govloop

GovLoop Community Pulse

Your snapshot of issues and resources that matter most to the GovLoop community

In this issue

We've heard a lot from community members over the past three months about what matters most to them, and we want to share those insights with you. We're keeping an ear to the ground through community surveys, one-on-one interviews with government employees and firsthand accounts from public servants, all of which are included in the new GovLoop Community Pulse. In it, you'll learn what issues are top of mind for your government peers, what GovLoop resources they're using to tackle those issues, as well as links to insightful news nuggets you might have missed.

It seems like almost overnight, our conversations, work agendas and personal priorities dramatically shifted. **This new COVID-19 era has called into question rules and policies that were once sacred, it has challenged the notion that some jobs just aren't suited for telework, and it has underscored the dire need for strong leadership and clarity, especially during times of uncertainty.**

What do these changes mean for government employees and what support do they need personally and professionally? Well, we're tapping into the power of community to help answer those questions.

In this issue, you'll find resources and insights centered on three main areas that are top of mind for the GovLoop community as we all navigate change:

1) Management and leadership

2) Workforce empowerment through tools and technology

3) How culture impacts the employee experience
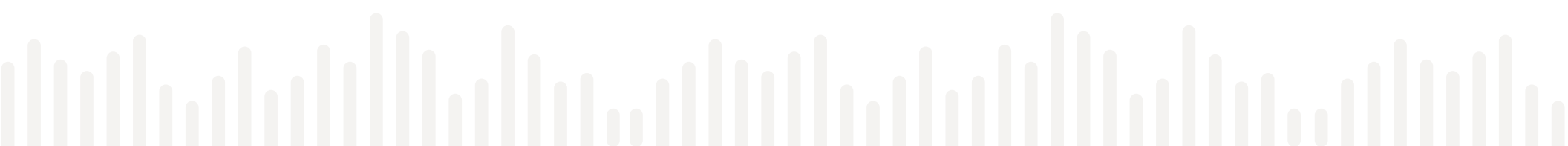
What's top of mind for public servants

In March 2020, we surveyed 500 GovLoop community members to learn what's top of mind for govies, what resources they are perusing on **GovLoop.com** and other platforms, and how their agencies responded to the coronavirus.

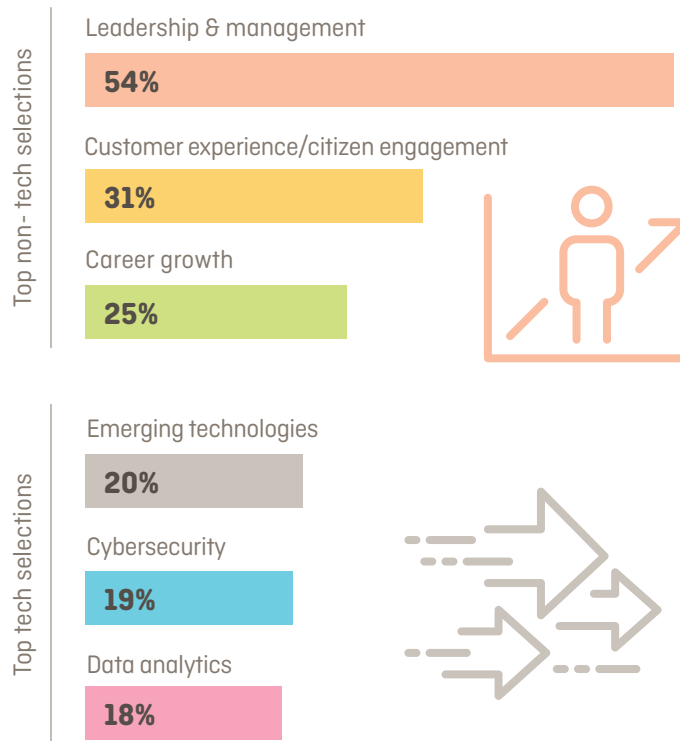Here's the breakdown of who responded to our survey:

17% Industry/ other

30% Federal government

26% Local government

27% State government
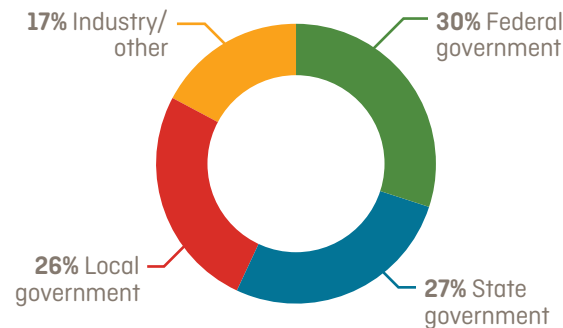
*"This has caused leaders to **rethink everything that we do**. How to handle clients as well as keep the business working."*

- Survey respondent

For the first quarter of 2020 (January-March), here's what your peers said they were reading on GovLoop. com and other platforms. They selected their top three responses.

Top non- tech selections

Leadership & management
54%

Customer experience/citizen engagement
31%

Career growth
25%

Top tech selections

Emerging technologies
20%

Cybersecurity
19%

Data analytics
18%

*"The majority of our agency's personnel need a lot of **upskilling**, especially in terms of technology use."*

- Survey respondent

When the GovLoop survey was initially created and released in mid-March, COVID-19 was very much a novel virus in the U.S., and many agencies had not yet released a clear response plan for employees. Even then, we heard from several readers that **COVID-19, business continuity, crisis management, telework, and change management** were top of mind. That still holds true today.

Key takeaways from the data

In times of crisis or calm, the focus must be on people. Employees are looking for tools and resources to help them lead effectively, whether that's peer management or learning how to **manage up** by figuring out who they are, who their boss is, and finding where they both meet.

What we saw in the survey data was a tale of two workforces:

- Those where upper management and IT leaders worked together — long before COVID-19 — to empower and equip employees for work beyond the office.

- Others that were scrambling to not only communicate changes but also to provide the necessary direction and technology for the influx of teleworkers.

"I would like to see IT and upper management better understand the effect [that] updates they implement have on the workers in the field," one community member said. Another added that "planning for these types of situations, instead of playing catch up while it gets worse" is vital.

Questions to consider:

In my current role, how can I lead from where I am, especially during times of crisis? What's one action I can take today to prepare myself?

Top Posts on GovLoop.com (February – April)

Making Sense of OPM's Coronavirus Guidance

The Best Government Conferences of 2020 [COVID-19 Update]

15 Ways to Get Your Mojo Back During the COVID-19 Pandemic

How to Prep Your Team for Quarantine Telework

Are You in Limbo About Your Telework Status?

Debunking 5 Misconceptions About Federal Paid Leave

The 2 Traits That Leaders Need When Working From Home

The Importance of Feeling Valued at Work

It's OK to Ask for Help

7 Steps to Make Your Virtual Presentations Accessible

COMMUNICATIONS, LEADERSHIP
IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

Nicole Blake Johnson

I read a statement online this week that I cannot stop thinking about: "You are [...] from home; you are at your home during a crisis trying to work."

Replace the word home with hospital, office or wherever basecamp is for you, [...] how we describe what many of us are facing right now. It took me a week to ful[...] thoughts before writing this post because I couldn't quite pinpoint how I was fe[...] was hearing from both public and private sector employees and how best to ac[...] array of emotions.

CAREER, LEADERSHIP
HOW TO PREP YOUR TEAM FOR QUARANTINE TELEWORK

Deborah Smith Cook   *March 6, 2020*

Favorite ☆

A closer look at topics you care about

Management, tools and culture — these are all things that matter to employees. But in the past three months, with the coronavirus outbreak morphing into a pandemic and the norms in our public and private lives upended, these three issues have become a lot more important, no?

At least, that's what we found GovLoop community members felt. Here is an abridged roundup of the insights, advice and stories that have been trending in the government community this most recent quarter of the year.
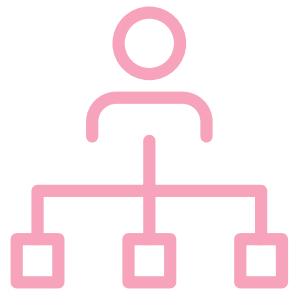
1 Leadership & management
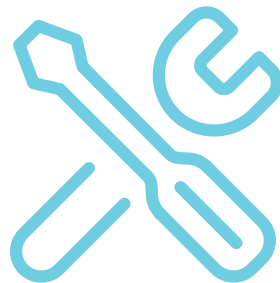
2 Empowerment through tools

3 Culture during COVID-19

1 Leadership & management

Strong leadership makes a difference in uncertain times. And leaders need inspiration from their colleagues to figure out how to manage their people from home during a crisis. Below is some inspiration!

How to Prep Your Team for Quarantine Telework

"We know that some employees are more 'cut out' for working remotely, just as there are others who prefer to work in an office. But how do we help everyone, workers and leaders alike, work effectively in this new environment?

Here are some suggestions:

- **Establish structure and routine**, such as weekly or daily stand-ups, or "hot hours" when everyone is available for meetings or virtual drop-ins.

- **Communication is perhaps the most important job of the leader in times of crisis.** Err on the side of overcommunication. Insist on video conferencing whenever possible. "Seeing" the team enhances communication through facial expressions and body language.

- **Don't forget that employees did not choose to work remotely.** They might welcome the opportunity, and they might love it eventually, but right now it's one huge change that could be forced on them.

Read the full blog

The 2 Traits That Leaders Need When Working From Home

"Being mandated to work from home is so much more than simply bringing your laptop home and occasionally checking emails. It's being available to children and pets, it's seeing home projects that are waiting to be done.

While you are at home trying to work, there are two character traits that will make it a little more bearable: **being adaptable and being available."**

Read the full blog

Mika's Management Advice on Managing Teleworkers

"My top tip for managing teleworkers is to consider **not doing anything different at all** than you would if you were managing your employees at your regular office.

What do I mean by that? Clarity in communication and expectations.

Make sure that your employees understand what your expectations are for accessibility, responsiveness and changes in work schedule, if they should have to do that. All of those things are incredibly important, just as they are in the regular office, especially even more so when they're teleworking."

Watch the video

We know you want more!

Here are other resources to check out:

Healthy Leadership Practices to Cure What Ails You

Q&A: How Can I Manage Well Remotely?

Remote Employees – 3 Things for Public Managers to Consider

4 Tips for Communicating With Remote Project Team Members

A Leader's Guide to Facilitating Virtual Meetings

Empowerment through tools

Without the right equipment, the remote workforce can't do its job. The right equipment can include obtaining secure collaboration software or setting up a stress management toolkit. Employees need to be empowered to continue essential operations by having the tools they need at their fingertips.

Stress management

Stress Relief When Work Is Also at Home

"Now, more than ever, government leaders and essential personnel need to find a way to relieve stress when work follows you everywhere you go."

Stress Management in Extraordinary Times

"First, we need to understand that effective stress management is **more than simply prioritizing schedules and upping our exercise regimens**. Although both are excellent tools in managing stress, it's important that we adopt a comprehensive approach to combat stress."

Survival Skills for the Government Employee

"As public servants, we don't get the luxury of staying home when times get tough. We are the people that are turned to in order to assist others during tough times. Stress comes at us from many different angles including colleagues, supervisors, customers, new mandates, new technology and now a pandemic – and these are only work-related stressors."

Cybersecurity

Texas CISO Warns of Ransomware Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

"Texas Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) Nancy Rainosek says agencies shouldn't forget about cybercrime during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rainosek: '**Ransomware is a serious challenge for state and local government agencies** because they need their systems and files to fulfill their missions and serve the public. For example, when a county gets infected by ransomware it can stop essential government services such as issuance of marriage licenses, title searches for real estate transactions, delivery of or billing for utilities, storage of criminal evidence, and performing traffic stops because video systems are impacted. That's just a sample of the services that we've seen impacted.'"

Work From Home Cybersecurity

"Public sector staff can follow these top tips to mitigate risk and protect both public and personal networks and information.

1. Understand you are a target
2. Follow your employer's security practices
3. Secure your home network
4. Follow basic cybersecurity hygiene"

We know you want more!

Here are other resources to check out:

8 Tips for Getting Into the At-Home Exercise Habit

How to Procure Accessible Tech to Support Your Agency's Digital Communication

Have You Heard About General Assembly?

Virtual Meeting Rules of Engagement

Culture during COVID-19

In this time of crisis, operating business as usual won't cut it. That means more empathy, more resilience, more mindfulness, more communication and more breaks. Public servants have committed to continue essential operations at this time, so how are they doing so while coping?

It's OK to Ask for Help

"I love what a wise leader told me a few weeks ago: **This is not business as usual; this is business as best we can.** Yes, the mission is still intact, but it should not be achieved at the expense of your team's health and well-being. It's during times of crisis that employees need an environment where it is not only OK — but regularly communicated and demonstrated — that they can and should ask for help."

Read the full blog

Overcoming Culture Problems When Teleworking

"If you have worked in human resources for some time (both in private and public sectors) like me, then you are asking why more organizations aren't [teleworking] already. **The answer lies in your culture.** For example, your organization may be hitting all the right bells as it pertains to public policy but lacking sorely in the areas of employee development and, hence, workplace culture. Culture is not free popcorn or coffee or blue jean Fridays. Culture is regular communication with your staff – all of your staff, not just a few of those deemed 'essential.'"

Read the full blog

Building Empathy to Address Critical Talent Gaps

"Every organization has a culture that shapes behavior and drives performance. In the most empathetic organizations, the culture is intentionally shaped and managed. Leaders prioritize creating a workplace where people-centered behaviors are recognized and rewarded. And individuals are consistently recognized for delivering empathetic customer experience. **By intentionally creating cultures that inspire engagement and commitment, high empathy organizations improve outcomes through high-quality employee experience**."

Read the full blog

We know you want more!

Here are other resources to check out:

Govies Going Above and Beyond During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Stepping Away From "Hurry Sickness"

How to Network While Practicing Social Distancing

How to Socialize When Practicing Social Distancing

Hypocrisy: The Engagement Killer

What Will the Public Sector Be Like After COVID-19 Virus?

On the radar

When strategies and initiatives come down from the top, it's rarely clear early on what they mean for all employees. Below we've highlighted three governmentwide efforts to put on your radar, along with context about why it should matter to you. You don't have to be an expert on the topic or be directly involved, but grasping these concepts can certainly help bump you up another rung on the career ladder.

Automation in the Workforce

What is it? Automation isn't entirely new in government, but it's gaining even more traction as agencies find ways to automate work they consider to be repetitive and ripe for machines to do faster and with greater accuracy.

What does it mean for you? For some employees, this will mean a change in the way they do their work and the need to acquire new skills.

[Learn more]

Do you think automation and automating processes will change how you do your job?


24% I don't know

47% Yes

30% No
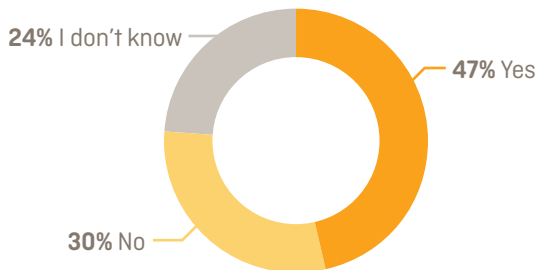
Federal Data Strategy

What is it? A guide for how agencies should securely and ethically use data to empower the workforce and serve the public.

What does it mean for you? There is a growing need for employees who know how to effectively use data to inform decision-making, so much so that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has a new job series for data scientists. This strategy will help set the foundation for data expertise in government.

[Learn more]

When asked, most community members said they hadn't heard of the Federal Data Strategy.

15% Yes

85% No
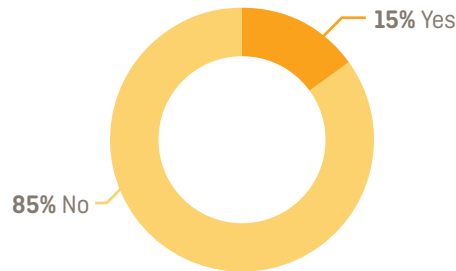
IT Modernization Centers of Excellence

What is it? A fairly new model for tackling key issues across government using tiger teams from industry and government.

What does it mean for you? As these tiger teams embed at federal agencies, including the Agriculture Department, the Housing and Urban Development Department and others, they offer opportunities for agency employees to learn new skills and help develop IT capabilities that support the entire agency.

[Learn more]

The CoE model has not yet expanded govern-mentwide, so only about a quarter of readers said they have heard of it.


28% Yes

72% No

GovLoop's picks

This issue's picks are brought to you by Nicole Blake Johnson, Managing Editor at GovLoop.

Reskilling and upskilling are gaining traction in government, and I don't want you to miss out. Maybe you want to develop skills in your current area of expertise or switch fields. If so, now might be the perfect time to start that journey. If you need some direction, here's a GovLoop worksheet that can help: "**How to Get Started With Workforce Reskilling**."

Is your department and/ or agency talking about reskilling or upskilling the workforce?

33% I don't know
29% Yes to both
4% Only reskilling
7% Only upskilling
27% No to both
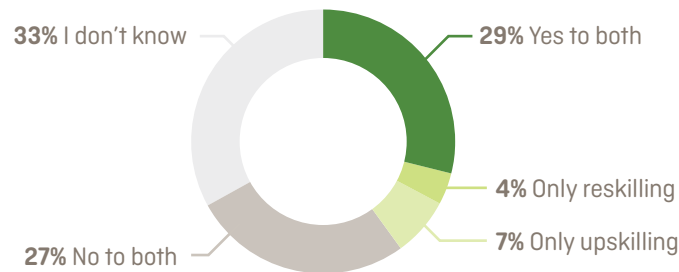
Looking for helpful content for **new managers** or ways to **beat feedback fear**? Check out **GovLoop's new blog series**, where my colleagues package five helpful resources, including videos, worksheets and blog posts to help you level up in different areas.

Subscribe to **GovLoop's YouTube channel**! You'll find quick videos with helpful management tips, simple explanations for some of government's top tech trends, and more.

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We know public servants like you are short on time, which is why our **Daily Awesome newsletter** is straight to the point. Every day you'll get the blogs, resources and online trainings that are relevant for hard-working government employees at the federal, state and local levels.

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