



The State of the Workforce: Key Issues Government Managers Face



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Executive Summary

Imagine a workforce in which managers could hire talented professionals with ease and onboard new employees in a matter of weeks instead of months.

What if managers could effectively connect with and engage employees at all levels of the organization and proactively ensure that they have the tools and skills necessary to take advantage of new technologies?

For government agencies operating within the confines of a decades-old personnel system, these hypotheticals may seem far-fetched and nearly impossible. What's more, it's tough to institute this level of change in an organization as large, diverse and complex as the government — with missions that range from ensuring students have nutritious lunches to managing the nation's nuclear stockpile.

But it isn't impossible. There are pockets of success at the federal, state and local levels where agencies are launching small pilot tests and expanding them into larger workforce programs, and finding creative ways to reskill employees and better align hiring decisions with their current and future workforce needs.

In this guide, we'll explore what progress in these areas looks like, case studies and best practices for transforming human resources at all levels of government. Specifically, we examine strides that agencies are making to:

- Ensure simple and strategic hiring.
- Reskill and redeploy human capital resources.
- Improve employee performance management and engagement.

To kick things off, let's review some of the main HR issues that government managers face today, in addition to feedback from the GovLoop community concerning top HR challenges.

Key Issues Government Managers Face —

Today's government managers face a flurry of challenges — whether it's managing a 21st-century workforce with systems that are decades old or engaging employees through meaningful work and substantive initiatives that address morale and quality of life.

Below, we've highlighted several issues in further detail, some of which are adapted from the [President's Management Agenda](#) but apply to all levels of government. Later in the guide, we'll share case studies and tips for addressing key challenges.



Keeping positions current.

The position descriptions managers used even one year ago may no longer be relevant. As mission priorities change, managers must assess how technology may have changed or eliminated the need for some positions. That means agencies must have the flexibility to adapt to ongoing technological advances. Fields undergoing rapid transformation include database administration, invoice processing, HR transactional services, financial management and management analysis.



Working with antiquated HR IT systems that are not interoperable.

It isn't uncommon for managers to grapple with multiple systems that track various aspects of the workforce. Even agencies that use a common system have issues. Take the Defense Department (DoD), for example. HR providers at DoD use a common IT system, but each uses a separate connection to the system. As a result, when an employee of a defense agency served by multiple HR providers transfers to a different part of the same agency or another part of DoD, the employee is treated as a new hire, according to a recent [Government Accountability Office](#) report.

Aligning total compensation with the competitive labor market.

Employee compensation is a longstanding challenge for government agencies. For many, especially those at the local level, it's nearly impossible to compete with private-sector budgets for recruiting and hiring. Managers must assess what flexibilities, benefits and meaningful projects will attract talented professionals to government and entice them to remain in public service.



Fostering a culture of continuous learning.

When budgets are tight, training dollars are usually among the first to be cut. Further compounding the issue is the fact that some positions don't have formal training or certification programs, as noted in a [2018 Federal Workforce Priorities Report](#). When training is provided, sometimes it's incomplete or irrelevant, inadequately addresses some duties, or focuses on skills and procedures not critical to the work being done. Other programs are not administered routinely, leaving longtime employees without updated knowledge.



Managing expectations of a multigenerational workforce.

Each generation of workers has different preferences, expectations and experiences, and managers must consider all of them. In Hawaii, for example, Chief Information Officer Todd Nacapuy [classifies employees by the technology that was in place](#) when they first started working for the state: mainframe, PC, laptop and mobile. Understanding how these employees interact with technology helps shape the state's strategy for communicating with them. For example, digital natives often want communications to be as simple as possible, while those who came on board in the era of mainframes tend to prefer printed, detailed communications.

Top HR Challenges Among the GovLoop Community —

We recently polled the GovLoop community to gain a better understanding of the major HR issues that are top of mind for our members. We asked them to select the option that best describes their most pressing HR challenges. Here's what they said:

61%

Improving employee performance management and engagement

22%

Developing simple and strategic hiring processes

17%

Reskilling and redeploying employees



It's not surprising that the majority of our community members selected employee performance and engagement as their most pressing HR challenge because these two issues drive the workforce.

There is a direct correlation between engagement and performance. In other words, when an employee feels a sense of purpose, that fuels dedication and persistence. According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), "An agency that engages its employees ensures a work environment where each employee contributes to the success of the agency while reaching his or her full potential."

An engaged employee can also find creative ways to work through the bureaucratic hurdles that stifle innovation in HR and other areas. These could include implementing hiring authorities that allow talented employees to join the workforce for term appointments or developing internship programs to attract budding professionals.

At the local level, for example, Louisville's Chief of Civic Innovation and Technology, Grace Simrall, understands the value of engaging employees through meaningful work.

"You know that you're working for the city you live in, and you're delivering the services to your friends, neighbors and family," Simrall said of the advantages that come with working in local government. "It's a powerful thing. It helps motivate many people to do excellent work."

Twenty-two percent of our poll respondents said developing simple and strategic hiring processes was their top challenge. Governments at all levels grapple with this issue, but a recent report from the White House highlighted just how long it has been since the federal government last spearheaded a project to revamp hiring.

The [progress report](#) about the administration's efforts to create a 21st-century workforce noted that "only one past project in the last 30 years was aimed at hiring processes, although many used compensation to improve recruitment and retention."

In the next section, we dive deeper into the HR challenges that our community members identified and highlight progress, best practices and case studies.

The State of the Government Workforce: Simple and Strategic Hiring

Finding the right employees to fill specific positions can seem like a daunting task, especially within the confines of the traditional government hiring process. Most agencies still post vacancies online and review hundreds of applications — if they're lucky — to find the right candidates.

This passive form of recruiting has long been the norm, but savvy agencies are learning that to get the right candidates, they must actively pursue the types of professionals they need.

The U.S. Digital Service (USDS), which launched in 2014 as a SWAT team aimed at improving the government's large-scale digital services, continues to replenish its cohorts of top-tier technologists, engineers and designers using active recruiting.

USDS is engaged on social media, attends large gatherings of technologists and uses tools such as [Medium](#), a free and open platform that allows anyone to write, edit and publish content, to connect with potential job candidates.

USDS headquarters, part of the Executive Office of the President, has its own [talent operations lead](#), Grace McKinney, who describes her mission as “convincing people to come make government services work better for citizens” and helping recruits “navigate all the many side quests they need to actually onboard into the government.”

Even if your agency has a small HR team and no dedicated talent operations lead, you can and should take advantage of free online resources to expand your reach.

Another tactic that agencies are using to improve hiring is establishing closer ties between HR teams and hiring managers. For example, some recruiters for the city of Detroit understand the nuances and technicalities of recruiting IT professionals. Detroit CIO Beth Niblock said her team partners with the city's recruiters to fill IT positions. “We would lose people in the process, so we found a way to make (hiring) faster.”

At the federal level, agencies have access to special hiring authorities that enable them to expedite hiring of the best candidates. But an [OPM study](#) found that “many agencies do not have policies in place or their policies do not sufficiently cover important aspects of how authorities are to be implemented. Only 56 percent of agencies have a policy on handling applications for excepted service hiring, as required.”

The excepted service includes positions that are exempt from the formal competitive process. That formal process requires agencies to open positions to all applicants and evaluate their qualifications.

Below, we show how DoD uses special hiring authorities to speed the hiring of cyber professionals.

Case Study

Streamlining Cyber Hiring at DoD

DoD is actively pursuing top talent for its cyberspace operations command.

As part of that effort, U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) uses a special hiring authority to drastically expedite and simplify its hiring and recruitment practices. [The Cyber Excepted Service \(CES\)](#) was authorized in 2016 as part of that year's National Defense Authorization Act. DoD CIO Dana Deasy said that CES has smoothed DoD's hiring process while offering market-competitive pay to quality candidates.

CES lets USCYBERCOM hiring managers make on-the-spot job offers outside the federal government's

typical constraints. They also use a market-based pay structure that is competitive with private-sector work to recruit faster.

USCYBERCOM conducted its [first public hiring event](#) using CES abilities on May 8, 2018, and more than 400 people attended. Hiring managers screened more than 300 resumes before conducting 70 same-day interviews and making 18 on-the-spot job offers.

CES permits agile, flexible recruitment and hiring under Title 5 safeguards such as appeal rights, attained career status, federal benefits, protections, performance management and retirement. The program seeks to enhance DoD's cyber defense capabilities.

What You Can Do Now:

As an HR professional

- Familiarize yourself with free resources and platforms such as LinkedIn and Medium that allow your agency to actively recruit and build brand awareness.
- Ensure that all HR personnel are familiar with [existing hiring authorities](#) and how and when to use them. Team gatherings such as brown bag discussions during lunch or internal speaker series are great ways to keep everyone informed.
- To improve hiring for critical and hard-to-fill positions, make sure that recruiters have a specialized understanding about those positions and what types of opportunities and benefits will attract candidates. They should also be aware of niche job boards for specific positions.

As a hiring manager

- Proactively partner with HR and find opportunities to expose them to the work you do. This is key to understanding the agency's current capabilities and where skills gaps may exist.
- Share with your HR department innovative examples of hiring efforts across government or the private sector that may be beneficial to your agency.
- Offer your expertise, especially if your HR department doesn't have the specialized knowledge needed to recruit specific types of candidates, such as IT or software developers.



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Reclaim Your Time With HR Transformation

An interview with Gaylan Sankey, HR Transformation Leader; Ryan Mitchell, HR Product Line Sales Manager and Tim Enright, Product Line Sales Manager, Federal Civilian, at ServiceNow

In order to compete for top talent, more and more HR leaders across government are realizing the importance of keeping pace with changes in HR service delivery that will enable them to focus on transforming their employee experience. As they look to redefine the role of HR and find new ways to serve employees, their focus is on automation to streamline and simplify how work gets done across all governmental departments and agencies.

Today's forward-thinking HR professionals are embracing compelling shifts that are rooted in private-sector practices, such as boosting employee self-reliance, creating digital experiences and adopting a shared services operating model. However, agencies are faced with the challenge of finding innovative ways to incorporate these shifts into their business model on a wider scale just as their counterparts are doing in the private sector.

To better understand the extent of HR transformation in government and what agencies can do to address the needs and expectations of their employees, GovLoop sat down with three experts from ServiceNow: Gaylan Sankey, HR Transformation Leader; Ryan Mitchell, HR Product Line Sales Manager; and Tim Enright, Product Line Sales Manager, Federal Civilian. At ServiceNow, their teams work closely with government agencies to unlock the potential of HR organizations.

"When an agency makes employee experience a key area of focus, HR can become more of a business partner, as opposed to being bogged down with daily questions about employees' benefits or paychecks," Sankey said.

One of the building blocks that HR professionals should focus on is developing more opportunities for employees to manage their own basic information and service needs, Mitchell explained. HR departments can save a lot of time and effort – and frustration – by leveraging automated tools and portals to provide the right information to the right person at the right time. When done effectively, self-service options can reduce the number of cases submitted to HR because employees are empowered to help themselves.

Another key shift taking place in government is the adoption of HR shared services. This isn't a new

concept, but it has evolved well beyond routine transactional activities. The next generation HR shared services model now leverages modern technology, automation and chat to focus on improving self-service through a digital-first approach. For example, we are now seeing HR shared services expand to become the most common provider of new hire onboarding services.

In addition to shared services, IT modernization is central to improving the HR experience governmentwide. But the thought of ripping and replacing older systems with more modern technologies can be cost-prohibitive for agencies with limited budgets.

"Agencies are skinning the entire employee experience with ServiceNow so that they can keep their legacy tools until they can figure out a path forward on those," Sankey said. "They can still have that one-stop shop for employees that has the look and feel of a modern solution."

Employees don't necessarily want to know or have to know how that experience is created. They just want the freedom and ability to get access to what they need when they need it. For example, ServiceNow HR Service Delivery provides a single access point for efficient, personalized HR services and can easily integrate with other cloud and on-premise systems.

"We encourage agencies to look at change," Mitchell said. "If you're going to implement new technology, you're changing. And if you're going to change, let's change processes and workflows as well."

That includes embracing mobile options to deliver services and rethinking how agencies tackle issues such as leave requests and other HR housekeeping items.

"What the government wants to do with the employee experience is create accountability around simple service requests, for example, but also create transparency all the way down to the employee and the manager," Mitchell said.

When agencies embrace this way of thinking and operating, they create an environment that supports employee engagement, better customer service and a stronger, more productive workforce.

The State of the Government Workforce: Reskill and Redeploy Human Capital Resources

Robotic process automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence are among the buzzwords you're sure to hear more of across government. The technologies hold promising benefits for agencies looking to free up staff for higher-value work and to keep pace with citizens' expectations for more digital and self-service options to connect with government.

But with any change comes a learning curve. This new wave of technological advancements will require government employees to gain new skills and adapt how they work as processes change with technology.

"From a people perspective, it's imperative that we train employees to spot processes that are ripe for automation, teach them how to program and fix the software when it breaks, and train them on how to manage a digital workforce as well as how to interact with their new digital coworkers," said [Craig Fischer](#), Innovation Program Manager at the Bureau of the Fiscal Service's Office of Financial Innovation and Transformation.

This is especially critical for federal agencies following governmentwide efforts to shift from low-value work — such as complying with unnecessary and obsolete policies, guidance and reporting requirements — to high-value work that supports mission-critical objectives.

"Each year, Federal employees devote tens of thousands of hours to low-value compliance

activities from rules and requirements that have built up over decades," OMB Director Mick Mulvaney said in an Aug. 27, 2018 [memo](#).

The memo calls out technologies such as RPA as key enablers to help employees focus on more mission-critical work. RPA uses software bots to automate repetitive, rule-based tasks, such as copying and pasting information from one system to another or reconciling financial accounts. These types of repetitive tasks are what OPM referred to in its 2018 Federal Workforce Priorities Report, which noted that 5 percent of occupations could be automated entirely, while 45 percent of total work activities could be automated.

This is why reskilling efforts are critical. About 300,000 federal employees may need to be reskilled in the next few years, according to news reports. It isn't clear how or when those efforts will take place, but agencies should be preparing for that shift now.

One thing is clear: Technology isn't the only driver forcing agencies to reskill and redeploy employees. As mission needs evolve, agencies must consider how their current workforce can adapt to meet new demands, especially when budgets are tight or there are restrictions on hiring.

Below we highlights how the state of Delaware is keeping pace with these type of workforce changes.

Case Study

Delaware Is Developing the Next-Generation Workforce From Within

The ability to reskill and redeploy employees to meet pressing needs is critical, especially during periods of slow or no growth. Take Delaware, for example.

The state is using its resources to train workers and equip them to meet the most pressing cyber needs. Delaware's Department of Technology and Information offers an annual boot camp to prepare employees to take the Certified Information Systems Security Professional exam, an independent information security certification.

More than 100 people have gone through the boot camp in the past five years. State employees get priority, but open seats are then offered to local and county government employees, then

to university students and then to private-sector partners, said Elayne Starkey, the state's former Chief Security Officer.

Delaware also offers a shadowing program in which employees from other departments can come to the central IT department, get a feel for the type of work being done and see if anything sparks their interest, Starkey said. For employees who need additional training, free courses are promoted on the department's website. Employees can take the courses outside normal work hours to prepare them for future roles in cybersecurity.

What You Can Do Now:

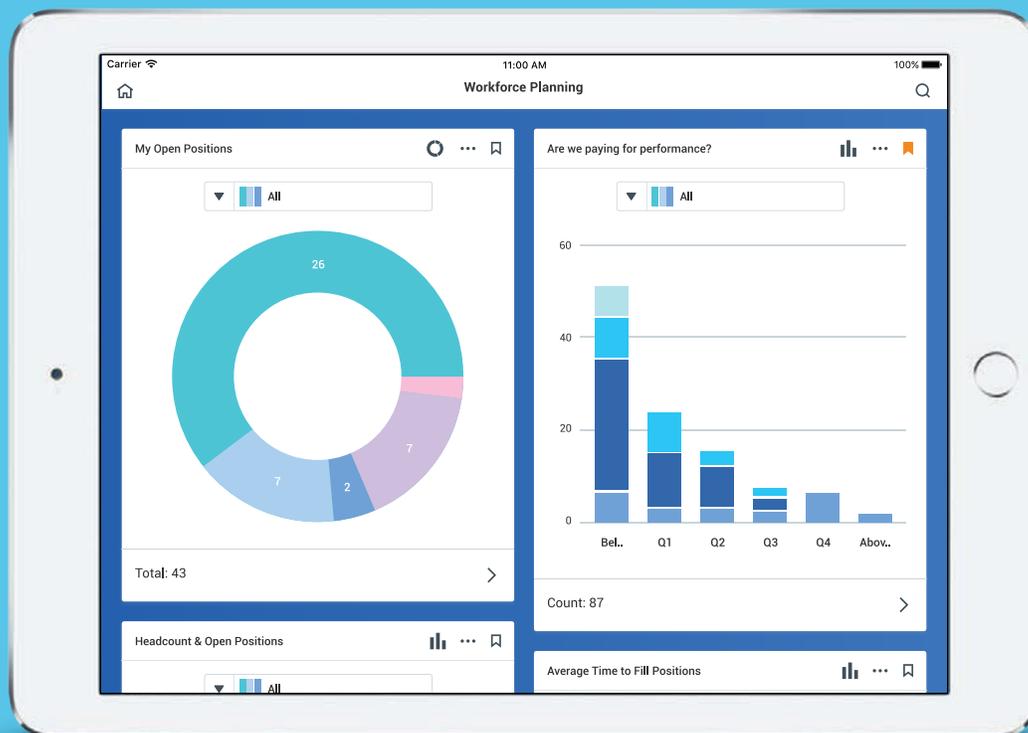
As an HR professional

- Connect with the various offices and programs within your agency to understand what technologies they are using and how those tools may impact the workforce. For example, you may decide to formalize these efforts by branding it as a roadshow where employees can share their innovative tech solutions with the department.
- From there, consider how that technology may affect your workforce policies and procedures. You'll need to work with internal stakeholders to update processes accordingly.
- Proactively work with middle managers to ensure that employees have the proper training to take advantage of new technologies. Free resources are available online, or you may decide to use internal or external experts to conduct group trainings.

As a hiring manager

- Educate yourself on what's required to acquire, adopt and implement new technology. Use internal briefings to facilitate dialogue, field questions and share information with stakeholders.
- Map out business processes and identify where there is friction and where technology can be of value to employees and the customers they serve.
- Involve the workforce in every step of the process and ensure that they understand what technologies are being considered, how those tools may affect their job and how you plan to teach them new skills.

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More than Paperwork: HR Drives a New Wave of Innovation

An interview with Ray Elwell, Government Industry Advisor, Workday

Gone are the days when HR was seen as a basic support function – one that often took a backseat to higher priority mission tasks.

As the nature and complexity of government operations evolve, agencies are realizing that HR departments play a key role in driving their mission. For example, as governments are asked to respond to citizens' demands and provide more services – without commensurate funding – having the right people in place is vital.

"Underlying everything that's going on in government is this requirement to do more with less," said Ray Elwell, Government Industry Advisor for Workday, a leader in strategic workforce planning. "Organizations are being forced to look at doing business differently and more efficiently."

In an interview with GovLoop, Elwell explained how agencies can redefine HR to fit the modern era. He also identified three major areas for HR re-development: hiring, training and performance management.

In today's dynamic work environment, agencies can no longer rely on traditional hiring practices, such as generic job boards or outdated print advertisements, to find the right candidates. They are competing with tech-savvy companies that are connecting directly with applicants through social media and targeted meetups. Long before open jobs are posted or applications are accepted, agencies need to have a strategy to attract the right applicants. This is especially critical as more seasoned professionals retire from government service.

"I think one of the biggest challenges right now is the cost of making a hiring mistake," Elwell said. "Governments struggle with that and are trying to make sure that when they recruit, not only do they do it in a timely manner, but that they're finding the right candidates to fit those positions. The cost of hiring and training someone, only to have them leave, is significant."

Once employees are hired, HR has the challenge of preparing them to excel in their current roles while also equipping them to meet the future needs of the agency. Employee development used to be based on training employees for promotion. Now, workforce training plays a much bigger role, as lateral career moves are becoming just as common in the workplace as moving up the ranks.

Workforce training has to be all-encompassing and relevant, which can be a tricky balance. While employees have to brace for inevitable change, they need to have room to specialize. And there's still the same expectation to educate employees on agency policies and codes.

All the while, HR has to keep employees engaged and committed for the long-run. One way to do that is by making routine tasks simpler and more accessible, such as offering self-service portals that provide instant access to pay stubs, benefit information or expense reimbursements. These applications give employees the freedom to complete tasks at their own pace, at any time, and on any device.

"The majority of government employees don't sit at a computer all day," Elwell said. "They need to have their business applications on their mobile device because that's how they live and work. Being able to deliver all those traditional back-office applications on a mobile phone or tablet is huge. The employer also benefits because now they have access to more accurate information to support organizational decision-making."

Technology has fundamentally changed HR aside from day-to-day duties, too. Traditional checkbox employee reviews are becoming a thing of the past as agencies leverage technology to create fluid succession plans, identify top performers and provide instant feedback on employee performance.

By incorporating modern applications into HR, governments can markedly cut down on inefficient processes for performance evaluations, filling positions and training employees. Specifically, Workday provides cloud-based solutions to help agencies organize, manage, staff and develop an effective and efficient workforce. For example, the county of San Mateo in California was able to consolidate 17 applications into one and drastically improve efficiency by partnering with Workday. The new solution simplifies how employees review and update benefits selections, update performance evaluations and more.

"I think the biggest area where we help organizations is modernization," Elwell said. "It is really taking them from a very static, stuck-in-their-way process, to getting them to rethink how they really want to do business. Whether that's recruiting, job performance, succession planning or just general HR self-service, those are areas where Workday is making the biggest difference with our customers."

The State of the Government Workforce:

Employee Performance Management and Engagement

Employee performance and engagement are the heartbeat of any successful organization. They drive work quality, customer service, employee retention and many other factors that determine if an agency flourishes or flounders.

One focus area of the President's Management Agenda is creating a 21st-century workforce. The steps that agencies will take to achieve that goal include streamlining performance management and dismissal procedures, increasing the link between pay and performance, and focusing intense employee engagement improvement efforts on the lowest-performing organizations.

In a [September 2018 progress report](#), the White House highlighted several updates, including the development of draft survey questions to understand agencies' policies and procedures for addressing poor performance, as well as facilitated employee engagement focus groups with managers and unit-level staff to identify employee engagement successes, challenges and opportunities within their work units.

Having these types of candid conversations can be uncomfortable for both employees and managers, but they can lead to meaningful change. The [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#) put it this way: "Managers sometimes fear that asking their employees about the work environment may be opening a can of worms. What they forget is that worms thrive in dark, moist environments. By bringing to light what most employees know anyway, you can demonstrate your willingness to invite real conversations that bring

in the voices of everyone who works for you."

Several agencies use employee surveys to generate feedback, but the planning, execution and follow-up to these surveys are vital. At the federal level, there is a greater push for managers to use the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as a tool to understanding, engaging and improving the workforce.

The key is understanding what drives your employees and what resources and flexibilities make your organization a great place to work. Working within the confines of government policies and regulations to create flexible work environments, leave policies, competitive compensation structures and employee development can have big impacts.

The town of Cary, North Carolina's IT department is one example of how small changes can make a difference. "We have physically changed our office to make it look more like a startup," said CIO Nicole Raimundo. "We've taken down all of the walls, and so it's open space. We've made it more enticing for folks to come in. And we're using agile methodologies. They have scrum standups every day in our application team. So, they are getting an experience much like they would get somewhere else."

We've also highlighted how the National Science Foundation (NSF) is engaging its employees through innovative pilot programs and career planning.

Case Study

Engaging Employees Through Pilot Projects

Pioneering innovative ideas in government can be tough, to say the least. It requires risk-taking, embracing the unknown and some serious marketing and communication skills to win over skeptics.

It also helps to have a champion or a sponsor who can shepherd your good ideas along and even create a space for those ideas to take root, get nourishment and bloom. For a growing number of innovators at NSF, [CIO Dorothy Aronson](#) is that person.

As the principal adviser to the agency's director and other senior managers on all matters involving IT, Aronson sees herself as an enabler who is charting a path for employees to introduce innovative ideas that improve how they work. She's collaborating with forward-thinking staff to introduce microprojects

that allow the agency to test new technologies and processes and determine how those efforts can and should be expanded.

"What I'm doing on a teeny-tiny scale, which is what I call a microproject, (is) working with a local group of IT people and saying, 'Can we do (X) just for a year?'" Aronson said. "They're developing their own survey of what they think is important about their jobs, and we're about to issue it to their peers. And then we'll start. It's important not only (for) the IT workforce, but the NSF workforce and the federal workforce."

The goal is to bring the kinds of expert tools that the private sector uses into the government to help energize the workforce, Aronson said.

What You Can Do Now:

As an HR professional

- Determine what methods your agency already uses to measure employee engagement and performance. Are there opportunities to consolidate or standardize those efforts?
- Look for ways to make your data actionable and share those results with employees, managers and senior leaders. Data visualizations are great for illustrating information in a meaningful way.
- Develop a game plan for putting those insights into action. For example, if your workforce wants more career development opportunities, what mechanisms do you have in place to provide them?

As a hiring manager

- If your agency doesn't have a formal process for sharing employee engagement data with staff, work with managers and partners in HR to make that information available across the organization.
- Proactively connect with HR to understand what role non-HR professionals can play in providing feedback and shaping new programs and initiatives that improve engagement and employee performance.
- To [boost engagement](#), organizations can use storytelling principles to produce messages that simultaneously promote their mission and values, tell employees how they contribute to the mission and, most importantly, explain why they should want to.

A Lesson in Change Management from the Food Safety and Inspection Service —

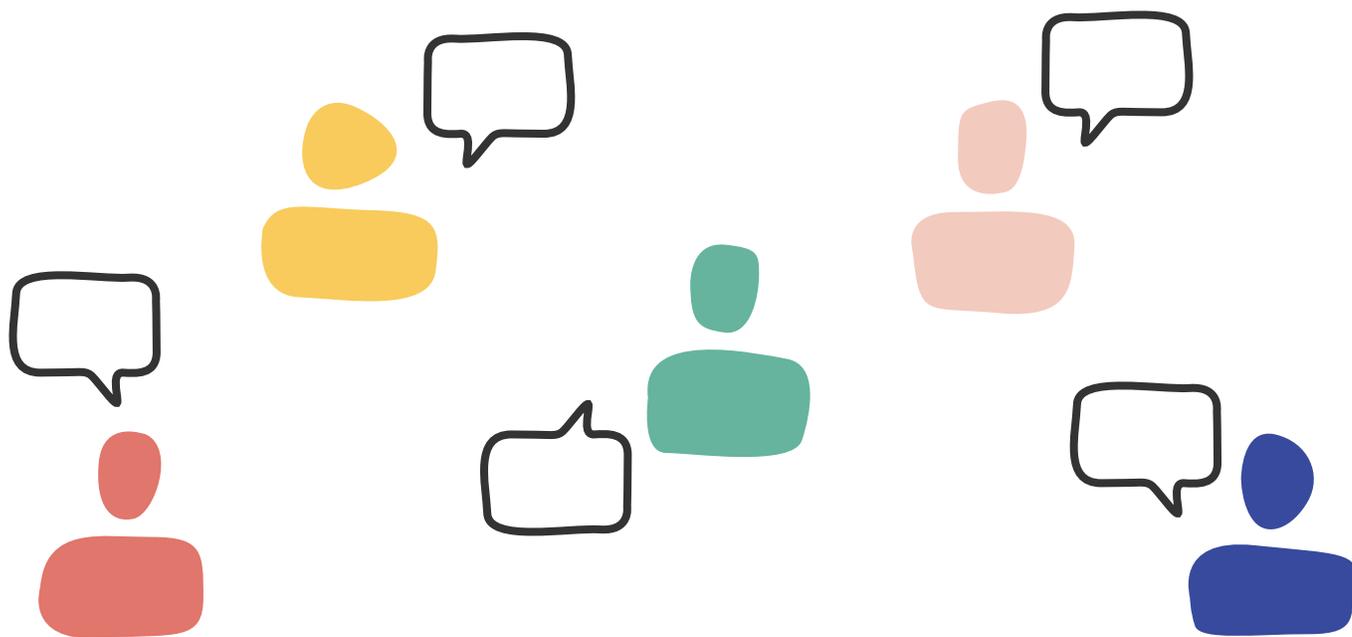
At the Agriculture Department’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), former CIO Janet Stevens and her team took a hard look at factors that impact the agency’s mission and how they could integrate ongoing efforts such as IT modernization.

“(There’s) a lot of activity there, plus we’re just looking at how can we deliver as quickly as possible, as securely as possible, and stay in line with what our business needs are,” said Stevens, who now serves as Deputy Assistant Administrator at the agency’s Office of Planning, Analysis and Risk Management.

Through much research, feedback and internal conversations, FSIS chose DevSecOps as the best way forward. DevSecOps is a cultural and engineering practice that breaks down barriers and fosters collaboration among development, security and operations teams using automation.

So, what does DevSecOps have to do with HR and the workforce? Well, one of the big takeaways that Stevens and her team shared is that many of the transformative IT efforts across government, such as DevSecOps, are less about the nuances of technology and more about building trust and helping employees understand and embrace change. These new approaches to delivering government services will have a major effect on the way employees work and serve citizens.

To help your agency prepare for these changes — whether you’re an HR professional or a middle manager — we’ve highlighted some key insights from Stevens and her team.





**Janet Stevens, former CIO,
Deputy Assistant Administrator,
Office of Planning, Analysis and
Risk Management**

We needed to make sure we talked about change in terms of how it impacts our employees and the mission. There's a lot of change going on, and you don't want to put too much change on an organization. You have to tee that organization up for the change that's coming. That's what we saw as one of our challenges: Are we set up not just process-wise, but organizationally?



**William Thompson, Acting Deputy
CIO and Associate CIO for the
Program Management Division***

One of the things you have to understand from a leadership perspective is that change is not going to be easy, but you have to be committed to doing it. That's what the organization had to do from the top down — commit to change, set up the vision and the goal and push that down throughout the organization. We can do research all day long, but if you see something in that research that isn't pleasant and you're not committed to change, you might say, "Let's not do that." Commitment starts from the top.



**Marvin Lykes, Acting Chief
Technology Officer and Acting
Associate CIO for the Innovation
and Operations Division***

When it comes to introducing a bunch of new software and terminology, you can see that employees are somewhat fearful at times. They're not sure where to start. But I think just that reassurance that they can fail forward can help ease those concerns. When change is implemented, employees must know that if they try something new and it doesn't work out, they can quickly learn from those efforts and try again. I think that confidence needs to be there; its important.



**Dennis O'Brien, Associate
CIO for the Governance and
Quality Assurance Division***

I also think one of the main aspects is focusing on the customer and making sure end users are getting the support that they need. As we change and as we modify the way we do business, how do our customers feel about it? Do they feel they're getting better service? Is it improved? Do we need to update our policies and procedures? Do we have the right technology? Do we have the right applications? Are they getting the support they need?



**Elamin Osman, Chief Information
Security Officer and Associate
CIO for the Information
Assurance Division***

Sometimes it's difficult for the customer or the business owners to understand what change actually means, so you have to go and sit with them and break it down to them. You have to explain exactly what's happening and how it's going to happen. Customers and business owners can help you carry out that change and give you the information that you need to mitigate the risk.



* Job titles were accurate at the time of the interview and reflect the work employees did in that specific capacity. For updated titles, please visit www.fsis.usda.gov.

Conclusion

Developing a workforce in which managers can hire the best employees and engage workers at all levels of the organization is critical for federal, state and local agencies. To do so, government needs a framework that encourages strategic hiring, strong human capital management and increased employee engagement.

For example, as agencies continue to embrace emerging technologies, middle managers and HR must collaborate to provide employees with the proper training and resources to adapt to change and effectively carry out the agency's mission.

Many of these efforts are already in motion across government, but success in these areas requires better partnerships among HR professionals, senior leaders and employees in specific mission areas. The key is developing a common language and actionable goals that unify these groups to ensure that internal and external customers are properly served.

About GovLoop

GovLoop's mission is to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 270,000 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 the public sector. For more information about this report, please reach out to info@govloop.com.

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Thank You

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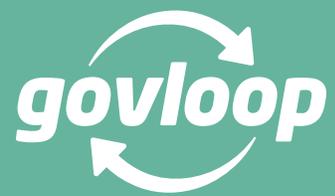
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