Civil Service Leaders’ Roundtable

Summary Note

The Future of Work in the Public Service

13 November 2019
École nationale d'administration (ENA),
2 Avenue de l'Observatoire,
75006 Paris
In 2019, the OECD Council adopted the Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC), which defines 14 principles of a fit-for-purpose public service. Transforming these principles into action requires a future-oriented understanding of how the work of civil servants is changing. The Roundtable was held to inform ongoing OECD analysis and the development of a toolkit, with objectives to:

- Identify the key issues related to the future of work in the public service – what is likely to change? what implications for workforce policy and for public management?
- Provide a platform for a deep exchange of insights and perspectives among those leading the change.
- Identify innovative emerging practices and experiments that could provide insight into new ways of working in a future context.

The event explored and tested four provocative hypotheses through facilitated interactive sessions.

**AGENDA**

**9:00-9:30** Opening remarks

Marcos Bonturi, Director for Public Governance, OECD
Florian Blazy, Deputy Director, Direction générale de l'Administration et de la Fonction publique, France

**9:30-10:45** Hypothesis 1: The future will be digital, but innovation and transformation of the public service will be human.

Digitalisation, robotics and smart automation promise to revolutionise the way public administrations work. But the understanding, skills and innovation needed to harness the potential of these technologies lie with people - not machines. Rather than digital technologies replacing human workers, they will transform the work that employees do. To make the digital transformation successful, the investment in technology requires a commensurate investment in people and the places in which they work.

Speakers: Alistair Nolan, Senior Policy Analyst - Innovation and Policy Evaluation, OECD & Barbara Ubaldi, Deputy Head of Division and Head of Digital Government and Open Data Team, OECD

Facilitated workshop session:

- How are governments anticipating the impact of new technologies on public sector jobs? To what extent will the work of public servants be transformed?
- What skills will be needed in the future? And how are public services ensuring that they have the right skills available in-house and at-hand?
- How should workplaces and working methods change to make the most of new technologies?

Feedback and synthesis
11:15-12:30 Hypothesis 2:
The only certainty is uncertainty, so we need to learn as we go.
As the speed of change accelerates, skills need to keep pace or risk becoming obsolete; and the most important skill will be the ability to continuously learn and adapt. This suggests the need to rethink individual and organisational learning to motivate staff, deliver on the “reskilling revolution” and better anticipate an accelerating pace of change.
Lead speaker: Geert Bouckaert, Professor of Public Management and Chair of the OECD Network of Schools of Government, Belgium
Facilitated workshop session:
  - How can employees be motivated to learn throughout their careers and be more open to change and adaptation?
  - What do employees need in order to invest in learning and development?
  - How can leaders and managers create a “culture of continuous learning” in their organisations?
  - How can a learning culture amongst individuals and teams be scaled up to the organisation level, with a focus on foresight and anticipation?
Feedback and synthesis

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14:00-15:15 Hypothesis 3:
The need for a diversity of expertise and skills requires diversity of employment models.
The civil service of the future will be increasingly specialised, but not all expertise will need or expect the same employment offer. Remote working and contingent forms of employment (contracting, temporary work, etc.) can provide opportunities for public services to acquire increasingly scarce skills and introduce greater flexibility and agility to their operations. However, these models can also incur potential risks. Public services will need to be more strategic in where and how they target a range of employment offers and learning investments.
Lead speaker: Florian Blazy, Deputy Director, Direction générale de l'Administration et de la Fonction publique, France
Facilitated workshop session:
  - How are public services introducing greater flexibility into their employment models? What lessons have been learned?
  - What are the right principles upon which to determine employment terms and conditions, rights and obligations?
  - In a context of increased alignment with private sector employment practices, what are the public service values that should be emphasised across public service professions?
Feedback and synthesis

15:15-15:45 Break

15:45-17:00 Hypothesis 4:
Salary is a baseline, but it is the experience of work that attracts and retains talent.
Competition for in-demand skills is becoming fierce, and this “War for Talent” is only expected to intensify in the future. Competing on the basis of compensation alone is unrealistic. The good news is that workers are looking for much more out of their careers than just good pay. Experts suggest that employees want a community, growth, and impactful work. Designing a positive employee experience goes a long way in attracting, retaining, and getting the best performance out of employees.
Lead speaker: Peter Woolcott, Australian Public Service Commissioner, Australia
Facilitated workshop session:
  - What do employees want from their jobs and employers? What are the key indicators of positive employee experience?
  - What are the opportunities to connect civil servants with the impact and the value they create?
  - What does it really mean to be an employer of choice in a Future of Work context? What benefits or competitive advantages does the public sector have and how can public services create jobs around these?
Feedback and synthesis

17:00-17:30 Conclusions and closing remarks: The role of civil service leaders in driving the change

17:30 Cocktail

www.oecd.org/gov/pem/
HYPOTHESIS 1
THE FUTURE WILL BE DIGITAL, BUT INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE WILL BE HUMAN.

The digital revolution is already here and is reshaping public workforces. While there is much debate about the specific impacts technologies will have, recent OECD research suggests that only 14% of jobs in the labour market are at high risk of disappearing, while 32% could be radically transformed. Rather than replacing workers, new technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual realities will transform the way public servants work. This transformation will depend on new ways of working across all public service professions - from digital public service delivery, to agile forms of management and leadership.

This disruption creates an opportunity to re-centre work around innovation and transformation through public employees and their skills. In this context, public services will likely need to appeal to a wider range of people and different skillsets than they had in the past. The focus will not only be on technical specialisations, but also on behavioural, and cognitive ‘meta-skills’ that are less likely to be automated. Public servants, more than ever, will need to be dynamic public problem-solvers, rather than rigid bureaucrats who narrowly apply the law.

Finally, while public employees will have to “reinvent” themselves with new abilities, the public sector as an employer must also adapt with new ways of organising its work and workforce. More interconnected organisations, virtual teams enabled by Clouds and dynamic technologically-supported workplaces may be necessary to consider.

Key Facts

**The digital transformation is here...**

- The OECD has estimated that 14% of jobs in the labour market are at high risk of automation and 32% could be radically transformed.¹

- While predictable, routine tasks are most at risk, all professions can be impacted: for example, “robot-lawyer” has successfully appealed over USD 12 million worth of traffic tickets, IBM’s Watson and DeepMind Health outperformed human doctors in diagnosing rare cancers, and AI has proven to be better at predicting stock exchange variations than finance professionals.²

- The exact impact on public sector jobs is still unknown: In Australia, around 150,000 public administration jobs could be displaced by 2030³, while in the US the estimate was that 130,000 federal jobs could be changed or eliminated by AI by 2040.⁴

**But many employees & organisations lack the skills to adapt and make the most of it.**

- Computer sciences and digital skills will need to be “mainstreamed” into many professions.⁵

- But, on average in the OECD, 6 out of 10 adults lack basic ICT skills or have no computer experience.⁶

- Critical thinking, creativity, judgement, innovation, entrepreneurship, and empathy will become increasingly coveted skills.⁷

**Such drastic change requires evolving public structures and employment policies.**

- Supporting public sector innovation is a high priority for governments, however in most public sector organisations there are few or no formal processes for conducting the innovation process.⁸
The United Kingdom government employs more than 17,000 civil servants in digital, data, and technology roles. The prominence of such positions will become increasingly relevant in the future. In this context, the UK Civil Service developed the DDaT (Digital, Data and Technology) Profession Framework, detailing the expected tasks, the essential skills and the required level, as well as the desirable skills for a range of digital professions. This framework has multiple objectives, such as making more explicit the different digital roles in government, identifying skills required for career progression, assessing skills for performance reviews, developing precise job adverts and carrying out human resources and workforce planning.

Source: UK Digital, Data and Technology Profession (2019), Digital, Data and Technology Profession Capability Framework


---

Share of jobs at high risk of automation or significant change

- **High risk of automation**
- **Significant risk of change**

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2019, OECD, 2019

---

1. OECD (2019), Employment Outlook
2. OECD (2019), Artificial Intelligence in Society
4. Partnership for Public Service and IBM Center for The Business of Government (2019), More Than Meets AI
5. OECD (2019), Artificial Intelligence in Society
6. OECD (2016), Skills Matter: Further Results From the Survey of Adult Skills
7. OECD (2019), Artificial Intelligence in Society
8. OECD, OPSI (2017), Fostering Innovation in the Public Sector
Key points raised from the discussions

How are governments anticipating the impact of new technologies on public sector jobs? To what extent will the work of public servants be transformed?

Participants emphasised that different groups of employees - such as low- and high-skilled employees - will be affected in different ways. Nevertheless, a number of elements are still not clear, such as the degree to which certain tasks and professions will be digitally automated or, augmented. Roundtable participants also considered the trade-offs involved in the introduction of new technology. Therefore participants recognised the need to:

• Develop more nuanced analysis that takes into account the wide range of jobs in the public sector.
• Find ways to ensure that technology is not only effective, but inclusive.

What skills will be needed in the future? And how are public services ensuring that they have the right skills available?

While digital skills will be increasingly essential, most participants agreed that ‘people skills’ such as empathy, dealing with complexity, and judgement will be even more important in a digital context. As data will come to drive policy and operational decision making to a greater degree, data and AI inputs must be accessible to data-literate human decision-makers, particularly when the data may suggest policy solutions that will negatively affect certain groups. Many recognised that that great skills and people already exist in the public sector, placing the onus on managers to better organise and use their existing workforce. Therefore, participants recognised the need for:

• Better and more consistent strategic workforce planning to translate technical skills and behavioural/ cognitive competencies into talent sourcing and upskilling strategies.
• Focus on the ethical aspects of technology and ensure that humans can always understand, explain and correct AI decision-making for errors or bias.

How should workplaces and working methods change to make the most of new technologies?

Most participants recognised that ‘digitalisation’ will affect many processes in government, though they differed on which specific processes will be affected. There was also recognition of the differentiated pace of change across and within countries. The challenge confronting managers will be successful implementation of change management strategies, and many countries have skilled professionals experienced in this. While workplaces are already seeing the impact of new working methods through access to working remotely, public expectations must also be kept in mind. Therefore, participants recognised the need to:

• Frame and define the problem: what technology, for what problem, for what workplace?
• Engage openly in debate: It’s not just technical discussion, the public (voters) and employees (unions) must be partners in shaping how the public sector workforce of the future adapts.

Following the discussion, delegates agreed to the following revisions to the hypothesis:

The future will be digital, but innovation and transformation of the public service must be human.

Paths for further exploration

• Compare different approaches to assessing the impacts of digitalisation on jobs and integrating this into workforce planning.
• Further develop the OECD’s public sector skills frameworks to reflect a digital future.
• Develop case studies on the ethical implications of AI and digitalisation in public sector contexts, and the role of human intervention.
HYPOTHESIS 2
THE ONLY CERTAINTY IS UNCERTAINTY, SO WE NEED TO LEARN AS WE GO

While nobody can predict all the changes that will come in the future, the increasingly rapid pace of change seems more certain. Therefore, public employees will need to rely on their ability to develop and master new emerging skills. As the social philosopher Eric Hoffer wrote, “in a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists”.

The main challenge for the public sector is therefore to adopt strategies to keep pace with fast changing skills in a digitally-rich and transformed environment. This will require moving beyond discrete training and development programmes, and towards the development of a learning culture in public organisations. This requires a focus on all public servants, who will have to be provided tools and incentives to learn as they go, building their knowledge and learning from experience – whether successful or not.

This is also a fundamental leadership challenge, since all people managers will have to become employee developers, focusing not only on getting the work done, but also on building the workforce needed. Through more coaching, frequent feedback and an emphasis on employee development, leaders can pave the way for a much broader change. The ultimate goal will be to transition from a learning culture to a learning organisation; in other words, an organisation that is able to leverage the collective knowledge of its workforce and beyond to learn from the past and anticipate the future.

Key Facts

Reskilling and upskilling have to become a priority, but the public sector and employees are not always treating them as such.

- The US Government estimates that it would cost US$24,000 to reskill each worker displaced by new technologies between now and 2022.¹
- However, austerity measures resulted in significant cuts to training for civil servants in most OECD countries over the last 10 years.²
- More than three in four adults with low skills across the OECD do not participate in job-related education and training in any given year, older cohorts and those with lower literacy levels are least willing to participate.³
- On average, close to 70% of adults in public administration participated in training over the course of the year, but little is known about about how this contributes to a learning culture and future-oriented transformation strategies.⁴

Leaders need to take their roles as enablers and coaches more seriously.

- Workers with specific pre-set goals are 40% more likely to be engaged, but only 30% of workers experience this way of working.⁵
- Employee development is valued in the recruitment and development of Senior Management in only 11 OECD countries.⁶

Learning also needs to happen at the organisational level.

- The building blocks of a learning organisation are: a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership that reinforces learning.⁷
**Leading the way**

**Lifelong learning opportunities in France**

France introduced an individual training account (Compte Personnel de Formation, CPF) in 2015. At the end of each year, individuals get training credits on their individual account based on the time spent in employment and working time during the year. The CPF hours can only be used for training options that feature on one of the national, regional or sectoral lists. These lists are developed by social partners, and are based on the associated labour market needs. The CPF can only be used to obtain accredited training. In addition to professional training, training to obtain a range of basic skills (socle de connaissances et compétences) is also eligible for the CPF. One year after its introduction, almost 2.5 million CPF accounts were created. This number increased to just over 4.2 million by the second month of 2017.

Other programmes have been implemented in France, such as training leaves (Congé Individuel de Formation, CIF) meant to upskill or reskill; recognition of skills for individuals with skills not yet officially recognised; or sector-specific lifelong learning programmes for sectors adversely impact by structural, economic, social and demographic change.

Source: Getting Skills Right: France, OECD, 2017
www.oecd.org/els/getting-skills-right-france-9789264284456-en.htm

---

**Willingness to participate**

Willingness to participate in adult learning by age and skill level

![Willingness to participate by age and literacy level](chart)


---

1 World Economic Forum (2019), Towards a Reskilling Revolution
2 OECD (2014), Survey on Managing Budgeting Constraints: Implications for HRM and Employment in Central Public Administration
3 OECD (2019), OECD Skills Outlook
4 Ibid.
5 Gallup, (2019) It’s the Manager
6 OECD (2018), SHRM
Key points raised from the discussions

How can employees be motivated to learn throughout their careers and be more open to change and adaptation? What do employees need in order to invest in learning and development?

Most Roundtable participants noted that their employees are motivated to participate in training, but emphasised the need to extend learning well beyond formal training modules and into the everyday life of the workplace. In this sense, employees need to learn how to learn, and be encouraged to teach as well. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Encourage all learning methods, including learning on the job, formal training/certification, digital tools and peer-to-peer learning methods.
- Develop learning plans at individual, team and organisational level to match employees’ needs/ambitions with the organisation’s.
- Build awareness of how re-skilling can help employees improve the impact of their work in the future.

How can leaders and managers create a “culture of continuous learning” in their organisations?

The OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability calls on adherents to promote a learning culture in the public service, recognising that this is a leadership and management challenge. But culture is hard to define, measure, assess and change. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Emphasise the role of team leaders as people developers, coaches, and teachers, using goal setting, delegation, task assignment, accountability and regular feedback as learning tools.
- Provide safe spaces for group reflection on successes and errors, and create opportunities for networking beyond the immediate team.
- Measure employees’ perceptions of their opportunities to learn through employee surveys or other tools.

How can a learning culture amongst individuals and teams be scaled up to the organisation level, with a focus on foresight and anticipation?

Uncertainty is not new to the public service, but there was a clear sense among delegates that the speed and impact of disruption is greater than before. Public employees may be learning as they go, but the challenge is to capture and share this learning so that it results in organisational transformation. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Promote safe experimentation and develop faster feedback loops to learn from experience, successful or not.
- Encourage “unlearning” and critical reflection in order to question the underlying assumptions of certain routines and practices.

Delegates suggested the following revisions to the hypothesis:

The only certainty is constant change, so we need to learn as we go.

Paths for further exploration

- Comparative analysis on integrated learning tools and the evolving role of Schools of Government in the learning ecosystem.
- Develop case studies of effective public sector experimentation (successful or not).
- Tools to measure and build organisational learning cultures from the top down and the bottom up.
HYPOTHESIS 3
DIVERSITY OF EXPERTISE AND SKILLS REQUIRES DIVERSITY OF EMPLOYMENT MODELS

The Future of Work brings with it a need for a wider variety of skills and backgrounds than ever before. With this greater diversity of skills comes the need for a greater diversity of employment models. Tenured civil servants with ‘life-long’ contracts and outsourced short-term contract staff are two extremes of a potentially much broader spectrum. Employees increasingly expect to be hired, managed, and compensated according to their unique sets of skills, performance and personal priorities. Public employers must therefore provide more individualised and flexible sets of terms and conditions to match.

In this fast-changing environment, the concept of a traditional “career path” is being questioned and redefined. A “career” as such looks less like a linear path, and more like a series of experiences, in which skills are constantly being developed and refined. This means that instead of starting at the bottom and climbing up the ladder, a better metaphor may be rock-climbing, which involves lateral moves and occasional descents in order to advance, zig zagging through different roles and organisations inside - and even outside - of the public service. Time off work, in the form of “sabbaticals” for either furthering education or pursuing personal interests may also be more common.

In this sense, a greater diversity of employment modalities in the public service also brings with it potential benefits and risks. While the public sector may be better able to access a broader pool of skills and have greater flexibility in deploying them, this may cause divergences across organisations if there are no clear criteria and guidelines in place. Upholding common public values needs to be considered and reinforced across modalities. The degree to which private employment models can be adapted for public sector use merits further debates.

Key Facts

The traditional career path is fading away.
- While differences exist across countries, job-to-job mobility has increased in over half of OECD countries since 2006.¹
- The average job tenure in the OECD has dropped since 2006, by up to 11 percentage points for workers with low levels of education, and by five percentage points for workers with high levels of education.²

Full-time, permanent employment is still the norm, but new employment models are increasingly common.
- Across OECD countries, one in seven workers is self-employed and one in nine is on a temporary contract.³
- Part-time work was on the rise in over half of OECD countries between 2000 and 2017⁴, and almost 20% of public employees in the EU 27 were working part time in 2015.⁵
- In terms of public sector employment, on average, 67% of public employees in central/federal governments have a civil servant contract, usually with greater job security and different recruitment processes, pay scales, and advancement opportunities.⁶

Public sector organisations are allowing for greater flexibility.
- 88% of public organisation allow flexitime, 77% telework, and 69% career breaks or secondments.⁷
**Leading the way**

**The Government of Canada Talent Cloud (GC Talent Cloud)**

The Government of Canada Talent Cloud emerged from the observation that the duality of employment models (permanent versus contract-based workers) was no longer fit-for-purpose in a changing world. Talent Cloud workers are project-based employees with high mobility, receiving benefits traditionally restricted to permanent employees. Throughout the duration of the contract, employees coming from the Talent Cloud benefit from the status of Government of Canada employee, opening rights to benefits after three months and to pension after six months of work.

While the Talent Cloud positions typically relate to digital, tech and User Experience (UX), an increasing amount of offers relate to administrative positions and HR, aiming to open policy, project management and procurement positions in the near future. People are chosen based on their hard and soft skills, regardless of their previous professional or academic background.

Source: Government of Canada, Talent Cloud User Guide  
https://talent.canada.ca/en/faq

**Megatrends create the need for skills development across the life course**

FROM:
- PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- TERTIARY SPECIALISE

TO:
- ECEC
- PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- TERTIARY SPECIALISE

Source: OECD Centre of Skills (2019), The Impact of Megatrends on Skills: Reengineering Skills Systems

1 OECD (2019), Employment Outlook  
2 OECD (2019), Employment Outlook  
3 OECD (2019), Skills Outlook  
4 OECD (2019), Employment Outlook  
5 European Parliament, Employment and Social Affairs (2017), Risk of Precarious Work in the Public Sector  
6 OECD, Government at a Glance 2019  
7 Softworks (2019), Managing Flexible Working in the Public Sector and how Technology could assist
Key points raised from the discussions

How are public services introducing greater flexibility into their employment models? What lessons have been learned?

This session looked at the infrastructure underpinning public employment: terms and conditions, job classification, pay. Increasing flexibility was a common theme throughout the day, but every national public employment system presents different structural rigidities and cannot change radically overnight. The concept of flexibility needs to be nuanced, and context-specific: visions diverge on where, when, and to which extent. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Find models that create legal environments and conditions for greater managerial flexibility while minimising the risk of employee exploitation.
- Give space to experiment with employment models that challenge long-standing HRM assumptions.

What are the right principles upon which to determine employment terms and conditions, rights and obligations?

The Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability calls for the flexible use of employment terms and conditions guided by transparent principles. Employment frameworks provide important levers to stimulate diversity of expertise and skills and there was a recognised tendency towards individualisation of the employment relationship – one-size fits all solutions are no longer fit for purpose. This raises tensions around equity and fairness. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Define under which specific conditions different employment models can/should be used.
- Manage the tensions between specificity and standardisation, and evaluate the trade-offs in terms of fairness and productivity.

In a context of increased alignment with private sector employment practices, what are the public service values that should be emphasised across public service professions?

Delegates agreed that the public employment model is likely to evolve towards greater permeability with other sectors, which raises challenges to the establishment of a common culture and the reinforcement of public service values and ethics. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Explicitly define the values of the public service and promote them widely.
- Analyse and manage risks linked to mobility such as conflict of interest or lack of shared values.

Delegates suggested the following revisions to the hypothesis:

*Diversity of expertise and skills requires diversity of employment models – and better communication around those models.*

Paths for further exploration

- Research on flexible employment models in public sector contexts – with critical analysis of benefits and risks.
- Update analysis on public sector pay systems and job classification in the context of Future of Work to balance the orientation towards individualisation with the need for broad standardisation.
- Tools to support values-based leadership and HRM.
HYPOTHESIS 4
SALARY IS A BASELINE, BUT IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS TALENT

The reputation of the public sector as a top-choice employer will determine, in part, its ability to ensure the right capacities are in place for the public services of tomorrow. In an ever more competitive labour market, employers have to be prepared to compete for in-demand skills. Attracting and retaining talent means knowing what employees want from their jobs and considering those preferences in employment conditions and policies.

Today, compensation is not the only criteria that candidates consider when choosing an employer. Other elements related to the way that employees experience their work are increasingly important, such as having impactful work, opportunities to develop their skills and careers, the quality of management, flexibility, and the general working environment. These are all areas where the public sector can - and should- compete.

The recruitment process is critical, but it just marks the beginning of the employee experience within the public sector. Effective people managers and well-designed induction and development programmes can open meaningful opportunities to make a difference. Flexible working policies are increasingly being adopted, potentially resulting in higher employee engagement.

But not all employees want the same things, and what they want may change throughout the course of their careers. Employers have to be able to track and identify employees’ preferences and perceptions in order to adjust and improve. Data and evidence can provide new insights about employee preferences and behaviour that can result in a more productive and innovative public service workforce, equipped to face the future challenges of work.

Key Facts

Attracting and recruiting the civil servants of tomorrow is more and more difficult.
● 42% of American state chief administrators considered the difficulty of attracting new employees one of the top three challenges of workforce management.1
● On average in the OECD, 25% of central government employees are aged 55 years or older, but in many countries (64%), moderate or high austerity measures prevented hiring for several years following the crisis.3

An emphasis on values and personal development can make the difference.
● 88% of young workers want their employer’s values to match their own.4
● Professional development and advancement opportunities are among the main reasons for Millennials to stay in their organisation.5
● Lengthy recruitment periods and red tape discourage employees from applying to government jobs: in the US average time to hire for government is among the highest in the labour market (41 days on average), with a similar trend for other member countries.6

Monitoring and maintaining high levels of employee engagement is essential to retaining talent.
● Employee engagement is an area of focus of employee surveys in 21 OECD countries, with several member countries having "engagement indices" to monitor and benchmark this dimension.7
● HR analytics will allow organisations to monitor and personalise engagement policies more easily to ensure retention and improve performance.8
**Employee Engagement at the US Department of Energy**

Every year, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducts the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to measure public employees’ perception of American public organisations. From 2011 to 2014, the FEVS saw a decreasing score for the US Department of Energy (DoE). The organisation issued a memorandum to reinforce engagement and organisational performance, giving direction for the implementation of various policies. For instance, leaders are encouraged to interact more regularly with employees, setting clear goals and reviewing progress to increase employee engagement. In this context, Senior Executive Service members and managers are held accountable for improvement, for instance through the appointment of Senior Accountable Officers. An analysis tool has also been created to organise the FEVS analysis and interpretation and action planning. Overall, much has been rethought around employee engagement, whether it is through a sharing of successful practices, common engagement challenges, or the implementation of employee-led recommendations.

Source: OECD (2016), Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service


---

**What Different Generations Look for When Applying for a Job**

(percentage responding extremely important, according to a survey of 1700 US workers)


---

1. Accenture (2019), Reimagine the state government workforce
2. OECD (2017), Government at a Glance
3. OECD (2017), Engaging Public Employees for a High Performing Civil Service
4. PWC (2013), Millennials at Work – Reshaping the Workplace
5. Gallup, (2016), How Millennials Want to Work and Live
7. OECD (2016), Strategic Human Resource Management Survey
8. OECD (2019), A data-driven public sector
Key points raised from the discussions

What do employees want from their jobs and employers? What are the key indicators of positive employee experience?

Participants emphasised quality of leadership and management, interesting work, and work-life balance as elements all employees (young and old) look for when applying to a job. The public sector has access to an ever-greater range of data and analytics to assess, predict and improve employee experience, through, e.g. employee surveys, union consultation, administrative data and other sources. However, many public employers still lack capabilities to make the best use of this data and communicate the positive features of public service work to potential candidates and citizens. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Invest in people analytics capabilities to understand and predict employee experience at a granular level, and design more targeted interventions to, e.g. attract in-demand skill sets, and under-represented target groups.
- Invest in management capabilities and give managers tools to be people leaders and enablers through e.g. coaching, faster feedback mechanisms, comparative performance analytics, etc.

What are the opportunities to connect civil servants with the impact and the value they create?

Branding public sector employment opportunities as meaningful work experiences helps, but public employees want to see the value-added impact of their work on the people they serve. Delegates recognised the need to ensure that public servants are provided with opportunities that use their skills fully. As automation reduces the administrative burden of many public sector jobs, opportunities will become available to redesign jobs around higher-value outputs. At the same time, digital technologies and higher levels of mobility can encourage employees to engage more directly with communities they serve. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Bring employees closer to the impact of their organisation through e.g. shorter feedback loops, and use digital tools and mobility programmes to reduce distance between public servants and citizens.
- Rethink the structures of bureaucracy and reduce layers of hierarchy to involve more employees in decision-making processes and break down silos.
- Redesign work and teams around value, taking advantage of the potential for automation of routine administrative tasks.

What does it really mean to be an employer of choice in a Future of Work context? What benefits or competitive advantages does the public sector have and how can public services create jobs around these?

Many delegates were proud of their public services’ overall attractiveness but recognised that the future is likely to feature an increasingly competitive labour market with more challenges to attract specific expertise. With salary constraints expected to continue for the kinds of professions at the heart of the Future of Work (STEM, leadership, etc.) the public sector can emphasise career path variety, work-life balance, talent development and public service motivation. Therefore, delegates recognised the need to:

- Develop more targeted and agile HRM processes, including employer branding, recruitment selection and staffing, and talent management/development programming (e.g. graduate recruitment schemes).
- Take more advantage of the flexible working options enabled by technology, and invest in capacities to manage dispersed teams working remotely.

Delegates suggested the following revisions to the hypothesis:

It’s the experience of work that attracts and makes the most of talent... but salary also matters.

Paths for further exploration

- Collect and share cutting-edge practices on people analytics in public sector contexts, and develop comparative indicators on employee work experience.
- Develop case studies on the effective use of virtual/dispersed teams and the management challenges implied.
- Develop experiments to anticipate new models of public sector organisation with a view to reducing hierarchy, busting silos and bringing more voices into decision-making.
OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability, 2019

VALUES-DRIVEN CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

1. Define the values of the public service and promote values-based decision making.
2. Build leadership capability in the public service.
3. Ensure an inclusive and safe public service that reflects the diversity of society.
4. Build a proactive and innovative public service that takes a long-term perspective in policy design and services.

SKILLED AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SERVANTS

5. Continuously identify skills and competencies needed to transform political vision into services which deliver value.
6. Attract and retain employees with the skills and competencies required from the labour market.
7. Recruit, select and promote candidates through transparent, open and merit-based processes.
8. Develop the necessary skills and competencies by creating a learning culture and environment in the public service.

RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTIVE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS

10. Clarify institutional responsibilities for people management.
11. Develop a long-term, strategic and systematic approach to people management based on evidence and inclusive planning.
12. Set the necessary conditions for internal and external workforce mobility and adaptability to match skills with demand.
13. Determine and offer transparent employment terms and conditions that match the functions of the position.
14. Ensure that employees can contribute to the improvement of public service delivery and engaged as partners in public service issues.

oe.cd/public-service-leadership