

# Tomorrow's workforce: An action plan for state and local governments



Working in the public sector provides professionals with unique opportunities to be innovative in a space that values mission-driven work across state and local government agencies. Challenges around outdated job descriptions, skills gaps, flexibility in work location and the overall brand image of government agencies, all contribute to government's ability to recruit and retain talent that can optimize and transform their organizations.

However, with challenges also come opportunities. State and local government IT departments can attract and retain talented employees and develop a skilled workforce, but they must transform their recruitment and hiring strategies to be successful. They must also rethink how they brand themselves to an incoming generation of workers that are increasingly civic-minded.

To help state and local governments chart a course to better understand and reimagine their workforces, the Center for Digital Government (CDG), in collaboration with IBM, conducted a national survey of state and local CIOs in July 2022. The report provides a roadmap for how state and local governments can address current talent gaps and cultivate their workforce of the future.

## Attraction and retention challenges

### Attracting talent

90% of CDG survey respondents say offering competitive compensation is their top workforce challenge. That challenge is coupled with shifting employee expectations around flexibility and remote work, which creates more competition for talent.

### Closing the skills gap and retention

An overwhelming 94% of CDG survey respondents said their organizations have trouble recruiting qualified technologists, and 86% said they have trouble retaining them.

### Key opportunities for transforming the government workforce

- Nearly 73% of CDG survey respondents said their organizations are improving or implementing flexible work policies to invest in employee growth and well-being. About one-third said at least 50% of their agency's workforce works remotely or utilizes a hybrid work model.
- 57% of CDG survey respondents said their organizations are improving employees' soft skills and hard skills through training.
- Nearly 42% of CDG survey respondents said their organizations are implementing or expanding diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts to ensure recruitment efforts are inclusive of all candidates, as well as investing in their employees' growth and well-being.

“There is a generation out there that’s becoming more and more civic minded, and I think there’s an attractiveness to public service. We can play well to that, but we need to develop a good, solid message about what they’re going to be doing in government.”

**Fred Brittain**

Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the state of Maine

“Government has a lot more to offer than what people see on the outside. We must brand ourselves in a way that shows candidates the work you do makes a difference.”

**James Canavan**

HR Director for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Service and Security

## Recruitment and retention best practices

By modernizing public-sector hiring processes, collaborating with external partners, and implementing multifaceted recruitment and retention strategies, state and local governments have an opportunity to redefine their workforces for the future. Some of those practices discussed in the report include:

**Embrace flexible work and compensation structures**

Organizations within the public sector recognize that job candidates now consider how work fits into their lives, encouraging them to redefine the employee value proposition, creating work environments that allow employees to have freedom over where and when they work.

**Upskill and train**

Many of the CIOs surveyed either have existing organizations that offer onsite job training to prepare their employees to meet the expectations of their roles, or they have collaborated with local schools and universities to build IT job skill curriculums for individuals who wish to enhance their skills and learning.

**Market government’s unique value proposition and brand**

Jobs within the public sector offer long-term stability, as well as a suite of competitive benefits, including paid time off, healthcare and pensions. Working in government allows individuals to perform mission-critical work modernizing citizen service delivery that directly impacts communities— providing an opportunity to grow skills while giving back.

[Read the full report](#) to understand further insights shared by state and local government CIOs and HR leaders from across the country.

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