



Public service organizations:
"Best Places to Work"?
(Yes, it's true!)

High performance. Delivered.



Workforce demographics are shifting, with the working-age population shrinking, and Millennials, who have very different work and career aspirations, rapidly becoming the largest segment of workers.

The traditional lures of a career in public service—lifelong employment and secure pensions—are no longer enough to attract and retain tomorrow's workforce. Meanwhile, public service organizations aren't viewed as "Best Places to Work." But could they be? New research from Accenture reveals compelling opportunities for governments to become employers of choice—and win the battle for talent.

State and local governments are in a perpetual battle for public support. To win that support, they must first win the battle for talent. The challenges are daunting—starting with the shrinking pool of potential talent. Instead of continuing its historical growth trend, the size of the working-age population could decline by nine percent by 2030, returning to a 1970 level.¹ Talent—especially those with information technology, data science and other in-demand skills—will be in short supply. At the same time, many state and local government leaders are still relying on outdated strategies and tools for talent management. Public service leaders face the need to fundamentally change how they define, discover, develop and deploy the talent they need to deliver the outcomes expected by the people and communities they serve.²

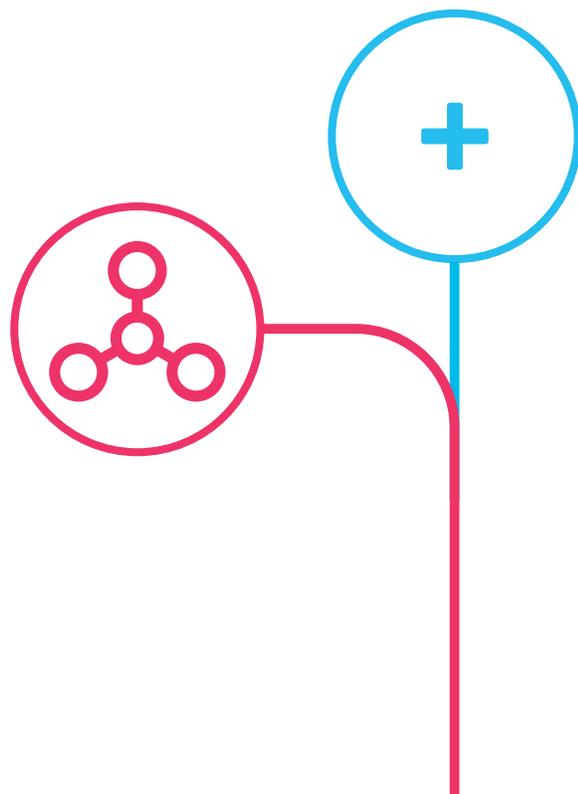
While the challenges may be great, the talent landscape for public service isn't all "doom and gloom." In fact, new research from Accenture³ points to some positive, and perhaps surprising, news: About four in 10 citizens and public service leaders already rate the public sector as likely to win a "Best Place to Work" award. The same research reveals important opportunities for public service organizations to build a position as employers of choice—including further developing the valuable talent already among their ranks.

Skills: Hiding in plain sight?

There's no shortage of statistics pointing to significant skills gaps. With certain competencies at a premium, how will public service organizations successfully find and retain talent? The Accenture study points to an unlikely source: current government employees.

Indeed, in many cases, public service organizations already have some of the talent—or potential talent—they need. Half of public service leaders believe they have strong talent levels in their organizations. In particular, they believe they have strengths in problem-solving skills (64 percent), analytical/quantitative skills (62 percent) and collaboration/teaming skills (60 percent).

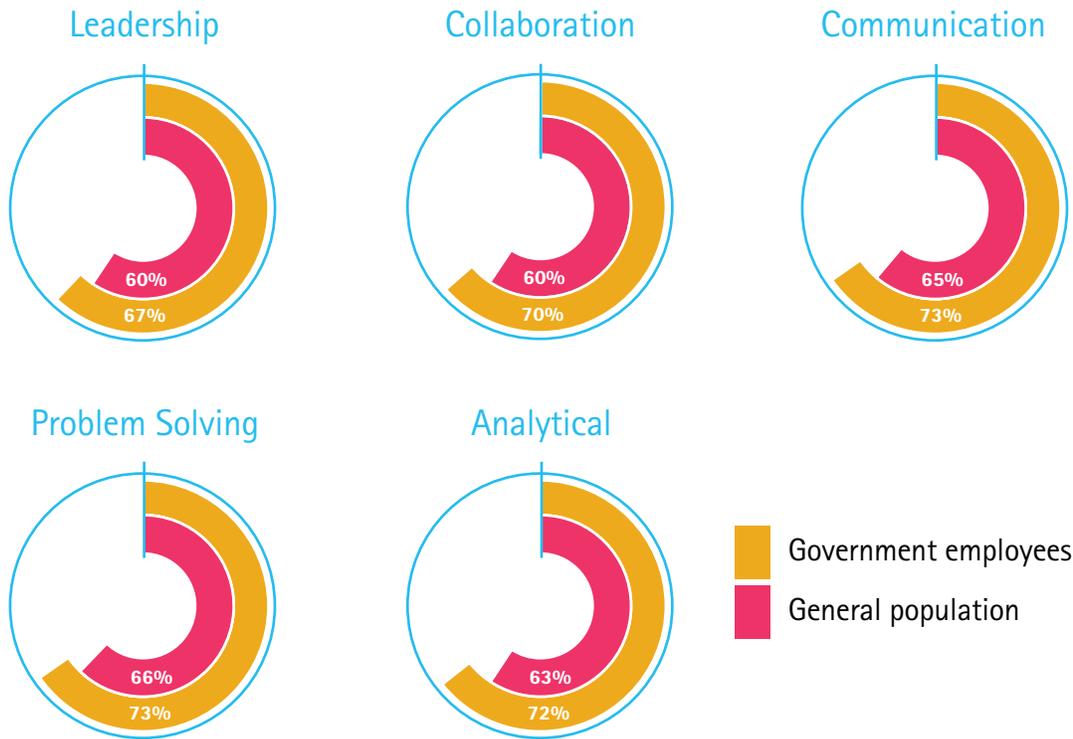
When searching for talent, leaders are well advised to look throughout the city, county or state enterprise—not just within the four walls of a particular agency or department. The key: identifying top performers and understanding their skills, capabilities and competencies. But just under half of public service leaders (47 percent) say they feel prepared to meet the challenge of developing and using the talent they already have for government management.



Fostering skill development: A must-do

When it comes to retaining and growing current public service employees, Accenture's research suggests that skill development can be a powerful lever. Interestingly, current public sector employees value skill development even more than the general population. That's true at all career stages except for those late in their career or retired.

Current government employees are more interested than the general public in every area of skill development we tested:



Winning the Battle for Talent

Accenture recommends that leaders fundamentally change how they define, discover, develop and deploy the talent they need. We believe successful governments will:

- **Define** talent based on the value added and mission criticality of their skills and competencies.
- **Discover** and attract talent by developing talent pipelines directly to the sources of those critical skills and competencies.

- **Develop** talent by targeting the potential of people to acquire and demonstrate critical skills and competencies.
- **Deploy** skilled talent into an agile workforce with successful onboarding, career mobility opportunities and effective leadership.

For more details, please see [*Winning the Battle for Talent: Government's Toughest Challenge*](#)⁴



Becoming the "best"

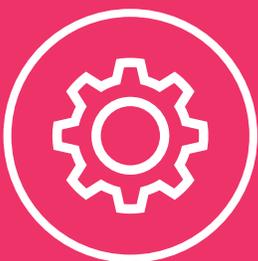
What will it take to improve the way talent is recruited and developed—while positioning public service organizations as "Best Places to Work"? Citizens and public service leaders agree on five strategies for government management:

- 1. Developing talent from within**—with succession planning focused on promoting existing employees. Organizations also should focus on coaching and developing the skills required to create and sustain a work environment where everyone contributes to their full capacity.
- 2. Flexible career paths**—enabling public service employees to experience multiple careers and job roles in one organization. Rotating employees into different positions and departments can help develop transferable skills and broaden socialization and leadership development opportunities. The message: "You can have as many careers as you want—right here."
- 3. Flexible work environment**—offering employees a variety of employment options: full time, flex time, part time, work from home, seasonal or contractual. Such arrangements empower employees to work according to their own goals, preferences and schedules while increasing the organization's utilization of all talent options.

4. Clear path to career advancement—with formal training and development programs. They should match specific skills and capabilities to increasingly responsible positions—and equip employees with the training and tools needed to demonstrate and track career progression.

5. Digitally enabled work—arming employees with leading-edge technologies that make them more effective in delivering services. Digital and mobile technology tools help employees become more connected, informed and productive—regardless of where they perform their work.

Almost eight in 10 citizens and public service leaders say that by taking such steps to become "Best Places to Work," government will do more than drive citizens' interest in public service employment. They also will strengthen perceptions of government as innovative and forward looking—and enhance citizens' overall satisfaction with government.



Massachusetts Builds HR Analytics Capability

As governments change the way they define, discover, develop and deploy talent, analytics can be one of the most valuable tools to help spot trends, pinpoint challenges and identify opportunities to improve government management.

Since 2010, the Massachusetts Human Resources Division (HRD) has been transforming from a focus on transactional work to a role as value-added strategic partners to the business. As part of that, it has undertaken a major initiative to improve HR analytics. Among the goals: to improve access to information, to "democratize" analysis and to use data to be more proactive in understanding and addressing issues and opportunities.

When complete, the analytics capability will offer important data-driven insights to numerous stakeholders.

Here are a few examples:

- The Governor's Office will have greater visibility to the composition of the workforce, along with productivity reports.
- Administration and Finance leaders will receive alerts when payroll spend is approaching the cap and will be better able to compare salaries across agencies and job types.
- State HR leaders will be able to better measure cycle time on service delivery and satisfaction with HR services.
- Agency executives will be able to identify high performers and anticipate retirements and attrition. Mid-level managers will have dashboards for tracking patterns of absence and leave, and supporting workforce planning.

Breaking through barriers

Despite the consensus on what to do, only 30 percent to 40 percent of public service leaders surveyed are ready to implement now. What's holding them back—and what clear steps can leaders take to overcome those government management barriers? Among the most-cited obstacles: lack of leadership support, insufficient knowhow, concerns about cost and disruption, and questions about regulatory issues.

Transforming into "Best Places to Work" will require disruptive change but will pay significant dividends. Fortunately, there's no single "right" way to initiate the change. In fact, Accenture sees a number of ways that leaders can get started:



1. Define.

Start using a standard set of definitions for the skills, capabilities and competencies required for each role in your organization. This will be a major break from the tradition of defining roles by job titles and spans of control and responsibility.



3. Develop.

Create a learning and career management system that will help your employees to match their skills, capabilities and competencies to your current and future needs and to plot one or more career paths within your organization.



2. Discover.

Using the same set of definitions, inventory the skills, capabilities and competencies of your current staff. You will be surprised at the range and depth you have on board today. Additionally, unleash the power of analytics to answer these and other key questions:

- Where do our best employees come from?
- Once people come into our organization, what path do they take in their career?
- Which skills, capabilities and competencies are the most valuable or hardest to find?



4. Deploy.

Use your insights on skills, capabilities and competencies to more effectively match people to opportunities for growth, development and promotion.

Is performance management performing?

For customers and citizens, personalized service is fast becoming the standard. That same orientation toward a tailored experience is increasingly being applied to employees, too. The goal: to improve attraction, development, engagement and retention of top talent. Recent Accenture Strategy research suggests that performance management practices aren't keeping pace. More than three-fourths of cross-industry respondents (77 percent) believe that personalizing performance management practices to individuals or groups is mandatory to meet the needs of the workforce of the future. What's more, 41 percent say that "one-size-fits-all" performance management practices have a major negative impact on performance management. Yet only 34 percent say their organization has moved away from a standardized performance management approach. As governments change how they develop talent, embracing more agile and personalized performance management will be critical to becoming "Best Places to Work."

To learn more, please see [*Is performance management performing?*](#)⁵

A "Best Place to Work" is one where people can fully develop and utilize their skills, capabilities and competencies. Be that place!

For more information, please contact:

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References

- 1 Accenture calculations based on U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, as published in U.S. States: *For Richer, For Poorer? Winning the battle for talent and securing our standard of living*
- 2 See *Winning the Battle for Talent: Government's Toughest Challenge*
- 3 Accenture Public Services Pulse Survey of 3,046 U.S. citizens and 108 public service leaders, December 2015
- 4 See *Winning the Battle for Talent: Government's Toughest Challenge*
- 5 See *Is performance management performing?*

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