Preparing for the Federal Workforce of the Future

The federal government’s reorganization offers leaders an opportunity to transform how agencies do business. To drive this change, leaders need to attract, retain and retrain a workforce that can effectively align with the needs of citizens now and into the future. Currently, many agencies are struggling to recruit younger employees, while the proportion of federal employees who are retirement eligible grows. Additionally, agencies are responding to various workforce trends, including the increased pace of automation and the growing emergence of critical areas like cybersecurity. Federal managers must develop innovative ways to fill these workforce gaps and find mission-critical expertise by retraining federal workers with outdated skill sets, sharing existing expertise across agency silos, attracting entrepreneurial talent, and bringing diverse talent from across the country into federal service. Below, we provide a snapshot of what the government workforce looks like now, some major trends affecting it, and recommendations about how federal managers can prepare for their workforces of the future.

Building a Flexible Workforce

Federal agencies often do not take advantage of the hiring flexibilities provided to them to build a dynamic workforce.

Recommendation: The Intergovernmental Personnel Act and other talent-exchange programs and hiring flexibilities make it possible to incorporate the expertise of employees from state and local governments, academia, nonprofits and the private sector on a temporary basis. Managers can approve short-term transfers of federal employees to another agency or position, allowing them to share expertise and gain new experiences and knowledge. Managers can recruit former federal employees without going through the full competitive hiring process, and may have special flexibilities to hire and pay for mission-critical skills. To create the workforce of the future, federal leaders should take advantage of available hiring flexibilities to fill skill gaps, diversity talent sources and promote knowledge-sharing across government and between sectors.

To Build a More Flexible Workforce:

- **TAP EXPERTISE FROM OUTSIDE**
- **RECRUIT FROM MULTIPLE TALENT POOLS**
- **USE EXISTING TALENT IN NEW WAYS**

What is Powering Government Innovation?

With the administration pushing for change across the federal government, agencies have been asked to rethink how they deliver programs and meet their missions. The Partnership for Public Service and Booz Allen Hamilton are working together to help agency leaders embark on efforts that will lead to leaner, more accountable and more efficient government; a workforce more aligned to future needs; and the elimination of barriers that hamper frontline employees from serving the public effectively.

To learn more, visit: ourpublicservice.org/government-reorganization

Data Sources: Unless otherwise noted, all data are from FedScope (https://fedscopecommunity.com) from the Office of Personnel Management, for all full-time, nonseasonal, permanent employees (September 2017)

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ADJUSTING TO AUTOMATION

According to the Office of Personnel Management, 5 percent of current federal occupations could be fully automated and 60 percent could be partially automated. The capabilities of technology to automate repetitive tasks and allow federal employees to focus on high-level strategic work will continue to grow.

Recommendation: Federal leaders need to assess their agencies to determine which tasks can be automated and how employees will be affected as a result. Leaders also need to invest in retraining employees for jobs that require greater expertise. Agencies can start small, finding pilots to pilot automation projects and allow their employees to get comfortable with new technologies. The Department of the Air Force, for example, is working to automate its acquisition process, creating a system that allows its workforce to more effectively tailor contracts to the needs of the agency.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING TOP TALENT

The Office of Personnel Management and the Chief Human Capital Officers Council have identified four government-wide skill gaps:

- **STEM**
- **ACQUISITION**
- **CYBERSECURITY**
- **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Federal agencies are competing against the private sector and each other for the employees who can fill these critical gaps in the government.

Recommendation: To help fill these skills gaps, federal leaders should consider retraining workers already using reorganization efforts. Federal agencies and others should also use existing recruitment, relocation, retention and other pay flexibilities to attract talent to these occupations. The departments of Agriculture and Treasury, for example, reported that offering special pay incentives allowed them to effectively compete with the private sector for a limited pool of highly competitive STEM candidates. Some other agencies are using gamified approaches to test the skills and capabilities of high-demand technical talent such as cybersecurity professionals as part of their recruitment and selection strategies. In addition, agencies can create partnerships with colleges, universities and private sector companies, and step up recruitment efforts by offering college scholarships in return for federal service, or by taking advantage of flexible hiring authori-

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