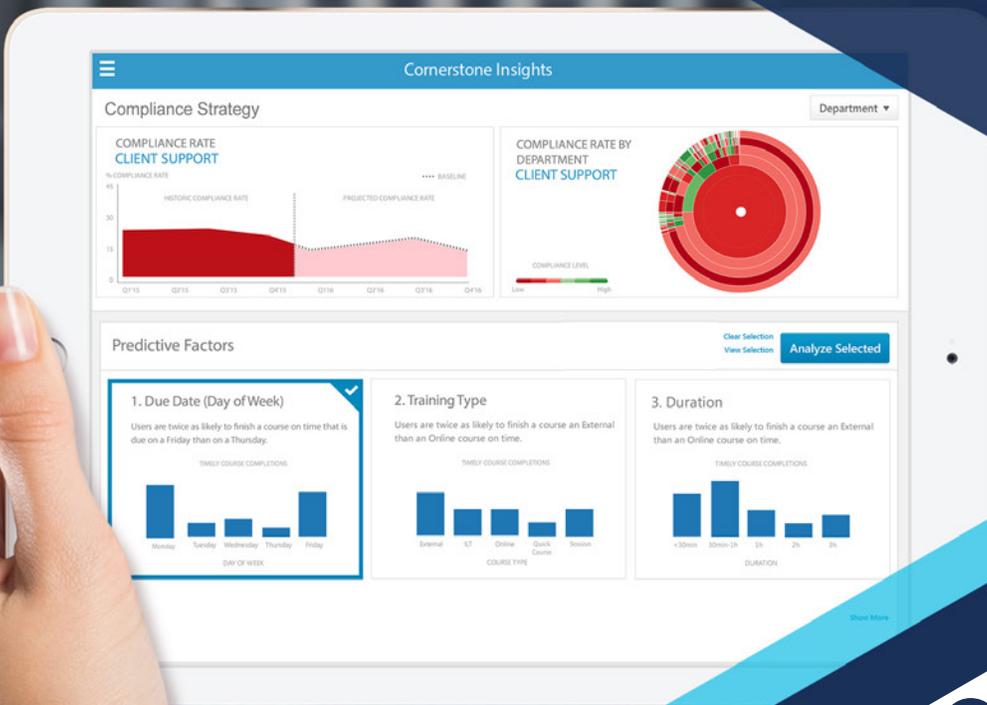
"It's still my home agency and I do stay engaged with my team and in touch with what is going on," she said. "It's never easy to leave something you're really in the midst of, but one of the things I say to the people I mentor is, 'when the door opens and an opportunity comes, you may never get that chance again.' There's never going to be the perfect time.

"If you build a good strong team, it's actually a growth opportunity for your team to take on," she said. "No leader should be so indispensable that everything falls apart when they leave."



Realizing the Potential of the Government Workforce of the Future

Cornerstone's cloud-based talent management software empowers a lifetime of learning and development that is fundamental to the growth of employees and organizations. From recruitment, onboarding, training and collaboration, to performance management, compensation, succession planning and analytics, Cornerstone helps organizations increase employee engagement and retention.



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THE POWER OF PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS IN GOVERNMENT HR

An Interview with Jim Gill, Vice President, Government, at Cornerstone

When it comes to workforce management

in government, it's not enough for HR professionals to know what happened in the past or even why it happened.

To better predict future trends and their agencies' needs, professionals need to know what will happen and what they should do about it. A small but growing number of government agencies are turning to analytics to drive these insightful, data-driven outcomes.

"There are some astute government leaders who are taking the next steps around predictive analytics to drive the future of HR in government," said Jim Gill, Vice President, Government, at Cornerstone. "But, in general, the public sector is still lagging in the adoption of data analytics."

According to a survey by the government IT networking group MeriTalk, agencies could save a projected \$500 billion if they fully embraced big data to increase efficiencies and enable smarter decision-making.

One of the biggest impediments is that senior leaders often doubt the efficiencies that data analytics programs provide, including cost savings. Of the 150 IT executives included in the MeriTalk survey, only 31 percent believed big data solutions would deliver efficiencies.

"Therefore, it's incumbent upon private and public-sector partnerships and organizations like ours to clearly demonstrate the value of analytics," Gill said.

At a time when agencies' budgets are shrinking, and they're spending up to half of their budgets on workforce salary and personnel support functions, it's crucial that they optimize workforce management and generate long-term savings to fund other mission services.

"When analytics is applied correctly, organizations can better predict their high per-

formers; their flight risks; who and why those people are leaving or staying; who not to hire; and how to proactively manage talent," Gill said. "Senior leaders understand that making data-driven decisions is the intelligent choice for the workforce of the future."

In the suite of analytics tools, what differentiates predictive analytics is that it provides a prediction of future outcomes, based on historical data. It helps to answer the question: what will happen? There's also prescriptive analytics, which provides agencies with recommendations based on a predictive model output. This helps agencies decide what they should do.

With these benefits in mind, it's hard to fathom why some agencies are leery about data analytics. But lack of confidence isn't the only barrier agencies must overcome.

"The slow uptake of analytics in government also stems partly from the fact that putting big data to work demands a process shift and a culture shift to get your data in one place for public agencies to use," Gill said. "Also, getting buy-in isn't always easy."

Implementing analytics requires a strong visionary leader, with the right team of resources, he added.

"Regardless of what software tools leaders use, they also need to be mindful that implementing a project like this, especially in the area of predictive or prescriptive analytics, means they need a new set of specialized resources in the office of the Chief Human Capital Officer or Chief Human Resources Officer," Gill said.

Those key roles and skillsets include:

- A Change Agent, who understands what drives the business

- A Workforce Behavior Expert to ensure critical success behaviors and functions are understood among the team
- A Workforce Scientist, who can align critical key performance indicators with data. This individual helps you understand what's available, what's needed and how to map your strategy
- A Data Scientist, who provides data validation and analysis expertise that ensures outcomes align with targets

"Data analytics is a progressive journey," Gill said. "The key for agencies is to ask the right business questions they want to solve and understand what data is needed to unlock that answer."

Gill recommends that agencies utilize the key roles and skillsets mentioned earlier to develop a workforce data strategy that addresses challenges of not capturing enough data to analyze or the right data. "At Cornerstone, we believe a unified talent management suite allows you to keep all your talent data and your people data in one, unified system or repository, making it easier to manage the full lifecycle of the employee," he said.

For many years, government used niche, customized solutions and processes to address human capital issues, such as recruiting and learning. With the evolution of next generation technologies, agencies can now unify these processes using cloud-based systems and automation.

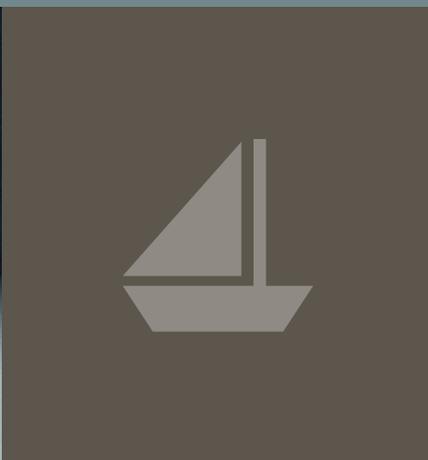
"We believe the days of buying, building, and maintaining large, on-premise HR systems are fading fast," Gill said. "By adopting next-generation technologies, agencies can reduce overhead and better support mission-critical operations. This kind of innovation is essential in recruiting, training and retaining talent for the federal workforce of the future."

TRENDS IN RETIREMENT

When seasoned employees retire from government service, they take with them a wealth of knowledge that cannot easily be replaced. That's why agencies must ensure that knowledge is not only shared but effectively transferred to the next generation of workers before it's too late.



 HHS IDEA LAB





Retirement

PHASED RETIREMENT

Phased retirement was a long time coming after Congress approved the program and President Obama signed it into law for the federal workforce in 2012.

It took another two years for [OPM to issue a final rule](#) for the program, informing agencies and employees about who may elect phased retirement, what benefits are provided during phased retirement, how OPM intends to compute the annuity payable during and after phased retirement, and how employees may fully retire.

Under the program, eligible federal employees are paid for working 20 hours a week, and they can collect half of their annuity at the same time. The program mandates that they spend at least 20 percent of their hours mentoring younger employees.

“The main purpose of phased retirement is to enhance the mentoring and training of the employees who will be filling the positions or taking on the duties of more experienced retiring employees,” [according to OPM](#).

The program is slowly taking hold at some agencies but has not yet been implemented governmentwide. When asked how it’s working with establishing and promoting phased retirement programs at agencies, OPM told GovLoop that “agencies may use phased retirement at their discretion to allow full-time employees to work a part-time schedule while beginning to draw retirement benefits. OPM’s role is to support agencies and to provide guidance on the use of phased retirement, not to mandate agency-specific policies, implementation plans or timelines.”

EPA, HUD and NASA are among the agencies that have taken the leap and are offering phased retirement to employees. However, there are some caveats. At NASA,

for example, although the agency has implemented phased retirement, not all of its centers are participating in the program, [according to the agency](#).

“The implementation of phased retirement requires a complex realignment of end-of-career planning for both individuals and agencies,” OPM said in its final rule. “Multiple administrative and technical processes either have to be established or adjusted to accommodate phased retirement.”

At SSA, resources are holding back implementation of the program, CHCO Wells said. “We’ve communicated to our employees and to our unions that as it stands right now, we’re not looking to implement [phased retirement] in the near future,” he said.

That’s not to say SSA officials won’t consider implementing it at a later time, Wells added. To implement phased retirement, an agency must have the flexibility of having employees who are partially retired, but SSA needs all hands on deck right now, he said. For those who want to move gradually into retirement, SSA already has options for them:

- ▲ Gradual retirement, a program SSA has had for years, allows employees to use their leave time or existing flexible work schedules, pending supervisory approval, to manage their time in such a way that gives them significant time off.
- ▲ Trial retirement allows employees to actually retire, but they must enter into an agreement with management that allows them to return to work if they are not satisfied with retirement.
- ▲ Voluntary Early Retirement Authority allows agencies that are undergoing substantial restructuring, reshaping, downsiz-

ing, transfer of function, or reorganization to temporarily lower the age and service requirements in order to increase the number of employees who are eligible for retirement.

“With those kinds of options, we just didn’t feel it was a good time for us to move into phased retirement,” Wells said, “and I’ve noticed that most of the agencies are treading very carefully.”

The Interior Department issued guidance for implementing phased retirement in early fiscal 2016. Mary Pletcher, Interior’s Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity, is not taking a one-size-fits-all approach to phased retirement because each bureau has a diverse workforce.

Guidance includes the length of the phased retirement opportunity, but bureaus may determine which of Interior’s more than 350 occupations can participate, based on mission needs.

Bureaus will implement programs during calendar year 2016 and should be done by year’s end. Some will be ready at the beginning of 2016.

“It comes down to succession planning and mentoring and ensuring the next generation of our workforce is able to learn from the workforce that has contributed much of their lives to our mission,” Pletcher said. “It’s one tool that we’ll have in the toolkit, with a combination of other programs and mentoring.”

“With 10,000 employees able to retire right now and another 10,000 over the next five years, we need to be doing everything that we can to make sure that they transfer their knowledge to the next generation of the workforce,” she said.



Retirement

CLOUD-BASED KNOWLEDGE SHARING

One of the major challenges agencies face is how best to identify and transfer years' worth of knowledge before employees leave for new jobs or retire.

As a result, it's integral to begin implementing techniques to ensure that agencies are able to benefit from the knowledge that retiring employees might possess.

The Health and Human Services Department fostered one initiative through its [Ignite Accelerator](#) that might be the solution for this problem. Cue the TEAK initiative.

A team of employees at the National Institutes of Health developed an easy-to-use interface that lets employees connect with subject-matter experts across the federal space. Called the Tool for Enhancing Agency Knowledge, TEAK enables agencies to search through an internal database of some 10,000 experts and locate the right person in a matter of seconds. GovLoop spoke with Vinay Pai, Program Director at the Division of Applied Science and Technology at NIH's National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB), about developing the interface.

It all started with a simple request. "We needed to find out what our sister agency was doing in a particular area of research," Pai said. "And I was struck by the fact that their

portfolio was so diffused, it was hard to find that one person who could give the information quickly. It made me ask, 'Why should it be this hard?'"

It was with that question in mind that a team from NIBIB took part in the Ignite Accelerator, examining the problem of knowledge sharing across agencies. The accelerator is a program for HHS staff who want to improve the way their program, office or agency works.

"The question is how do you connect the dots between people and the knowledge they have to share," Pai said. "Rather than letting everyone stay in their silos, we created an easy-to-use interface, which allows you to connect subject-matter experts across the federal space."

Following the three-month challenge in the summer of 2015, Pai and his team have continued to develop the database, bringing about 10,000 program officers within NIH into the system. The database will evolve as people come and leave.

"By connecting the dots, we allow for more intuitive knowledge share across agencies and individuals," he said. The next step is for TEAK to move to the cloud within the next few months to effectively create a sustainable peer-learning network.

Knowledge sharing among outgoing employees is a reality that stretches past online interfaces such as TEAK. Personnel changes at federal agencies are inevitable, but losing valuable information that retiring employees possess should not be. "The truth is, only collective knowledge is power," [according to the book "The Insider's Guide to Supervising Government Employees."](#) "Individual knowledge that is not shared leads to irrelevance and delayed solutions. When that knowledge is shared in a collaborative manner, the collective understanding of issues, obstacles, and possibilities grows exponentially."

Agencies must set sustainable processes to capture and share knowledge from outgoing employees with current staff. Neglecting to do so will rob and has robbed agencies of invaluable techniques, information and approaches that their outgoing employees fail to pass on.

Simply waiting for employees to share their knowledge as they begin to retire is not enough. Instead, agencies must set a precedent from the top down. It is only then that retirement can truly be just a personnel loss — not a major informational one.



Retirement

GETTING EXPERTISE FROM A KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROCESS

In Maryland's Montgomery County, the average age of public servants is 46.

This reality isn't exclusive to the county but one faced by governments nationwide as their workforces age and fewer younger professionals are hired and groomed to fill those positions.

"It's not a young workforce," said Shawn Stokes, Director of the county's Office of HR. "Montgomery County is [a] fabulous place to live, [and a] fabulous place to work. People come here, they stay [and] they don't leave. And I think that was something that was acknowledged many years ago."

The county responded by developing a process that allows retirees to come back and work for a limited amount of time. It's simply called the knowledge transfer process, Stokes said, adding that it's one of the things that impressed her when she became head of OHR earlier this year.

"We have a situation here where we can allow a person who's going to retire up to a year to come back and work on transferring their knowledge," Stokes said. "Of course it's subject to individual budgets of the department, but just having that opportunity I think is really great."

One thing participants cannot do is receive a pension if they are working full time. But depending on the particular position — if it's part-time or temporary, for example — and how it is classified, employees may be able to receive a pension and a paycheck.

"Executives as well as the department heads love this option and are very supportive of managers when we're going through transition of people retiring. So I've seen it really be a great asset and benefit to the county since I've been here," Stokes said.

Retirees come back and work on knowledge transfer with somebody who was recently hired. Stokes approves the applications for those who want to participate.

One aspect she would like to improve is promotion of the transfer process. "I don't know that we advertise it well," Stokes noted. "That, to me, is about how we tell our story."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR HR?



Managing a multigenerational workforce is the new normal for government. Working together under one roof are millennials, Generation Xers, baby boomers and what the government refers to as Traditionalists, or those born in 1945 and earlier.



Each of these groups has different needs and aspirations, but what unites them is their desire to do meaningful work. As a strategic partner in the workforce, HR plays a key role in helping employees achieve their full potential and creating a work environment that entices talented employees to join the organization and experienced workers to stay and share their knowledge.



At the same time, HR professionals are adjusting to new ways of doing business using automation, social media and cloud technologies. They must be open to learning and applying new techniques for attracting and retaining employees of all ages, especially millennials.



And many HR organizations are trying to do more with less, while facing budget uncertainties. But the government innovators in this guide prove there are savings to be had and less conventional approaches to institutionalizing change when funding is scarce. Take HUD, for example. Something as simple as making sure new employees have someone to eat lunch with makes a huge difference.

Find the employees at your organization who have a passion for people and solicit their help. SSA did just that and managed to not only meet managers' needs, but also give employees opportunities to try new things.



If there's an initiative or approach featured in this guide that resonates with you, consider reaching out to that office or individual to exchange notes and heed their lessons learned. That's what the future of HR is all about.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN



ANALYZE THE DATA

For agencies, the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is an invaluable resource. The survey is full of insightful data about employee sentiments toward their supervisors, senior leaders and overall work satisfaction. Look for patterns in the data and make comparisons. Compare your agency's results to the governmentwide score and benchmarks.



USE OTHER SOURCES

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey isn't your only source. Agencies at all levels of government can and should use other sources of qualitative or quantitative data to measure employee engagement, such as internal surveys or focus groups. Stay interviews are also great sources for data. They help managers understand what makes an employee stay at the agency, and what factors could cause them to leave.



DETERMINE AREAS OF FOCUS

Choose a few areas to focus on for improvement, or continue making improvements in an area you previously identified. If you're having trouble selecting an area, start tackling issues that can produce quick wins and build momentum for change.



DETERMINE ACTIONS

Actions should be realistic. They should also have a manageable scope and timeframe. Include measures and ways of tracking progress.



ENGAGE LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

Do not work in silos. This is a team effort. Involve senior leaders, managers and supervisors. They can help to reach all components and levels of the agency.



BE TRANSPARENT

Keep employees informed of progress made, and include them at key stages. Make employees aware of actions that are being implemented, and be open to constructive feedback. Remember, it's a team effort!



REVIEW PROGRESS

Monitor progress along the way and review results. Be sure to communicate progress and the final outcome.

SOURCE: Adapted from the Office of Personnel Management, 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

ABOUT GOVLOOP

GovLoop's mission is to "connect government to improve government." We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 200,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

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