Workforce of Tomorrow

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH**COLLABORATIVE**

CENTER FOR STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE

Workforce of Tomorrow

Local Government Research Collaborative

The LGRC is a network of twenty local governments, the Alliance for Innovation, and universities across the nation, which funds research critically linked to the practice of local government management.

Center for State and Local Government Excellence

The Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) helps local and state governments become knowledgeable and competitive employers so they can attract and retain a talented and committed workforce. SLGE identifies leading practices and conducts research on competitive employment practices, workforce development, pensions, health care benefits, and financial planning. SLGE also brings state and local leaders together with respected researchers. It features the latest research and news on health care, retirement benefits, recruitment, succession planning, and workforce demographics on its website. [slge.org]

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Executive Summary

Local governments will face significant challenges in attracting and retaining talent in the years ahead as retiring baby boomers are replaced by a workforce that is younger, more diverse, more mobile, and more reliant on information and communication technologies. The workforce of the future will have different expectations of employers and employment than their predecessors. The impact of baby boomer retirements will be widely felt in both the public and private sectors. There will be increased competition for talent and greater pressure on local governments to adapt to changing times, market themselves as employers of choice, anticipate workforce needs, and invest in and engage employees in meaningful ways.

These issues have not been on the radar screen for many elected and appointed officials. Budget challenges, legacy costs, and certain political environments will make it difficult for many local governments to compete with the private sector when it comes to wages. But leadership makes a difference. Public service is more than a paycheck and next generation workers are attracted to meaningful work and the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. Local governments can market themselves as an employer of choice by focusing on their assets: a sense of purpose, a mission that matters, being able to serve the public with integrity, interesting work, internal mobility, good benefits, and job variety.

While these assets may offset a less competitive salary, the traditions, practices, routines, and habits of government work will need to change. The next generation has a preference for flexibility, self-directed work, rapid upward mobility, and a highly collaborative environment.

Local government leaders need to have a sense of urgency about the challenges and changes ahead. Organizational transformation is needed and requires leadership.

MANAGING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

A multi-generational and increasingly diverse workforce offers both opportunities and challenges. Older workers bring experience and know-how to the job, essential to high performance. Younger workers bring energy, new ideas, and technology savvy, attributes that are equally important. With four to five

generations already coexisting in the workplace, local managers need to be cognizant of the similarities, differences, and nuances of each generation and find creative ways to accommodate them. Managers also need to build trust and communicate effectively to gain everyone's commitment to organizational goals.

Themes that emerged from interviews with local government managers, academics, and HR experts and from a literature review conducted for this project include:

- Transforming local government human resources policies and practices is at the heart of building the workforce of tomorrow and requires commitment from the top.

- Next generation workers are motivated by more than money. They want opportunities to do something worthwhile, so they will examine an organization's values and culture when considering a position.

- Flexible work practices can enhance retention for workers at all career stages. Younger workers expect the flexibility to work anytime from anywhere to get the job done—and older workers appreciate such flexibility as well.

- Technology will shape how work is organized, the nature of employment relationships, how employees communicate with each other and constituents, and the skills needed for many jobs. Younger employees are drawn to employers that provide the most up-to-date technology.

- Developing the next generation of leaders is vital to building and sustaining a talented workforce of tomorrow.

Graduate and undergraduate students responding to a survey administered by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) for this project offered similar themes:

- Most students have a favorable opinion of local government, are likely to pursue local government career options, and are attracted by the opportunity to make a difference in the community and people's lives.

- Students who said they aren't likely to pursue local government career options cited too much bureaucracy, constraints on what can be accomplished, not enough creative flexibility, slow hiring processes, and a greater interest in the non-profit sector.

- More than 50 percent of respondents said they expect to stay in a local government position for five years or less (compared with an average tenure of 7.1 years for local government employees between 2000 and 2014), and a majority said they plan to work in a variety of sectors throughout their careers.

- Internships provide important work experience to students seeking local government jobs. 50 percent of students are already in internships and 19 percent are seeking those opportunities.

- Professional development is a top priority for students, particularly employer-paid conferences service on committees and task forces, and external training opportunities.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The interviews conducted by SLGE for this project identified six strategies to guide local governments in building the workforce of tomorrow.

1. Reinvent human resources to become flexible, nimble, creative, can-do, strategic, and staffed by skilled employees who champion people management issues and set the workforce agenda. The local government manager should be a key advocate for this transformation.

2. Revamp antiquated policies and practices to meet the needs and expectations of a changing workforce and to compete successfully in the talent race.

3. Make government an employer of choice by building a brand that tells the great story of public service.

4. Focus on talent management, leadership development, and succession planning to prepare for workforce transitions, build needed bench strength, and grow future leaders.

5. Create a culture that values and engages employees in meaningful ways.

6. Leverage technology, data, and automation to improve government operations and provide employees with the tools they need to be highly productive and successful.

Winning the Talent Race

Which organization is most likely to hire the talented graduate student? One organization takes weeks or even months to respond. After the first interview, the organization sends a second-round interview invitation with a packet that includes a copy of the budget, an organization chart, and a job description. Another organization quickly responds to an application, schedules a first-round interview, and invites the applicant for a second interview. The packet that comes for the second interview includes glowing statements from individuals about what a difference the organization has made to them.

Bob O'Neill, ICMA executive director, tells this exact story about a 2015 graduate who had applied to five nonprofit and five government positions. Unfortunately, all five governments responded slowly with bureaucratic information that failed to convey any excitement about the opportunity to work in local government. The nonprofits moved quickly and marketed themselves much more effectively.

With four to five generations in the workforce today and the continued wave of retirements over the next decade, the challenges of attracting and retaining talent have never been greater. Slow, stodgy, and standardized practices simply won't work. The governments that will win the talent race are those that adapt to changing times, anticipate their workforce needs, share great stories about the opportunities of working for their organizations, and invest in and engage their employees. Local government managers need to make the case for change and champion it.

The following sections identify **six strategies** that emerged from conversations with practitioners, academics, and HR experts about the workforce of tomorrow.

ACTION STRATEGIES

1.   Reinvent HR

"In a world of increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, HR issues matter more than ever." Dave Ulrich, William A. Schiemann, and Libby Sartain[1]

Often seen as the "rule police" and the "agency of no," the human resources department of tomorrow must be flexible, nimble, creative, can-do, strategic,

> "HR will have to be valued and resourced as a strategic function that serves a critical business need."
>
> Debra Figone, former city manager, San Jose, California

and staffed by skilled employees who champion people management issues and set the workforce agenda. Human resources professionals will need to overcome hurdles of limited resources and a perception that they have legacy mindsets or low expectations about their role in the organization. Local government managers need to assume a leadership role to ensure that human resources evolve to meet changing workforce needs. That leadership role includes working with elected officials to agree up front with the framework for change.

Tom Calo, of Salisbury University and a former public and private sector HR director, says transforming HR is at the heart of building the public sector workforce of tomorrow. "Human resource policies and practices affect employee behavior and attitudes," Calo said. "They are a window into the organization and its culture."

Five guiding principles for reinventing HR to support the workforce challenges of the future and become "stewards of the people processes"[2] are:

- **Make human resources a core business function** that addresses strategic workforce issues more than employee transactions.

- **Promote HR innovation** by encouraging and supporting a "let's try it" approach to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding employees.

- **Raise the competence, skills, and stature of HR staff** to become workforce advisors and resources, rather than enforcers, by investing in training and professional development.

- **Connect HR practices and expectations to the organization mission and priorities** to ensure that all human resources work is aligned with and supports where the organization is going.

- **Embrace flexibility and rapid response** to make HR a go-to resource on workforce and people management issues.

Changing the environment within which HR operates is mission critical. This means raising expectations about the role of HR in the organization. HR staff who see themselves as vital front-line resources, rather than backroom paper pushers or enforcers, are more likely to step up to the strategic opportunities.

2. Revamp Antiquated Practices

Cool Company X allows employees to set their own hours, dress however they like, and work from home. Supervisors give their employees lots of space for getting the work done and encourage collaboration to meet agreed-upon goals.

How many local governments are like Cool Company X?

Daniel Pink says traditional work practices and reporting relationships put some local governments at a disadvantage in the race for young talent. "Millennials are more fluent about their preferences than boomers," Pink said. "They prefer self-directed work—the ability to work on what they want when they want with people who share a collaborative purpose."

Peter Cappelli of the Wharton School believes this is a "moment of enormous opportunity" for organizations to examine and revamp HR practices to meet current needs. "Little has been done in the past few decades to examine the value of widely used practices that are central to how companies operate," Cappelli writes. "By separating the effective from the worthless, HR leaders can secure huge payoffs for their organizations."[3] Recognizing the need for change, many state and local governments are already implementing policies and practices that:

- **Support and promote work-life integration and balance.** Many employees want to be able to better manage their work and home lives so that they can be happy and successful in both places. Employees prefer to work on their own clock rather than a company clock, while staying in close touch with supervisors and co-workers who share responsibilities. "The line between work and home life is more blurred today," said John Wilson, corporate cultural strategist in Edmonton, Alberta. Technology is essential to successful work-life balance along with clear performance goals that define desired results and timeframes. Perhaps most important is trust between the supervisor and employee that the work will get done. The measure of performance success is results achieved, rather than hours in the office, a traditional schedule, or "presenteeism."

- **Create broad outcome-based systems and practices.** Traditional HR systems try to standardize everything—pay ranges and starting salaries, job titles, and position descriptions. Examples of successful outcome-based practices include (1) broader compensation bands that support flexibility in how pay is set and performance rewarded; (2) tailored position descriptions that define specific results to be achieved for each job rather than standard groupings and generic responsibilities; (3) titles that fit the job rather than the structure, including sometimes allowing employees to select titles that are easily understood by external partners/audience; and (4) wider range of job types—full time, part time, short term, contract, shared.

More than 80 percent of all local government workers are still full-time, just as they were 20 years ago. As long-time baby boomer employees retire from full-time positions, that trend of primarily full-time work is likely to change. In some cases, outsourcing or hiring part-time employees may be the best options for getting the work done, particularly for highly technical jobs in which skills and requirements may change faster than local governments can adapt. A transition plan to phase in needed changes is essential to success.

- **Expedite hiring processes.** Speed matters, particularly when seeking top talent. Tools and processes that maximize hiring efficiency include social media for recruitment outreach; fast-track hiring at face-to-face and virtual job fairs (walk in, meet the right people, interview on-site or online, and walk out with a job prospect); virtual connections with hiring managers on Facebook; immediate responses to job applications; and electronic first-round interviews.

"Talented people need organizations a lot less than organizations need talented people"

Daniel Pink, Author

- **Phase out seniority-driven systems.** Reward systems based on seniority aren't great motivators—only incentives to hang around. As part of a comprehensive overhaul of its HR system, the State of Tennessee is transitioning to a performance-based reward system that deliberately differentiates employee performance based on discrete individual goals. The new pay-for-performance system provides three ratings—valued, advanced, and outstanding, with pay increases tied to those ratings—and eliminates all longevity pay.

3. Make Government an Employer of Choice

Winning the talent race requires marketing government as a great place to work—an employer of choice—rather than posting job descriptions and hoping talented people will find them. "The most important factor in becoming an employer of choice is to build a great brand that defines what it means to work for this organization and what this organization stands for," said Libby Sartain, former HR director at Southwest and Yahoo. Company stock and profit-sharing options give some companies a huge advantage in the talent race, making government branding even more important.

Governments are only beginning to understand the importance of building their brand, often having left their identities as employers up to chance or to outdated perceptions of government work. "Many people picture government as a 1950s or 1960s environment," Pink said. "They form opinions where they have the most interactions (DMV, garbage collection, potholes, parking) and think less about it when they are enjoying a park."

In fact, government has a great story to tell about what it offers to talented people—a sense of purpose, a mission that matters, being able to serve the public with integrity, interesting work, internal mobility, and job variety—factors that are regularly cited in surveys and research about what next generation workers are seeking in jobs and careers. "People long for meaningful work and the opportunity to make a difference," said John Wilson of Edmonton, Alberta. "We offer incredibly meaningful work, and that value proposition is very attractive to young workers."

Edmonton, which was selected as one of Alberta's top employers in 2015, meets potential new employees where they are—Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and a "talent hub" on the city website that invites potential employees to be part of an organization that allows you to "think outside the box, surround yourself with smart colleagues, and perform at your best." The city has a three-member HR outreach team that works on attracting, retaining, and developing a diverse, productive, engaged, and talented workforce to meet business needs and build a workforce that reflects the make-up of the community. The outreach team has focused particularly on Canada's fast-growing aboriginal population which is also the country's most underemployed group.

Marketing government as an employer of choice starts with a careful look at job descriptions and advertisements. Does the job sound dull and bureaucratic or

does it convey the excitement of public service and the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives?

Government often undersells it accomplishments. Building the brand depends on telling the good news stories about exciting government work, starting with K–12 children and continuing through college and graduate school and in the community at large.

The Tennessee Department of Human Resources has invested in a marketing campaign to position state government as an employer of choice in anticipation of the retirement of as much as 50 percent of its workforce (more than 20,000 current employees) within the next decade or sooner. Employee surveys are used to identify "bright spots" about government work that can be used in marketing state employment. HR Commissioner Rebecca Hunter, previously director of HR for Hamilton County, Tennessee, said there is a healthy sense of competition among agencies to highlight their good stories.

4. Focus on Talent Management, Leadership Development, and Succession Planning

As more baby boomers retire, will local governments be ready?

HR directors responding to a recent IPMA-HR survey said succession planning is their top challenge, but only 27 percent are doing it. The press of day-to-day activities, lack of top leadership commitment, and a smaller workforce with less time to devote to new initiatives were mentioned as obstacles to succession planning.

Purposeful, intentional, and strategic attention to talent management and succession planning are keys to preparing for workforce transitions, building needed bench strength, and growing future leaders.

- Talent management addresses the people side of the equation—identifying and investing in high-potential employees to meet future workforce needs, create growth opportunities, and ensure that the most talented employees stay because they see a bright future in the organization.

- Succession planning focuses on identifying mission-critical positions, assessing expected turnover in those positions, and planning for smooth transitions when employees resign or retire.

Not all positions are mission critical and routine turnover is part of the reality, especially since research shows that many young employees value mobility over long-term careers. That's why identifying the star performers and matching them with opportunities down the road is so important. "Really good organizations focus on talent review by asking, 'What ready talent do we have for what roles, who do we really need to retain, and why?'" said Libby Sartain.

The impact of lost institutional knowledge and know-how when long-time employees in mission-critical jobs leave is hard to anticipate and even harder to replace. Figuring out how to transfer that knowledge and experience before it walks out the door is an important part of succession planning. Approaches to capturing institutional know-how include:

"We talk about how people have delayed retirement. I've yet to find someone who has figured out how to delay aging."

Neil Reichenburg, executive director IPMA-HR

"Today's young talent are lifelong learners…and they intend to continue their education—formally and informally—for life."

Rebecca Ryan, Live First, Work Second

- Formal mentoring programs to help employees learn the ins and outs of succeeding in the organization
- Job shadowing
- Experiential learning
- Interim assignments for younger workers
- Short-term engagement of retirees for transitional projects to transfer institutional knowledge.

Employee training and leadership development, which are vital components of recruiting and retaining a talented workforce, sometimes fall victim to budget constraints. Tennessee HR Commissioner Hunter tells the story of a CEO and CFO who were working to balance a tight budget. The CFO suggests cutting training and development saying, "If we train them, they just leave." And the CEO asks, "But what if we don't train them, and they stay?"

With 30 percent of its workforce eligible to retire today, growing to 50 percent in five years, Hunter said the state knew it needed to invest in developing future leaders. The state provides a range of leadership development opportunities designed to identify and nurture future leaders, build employee motivation and commitment, and engage employees in meaningful ways. The program is a powerful retention tool because it lets employees know that they are valued and have a future in the organization. "We sometimes get so focused on performance that we forget about people," Hunter said. "We need to constantly nurture people and ideas."

Tennessee was one of the first state governments to create a chief learning officer position who works closely with agency heads to design and implement the talent management process and leadership development programs.

Important targets for leadership development in today's multi-generational workforce are first-line supervisors and middle managers, to ensure they are ready to embrace and guide new employees that are driven by the opportunity to make a difference and build on the promise of the work that brought them to public service.

For employees, a visible leadership development program tells them that there are opportunities for internal mobility and growth if they invest in the organization. Providing those kinds of opportunities for really talented people is important to building the workforce of tomorrow.

5. Create a Culture that Values and Engages People

"Cities must look for values and character in addition to skills and experience." Debra Figone

Here's what some HR experts and practitioners say about organizational culture:

- "Culture matters. Every organization has a culture. You can either respond to it or influence it." Simon Farbrother, city manager, Edmonton, Alberta.
- "Culture is what draws people to a company. It is something that fuels being able to do well in

the company." Libby Sartain, former HR director at Southwest and Yahoo.

- "An organization policy manual tells what the organization culture is and how people relate to each other. You can't change culture and behavior without changing HR policies and procedures." Tom Calo, Salisbury University.

- "How we develop our culture is the biggest lever we have for achieving organizational goals and meeting the challenges of the future." John Wilson, corporate culture strategist, Edmonton, Alberta.

Every organization has a culture. Sometimes it's more background music. Sometimes it changes like the weather. And sometimes it is a centerpiece for how the workplace thrives. A culture that provides a framework for action, guides behavior, engages employees, encourages collaboration, and builds employee commitment and loyalty helps make an organization an employer of choice—and a great place to work.

Developing a culture that permeates the organization and touches all employees is a "process, not a project," says Edmonton City Manager Farbrother. Edmonton has a corporate culture office, 400 volunteer culture ambassadors from the city's workforce, a culture advisory group, and an annual staff event—all designed to connect employees to the city's mission and create an environment in which employees are actively engaged in decision making, know they are valued resources whose work matters, and are proud to work for the city.

An inclusive culture, flexible HR practices, leadership development opportunities, and access to great technology tools all support employee engagement. IPMA-HR Executive Director Reichenberg believes organizations shouldn't be afraid to do engagement surveys because they provide useful information and send the right message to employees. Other engagement approaches include:

- Reduced layers of decision making that give employees more say in setting priorities and defining directions

- Sustained and meaningful opportunities for organizational involvement such as Edmonton's culture ambassadors and Tennessee's leadership advisory council

- Collaborative teams for getting work done

- Employee events that foster a sense of belonging

- Ongoing communication and feedback systems to ensure that employees are well informed about organizational priorities and issues affecting them.

Operating in a union environment requires special attention to engagement, particularly during changing times. Unions are sometimes seen as protectors of traditional work practices and obstacles to new initiatives such as succession planning. But engagement can break down barriers and change traditional mindsets. Edmonton has engaged union leaders in its culture journey, including inviting them to participate in leadership training opportunities.

"Budget and technology are very important to city success. But people are what make the difference."

Simon Farbrother, city manager, Edmonton, Alberta.

6. Leverage Technology, Data, and Automation

Technology has changed the way governments operate, how work is organized, the nature of employment relationships, and the skills needed for many jobs. Apps, mobile devices, social media, cloud computing, open source data, and more are part of local governments' technology arsenal and are integral to day-to-day work.

Technology, data, and automation create both opportunities for and challenges to address workforce needs:

- Local governments must continue to invest in technology to keep pace with rapid changes—as much as their tight budgets will permit—and build internal IT staff capacity.

- Deepening the organization's expertise in data analytics, for example, can help governments make more strategic decisions about what works and what is most cost effective.

- Automation may change the nature of or need for some jobs, making assessment of the long-term life of jobs an important component of workforce planning.

- Technology enables employees to work from anywhere, but many HR systems are not set up to deal with a work environment that includes virtual employees.

- HR professionals must become technology savvy to keep pace with changes and leverage technology, data, and automation to support HR and organizational goals. "The days of HR technology sitting in the basement running PeopleSoft are over."[4]

- Technology is a particularly powerful tool for recruitment because it offers easy ways to connect with large target audiences and expedite hiring processes.

- Many young employees are ahead of older workers on technology. Senior staff need to value their technology smarts and unleash them. Reverse mentoring is an effective way for younger workers to coach older workers.

- Too much reliance on technology to communicate can make it difficult to build strong relationships that are essential for a positive organizational culture.

A Blueprint for the Future

These workforce strategies cannot be achieved overnight and will require constant vigilance and advocacy from local government leaders to succeed.

While many strategies and practices can be adapted from one community to the next, regional differences will require special attention. Housing costs, for example, have become an impediment to hiring and retaining employees in some places. Creativity and innovation will be needed to address many specific issues, such as changes to the compensation package or the development of a new housing strategy.

Evolving demographics underlie all of the workforce challenges. For example, between 2014 and 2060, the portion of the U.S. population of Hispanic

origin is expected to increase from 17 percent to 29 percent, those of Asian origin from 5 percent to 9 percent, and African Americans from 13 percent to 14 percent.[5] These changes come at a time when local government workforces are much less diverse than the U.S. population. In 2014, about 12% of the workforce was of Hispanic origin; 3% was of Asian origin; and 14% was African American.[6]

Societal trends will also affect human resources strategies. There are likely to be more sourcing options for talent, from partnerships with nonprofits to outsourcing and shared employees. These workforce shifts may follow a broader societal movement of relying on individuals working as freelancers or independent contractors. As workers who take entrepreneurial approaches accept local government positions, they may be inclined to take more initiative to tackle problems. That initiative can pay dividends for organizations that are strapped for resources, and may also pose challenges for government leaders who need to ensure there is proper oversight and good communication with key stakeholders.

There is much to learn from organizations that already have had success in implementing effective workforce strategies, whether dealing with onboarding new employees or reinventing human resources. Some governments have become learning organizations that develop everyone's talents and skills. Knowing where there are current and future skills gaps and having a plan to address them is essential, as is having a strategy to address any systemic changes to human resources practices that are needed.

Review of Practitioner and Academic Research

The workforce of tomorrow has been the focus of articles, briefs, and reports from a range of sources, including public and business administration journals, human resource journals, domestic and international state and local associations, global consulting firms, business organizations, and unions. A review of these resources highlights many of the same themes that emerged from the conversations with practitioners, academics, and HR experts. The following sections highlight ideas about the workforce of tomorrow, organized around eight themes: (1) placed-based employment; (2) shifting generational balance; (3) gender diversity; (4) technology, (5) compensation, (6) training, (7) work-life balance, and (8) management strategies.

Place-Based Employment

As place-based employers whose mission is to serve people in their communities, local governments are particularly well equipped to attract young employees who want to "make a difference" through their work[7] and help people. Local governments offer the opportunity to:

- Work directly in a community
- Make a contribution by producing tangible infrastructure improvements and providing direct services, along with social, economic, and environmental outcomes
- Work in an organization whose mission is to create public value and improve the wellbeing of their communities.

These characteristics can help local governments position themselves as attractive career options for the service-motivated next generation. In particular, local governments offer employees the opportunity to contribute to positive change in the communities in which they live, which is likely to appeal to young workers who search for communities that fit their values and lifestyle, and then look for employers who do the same.[8] Because they are motivated by more than money, young workers often examine an organization's values when considering a position.[9] Cool Communities research conducted by Next Generation Consulting has shown that the more engaged and involved young workers are in their community, the longer they are likely to stay.[10]

Local governments can attract the next generation of employees to public service by partnering with schools and nonprofit organizations to increase awareness of the range of job opportunities and the benefits. Examples of successful programs include the "Power Up the Future" job shadow day for high school students sponsored by the Federal CIO Council, which showcases local IT careers to high school students; and the Municipal Management Association of Northern California's Job Shadow Program, which connects local government managers with talented undergraduate and graduate students for job-shadowing experiences.[11]

Shifting Generational Balance

Local governments are in a race for talent at a critical time. The increased pace of retirements is creating a talent gap in critical administrative, managerial, and professional positions. The gap is exacerbated for local governments because so many boomers joined the public sector.[12] For example, in 1971, 71 percent of city managers in the United States were 40 years old or younger and only 8 percent were over 50. By 2012, only 11.4 percent of city managers were 40 or younger and 63 percent were over 50.[13]

The shifting generational balance in organizations will have profound effects on future dynamics. Four to five different generations of employees already coexist in the workplace, requiring employers to understand the preferences of each generation and to find creative ways to accommodate them.[14] Each generation has unique communication styles, learning methods, and cultural values, which present both opportunities and challenges in the workplace.[15]

While baby boomers are reaching retirement age in large numbers every day, many are choosing to continue working, driven both by continuing interest and the impact of the 2008 economic downturn on retirement savings. James Svara has observed that the slower-than-expected rate of baby boomer retirements could lead to frustration among younger workers and new recruitment challenges:

- Generation X professionals may feel squeezed between boomers who have not yet retired and millennial colleagues who may leapfrog them into higher positions.

- Some younger workers may seek opportunities outside local government rather than wait for promotions.

- The youngest generation, born after 2005 (Generation Z, the New Silent Generation, Generation We, the Re-Generation), will soon enter the workforce. A digital and global generation, this group is accustomed to and expects rapid change.[16]

Frustration-driven mobility will add a new dimension to local government workforce strategies—"re-attraction" of those who leave local government to find advancement elsewhere (boomerang employees).

Svara notes that "leaving local government does not necessarily mean rejecting it; it appears that most will be interested in coming back if they have opportunities for advancement."

In order to attract, retain, and re-attract employees who are committed to community service, local

governments will need to partner with educational institutions and other organizations and sectors to connect the spirit of altruism with careers that offer both meaningful work and opportunities for advancement.[17]

Gender Diversity

In addition to generational differences, local governments need to pay attention to gender diversity in the workforce of the future.

Results from ICMA's 2012 State of the Profession survey of both ICMA members and nonmembers who serve as chief administrative officers (CAOs), found that women made up 20 percent of the nation's local government CAOs in 2012 compared to 13 percent in 1981.[18]

This talent pool is important to local governments. A study by Robert Schuhmann and Richard Fox found that female city managers bring different priorities and policy preferences to the job, and are perceived to be more responsive to their constituents than their male counterparts.[19]

Strategies for advancing the number of women in chief administrator positions include:

- Formal mentoring programs for potential female leaders

- Increased awareness of and attention to gender biases

- Involvement of female leaders in both formal and informal professional gatherings[20]

- Integration of gender issues, including gender-based leadership models into MPA and MPP curricula.

- As LeAnn Beaty and Trenton Davis note, "What will enhance the growth in the numbers of women in city management if education will not?"[21]

Technology

The growing impact of technology on service delivery is driving demand for a highly skilled next generation workforce that is able to develop and exploit new technologies.[22] Local governments are already making wide use of technology to deliver services and meet local needs. Mobile apps, open source data, social networking, crowd sourcing, and more will change the expectations of how government does business and how quickly it responds to public needs. While these changes will improve productivity and efficiency, they also require new skills, a new way of thinking, and workforce digital literacy.[23]

The next generation of workers has grown up with technology, which fuels their expectations in the workplace. Based on research and survey data, tech-savvy younger workers:

- Expect employers to embrace technology in the workplace and the flexibility it brings to working lives[24]

- Consider the availability of state-of-the art technology in the workplace when considering a job opportunity

- Believe that access to the technology they like to use makes them more effective at work

- Expect employers to provide access to tools for social collaboration—social networking, instant messaging, video-on-demand, blogs, and wikis—which will enable them to connect, engage, and collaborate instantly[25]

- Prefer to communicate electronically rather than face-to-face or by telephone.

Younger workers' reliance on technology can create workplace tension and cause some next generation workers to feel constrained by outdated or inflexible work styles.[26] A local government workforce that spans multiple generations will present new training needs and challenges in order to incorporate different communication styles and comfort levels with technology.[27]

Compensation

Younger workers are likely to gravitate toward employers who offer personalized benefit structures to fit their particular circumstances and preferences. Technology will support this trend by making it easier and less costly to manage a more complex employee benefits system.[28] In fact, in its 2011 survey of recent college graduates, Pricewaterhouse Coopers found that 73 percent consider the ability to customize benefits an attractive feature of an organization's recruitment strategy.[29]

Over the past decade, employees' attitudes toward and expectations of their employers have changed. Next generation workers expect to have a variety of jobs with multiple employers throughout their lifetimes. Only a quarter of students responding to the Pricewaterhouse Coopers survey want to stay in the same field and progress with the same employer throughout their careers.[30] The dynamic employment expectations of younger workers increases the importance of portable employer-provided benefits in order to ensure that job transitions do not result in lost access to benefits. In particular, the future retirement security of the more mobile next generation will depend on the portability of retirement benefits, allowing them to transfer accrued savings from employer to employer.[31] While defined benefit plans can be used as retention tools, they may become less appealing to future local government employees.[32]

To attract mobile next generation workers, employers will need to focus on more than competitive salaries and benefits. Next generation workers value:

- A positive and engaging work environment[33]

- Workplace flexibility in terms of when and where work is performed

- Training and professional development and opportunities for advancement based on performance.[34]

Next generation employees are entering the workforce with higher levels of student debt than previous generations.[35] The need to repay student loans may cause some young workers to weigh the higher salaries offered in the private sector against the benefit of making a difference in their community.[36] Local governments may need to expand or create programs like the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which is available for certain student loans

if the graduate works in a federal, state, or local government organization.

Training

When asked what benefits they would most value from an employer, recent graduates responding to the 2011 Pricewaterhouse Coopers survey ranked training and development (22 percent) and flexible working hours (19 percent) higher than financial benefits.[37]

This preference fits with the changing social contract between local government employers and next generation workers. The old framework was based on local governments providing job security, an adequate salary, and generous benefits. Ongoing fiscal constraints have challenged this employment package. The new social contract will require greater attention to investing in employees to help them advance in their careers.[38]

The financial challenges that local governments face will force the next generation to do more with less and create adaptable organizational structures and practices. Local governments in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties in California offer a regional, multi-government approach that includes a talent exchange program, a forum for future city and county managers, leadership academies, speed coaching, and a regional internship program.[39]

To keep pace with this dynamic environment, local governments will need employees who are self-motivated, adaptable, and willing to constantly upgrade their skills to meet changing circumstances. In the

new era, "learn-how becomes as important as know-how."[40] Training that takes into account generational differences and cultural values will be essential to prepare and retain the evolving multi-generational, technology-driven local government workforce of the future.

Younger workers' comfort with technology will make remote or virtual live training and self-paced online training nearly as effective as in-class training. As they begin their professional lives, younger workers will need training in oral and written communication, interpersonal and presentation skills, supervision, leadership, and citizen service. Case studies provide "experience" in handling situations they are encountering for the first time. Their older generation colleagues will need to build skills in leading and supervising under changing circumstances, as well as conflict management to overcome generational tensions.[41]

Work-Life Balance

Some younger workers have a "live first, work second" mindset. Research has consistently shown that next generation workers are attracted to employers who support the desire for balance between their personal and professional lives. Their desire to have control over their time leads them to want a greater say in how and when they work.[42] As a result, workplace flexibility is important for the millennial generation—they work well when they are given clear instructions and concrete targets, but are allowed latitude in determining where work is done and how tasks are accomplished.

When it comes to work-life balance, this generation is:

- More likely to have a spouse working full-time

- Less likely to take a career break after having children

- More willing to move or take a cut in pay in order to have more flexibility[43]

- Motivated by the ability to be flexible, respected, creative, and autonomous

- Mission driven

- More likely to remain with an employer when they feel that their talents and efforts are being fully utilized and appreciated.

Management Strategies

The next generation of workers prefers a management style and organizational structure that is flatter and more collaborative. Younger workers resist rigid, bureaucratic structures and information silos.[44] They expect to work in "communities of mutual interest and passion—not structured hierarchies. Consequently, people management strategies will have to change so that they look more like Facebook and less like the pyramid structures we were used to."[45] The traditional structures, systems, and processes in place in local governments are oriented to a static world, rather than the dynamic and disruptive world in which the next generation will operate.[46] Some externally and internally imposed processes that slow down local government decision making may frustrate the next generations of workers. They find traditional working practices constraining and frustrating, expecting instead management practices that "empower, enable and encourage innovation, follow-through, and results."[47]

Next generation workers want to be viewed as partners in the organization who are included in decision making from the start.[48] They are energized by opportunities to engage, interact, and learn from senior managers.[49] In contrast to traditional annual performance evaluations, millennials seek frequent, real-time feedback that enables them to improve performance and be recognized for their contributions.[50]

Opportunities for career progression make an organization attractive to young workers,[51] and the lack of opportunity for advancement is one of the top five reasons for leaving an employer.[52] When promotions are not available, rotational assignments can substitute for advancement, at least temporarily.[53]

The challenge for managers of next generation employees will be to recognize when they need coaching and supervision and when it is best to give them freedom to learn from experience. While younger workers value flexibility, they also expect clearly defined deadlines and accountability.[54] Developing young workers into future organizational leaders requires managing their expectations while finding ways to reward early accomplishments.[55] Organizations must recognize that the future is not a place that they will go, but a place that they will create.[56]

Local Government Workforce Trends and Projections

Over the past 20 years, the local government workforce has grown, aged, stayed longer in their organizations, and become better educated, based on a Center for State and Local Government Excellence analysis of workforce trends. The following sections summarize local government workforce trends and projections based on the analysis of (1) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Current Employment Statistics program data; (2) BLS and U.S. Census Current Population Survey data; and (3) BLS Employment Projections program data.

Workforce Trends

Between 1994 and 2014, the local government workforce grew by 20 percent increase, which tracks closely with US population growth.[57] About 80 percent of local workers are full-time employees.[58]

Among 21 local government employment functions, development during the past 20 years growth has ranged from 65 percent for fire protection positions, excluding firefighters, to 7 percent for housing and community. A few positions have declined including

FIGURE 1. U.S .Population and Local Government Employment

	1994	2004	2014	% change 1994—>2014
US population	264,745,849	294,223,701	320,087,963	21%
Local government employment	11,682,000	13,909,000	14,074,000	20%
Local government excluding education	5,352,200	6,144,100	6,282,500	17%
Local government general administration	3,420,400	3,985,700	4,038,100	18%

Source: SLGE analysis of http://www.bls.gov/ces/ and http://www.census.gov/popclock/ (end of year/annual figures used)

Note: includes all local government employees on payroll

FIGURE 2. Growth in Local Government Job Categories (1993–2013)

Fire protection non-firefighter	+65%
Libraries	+37%
Corrections	+36%
Air transportation	+30%
Police officers	+28%
Firefighters	+25%
Financial administration	+24%
Parks and recreation	+23%
Judicial and legal	+20%
Natural resources	+20%
Police protection non-officer	+18%
Water supply	+16%
Transit	+15%
Water transport and terminals	+11%
Gas supply	+10%
Housing and community develop	+7%
Sewerage	+6%
Public welfare	–0.2%
Electric power	–0.6%
Streets and highways	–2.5%
Solid waste management	–4%

public welfare, streets and highways, and solid waste management. Figure 2 shows two decades of growth for a selection of core general local government roles.[59]

Between 2000 and 2014, the average tenure of local government employees was 7.1 years, an increase of 18 percent.[60]

The average age[61] of the local government workforce increased from 42 years in 1994 to 45 in 2014. During the same timeframe, the percentage of employees at retirement age (65 and older) in local government workforce increased from 3 to 6 percent. Figure 3 shows the percentage of local government employees in six age ranges in 1994, 2004, and 2014. Over the past 20 years, the workforce has become older, leading to an increase in the rate at which workers are retiring. From 2005 to 2014, the rate[62] of state and local workforce separations due to retirements, transfers, deaths, or disability increased by more than 20 percent.

The local government workforce has become more educated over the past two decades, with the percentage of employees with bachelor's degrees increasing from 23 to 26 percent and those with graduate degrees increasing from 19 to 25 percent. Figure 4 shows education levels for the local government workforce between 1994 and 2014.
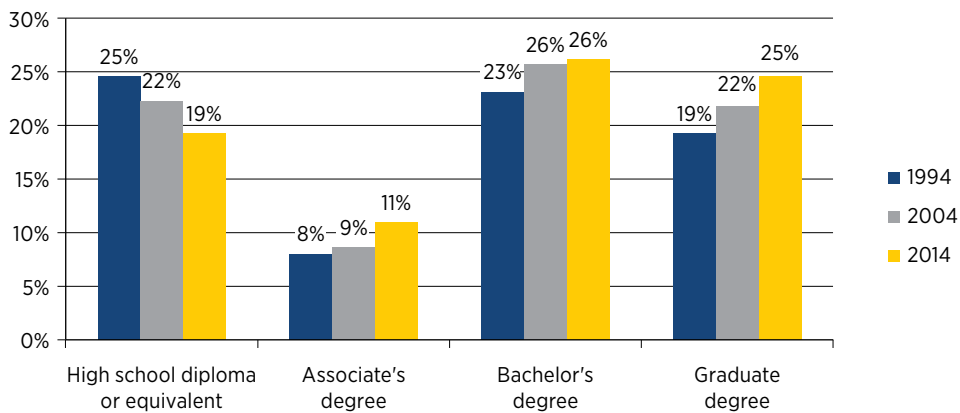
Workforce Projections

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that local government employment, excluding education and hospitals, will increase by 5.8 percent between 2012 and 2022.[63] The following list summarizes projected employment growth in major occupational groupings.

FIGURE 3. Age Ranges of the Local Government Workforce

Age	2014	2004	1994
65+	6%	3%	3%
55–64	19%	17%	11%
45–54	26%	29%	26%
34–44	24%	26%	31%
25–34	19%	19%	22%
<25	6%	7%	7%

Legend: ■ 2014 ■ 2004 ■ 1994

Source: SLGE analysis of https://cps.ipums.org/cps/0
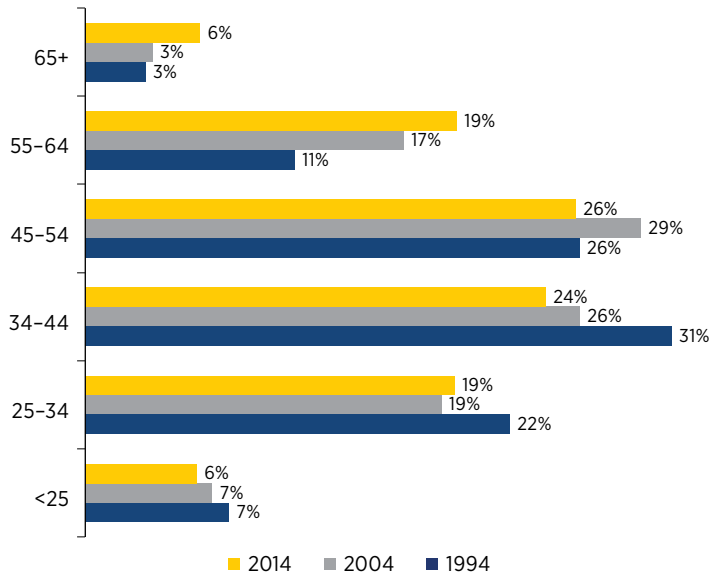
FIGURE 4. Highest Education Levels in the Local Government Workforce

	1994	2004	2014
High school diploma or equivalent	25%	22%	19%
Associate's degree	8%	9%	11%
Bachelor's degree	23%	26%	26%
Graduate degree	19%	22%	25%

Source: SLGE analysis of https://cps.ipums.org/cps/

- **Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations: +7.6 percent.** This group includes supervisors; electrical and electronic equipment mechanics, installers, and repairers; and vehicle and mobile equipment mechanics, installers, and repairers.

- **Construction and extraction occupations: +7.1 percent.** This group includes supervisors; construction trades workers; helpers, construction trades; and other related positions.

- **Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations: +7.0 percent.** This group includes health diagnosing and treating practitioners; health technologists and technicians; healthcare support occupations; protective service occupations; food preparation and serving related occupations; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations; and personal care and service occupations.

- **Production occupations: +6.9 percent.** This group includes supervisors, assemblers, and fabricators; metal workers and plastic workers; printing workers; textile, apparel, and furnishings workers; woodworkers; plant and system operators; and other related positions.

- **Transportation and material moving occupations: +6.2 percent.** This group includes supervisors; air transportation workers; motor vehicle operators; rail transportation workers; water transportation workers; and moving material workers.

- **Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations: +5.3 percent.** This group includes supervisors; agricultural workers; and forest, conservation, and logging workers.

- **Office and administrative support occupations: +3.0 percent.** This group includes supervisors of office and administrative support workers; financial clerks; information and record clerks; material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers.

- **Sales and related occupations: +2.5 percent.** This group includes supervisors; retail sales workers; and service sales representatives.

Within these categories, occupations with the highest growth potential include mathematical science occupations; computer and information analysts; metal workers and plastic workers; media and communication workers; broadcast and sound engineering technicians and radio operators; and precision instrument and equipment repairers. Occupations expected to decrease include data entry and information processing workers; communications equipment operators; certain office and administrative support workers; database and systems administrators and network architects; industrial engineers, including health and safety; and human resources workers.[64]

Of particular interest to many local government managers, police officer and firefighter employment, individually, is expected to increase by 6.8 percent between 2012 and 2022. Also, during this same timeframe, financial specialist employment is expected to increase by 4.9 percent and computer occupations by 5.0 percent. Bus driver employment is projected to increase by 6.8 percent.[65]

Of particular interest to many local government managers, police officer and firefighter employment, individually, is expected to increase by 6.8 percent between 2012 and 2022.
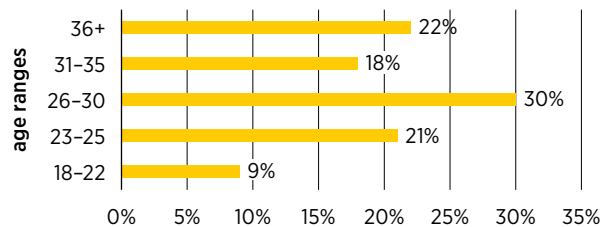
Student Survey Results

During May 2015, the Center for State and Local Government Excellence administered an online survey to students from Arizona State University, the University of North Carolina, the University of Washington, the University of Kansas, and the University of Colorado Denver. The survey was also sent to the ICMA Student Chapters.[66] A total of 185 students completed the survey. The majority of respondents (75 percent) were pursuing Master of Public Administration (MPA) degrees, with 11 percent working on Bachelor of Science degrees.

Opinion of Local Government

More than half the respondents (56 percent) had a *somewhat favorable* opinion of local government, and 36 percent had a *very favorable* opinion. These positive opinions of local government are similar to recent confidence levels in local government among the overall U.S. population. In a 2014 Gallup survey, 72 percent of Americans had confidence in their local governments.[67] These positive opinions will contribute to successful recruitment of needed talent for the local government workforce of tomorrow.

FIGURE 6. Opinion of Local Government

- Very favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Somewhat unfavorable
- Very unfavorable
- No opinion

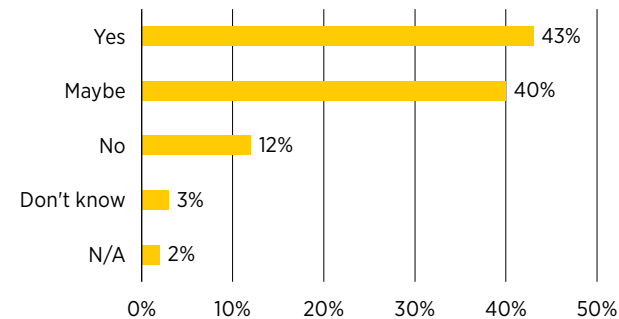*n = 185*

FIGURE 5. Survey Respondent Age Ranges
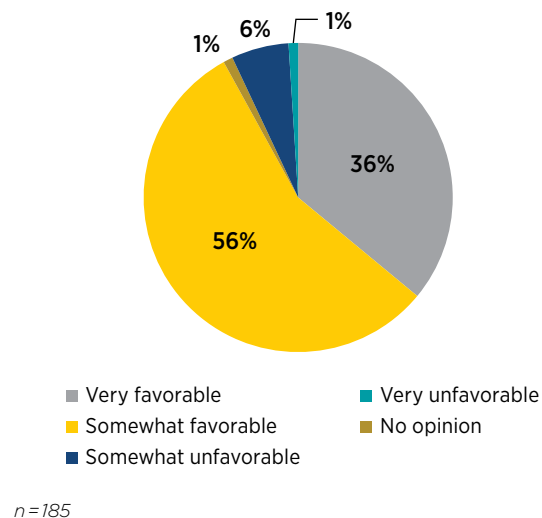
Interest in Pursuing Opportunities in Local Government

More than 80 percent of respondents plan to or may pursue local government career opportunities. After graduation, 43 percent say they will pursue a job in local government and 40 percent say they might seek a local government job. Reasons given by the 12 percent that don't plan to pursue a local government job include more experience with or interest in state and federal levels, too much bureaucracy, constraints on what can be accomplished, not enough creative flexibility, slow hiring processes, and more interest in the non-profit sector.

Career Search Resources

Knowing where talented graduates look for local government jobs will help governments know where to advertise their openings. More than half of survey respondents said they expect to use some combination of face-to-face resources such as networking and university career services and online sources such as employer, industry, and job aggregator web sites. Figure 8 summarizes all likely job search resources.

Internships

Internships give students pre-career training and work experience. Half the respondents say they have completed (43 percent) or are currently completing (7 percent) internships. Another 19 percent say they plan to pursue an internship opportunity. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23 percent) have not and do not plan to complete internships.

FIGURE 7. Plans to Local Government Job Opportunities

Yes	43%
Maybe	40%
No	12%
Don't know	3%
N/A	2%

n=185

FIGURE 8. Job Search Resources

Employer web sites	81%
Networking	79%
Industry job web sites	77%
General job search web	57%
University career services	52%
State-based	49%
Professors	41%
Social media	36%
Informational interviews	29%
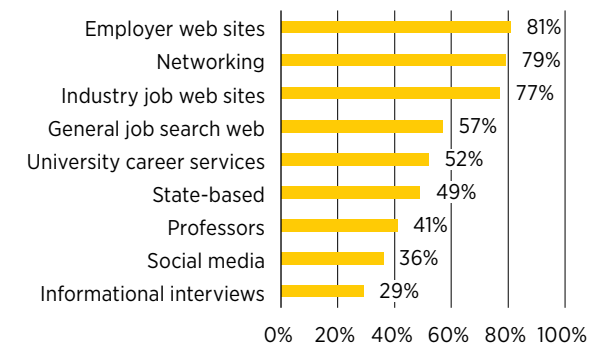
n=185

Note: Other resources mentioned include job fairs, Native American Tribal Organizations, and sector-specific web sites.
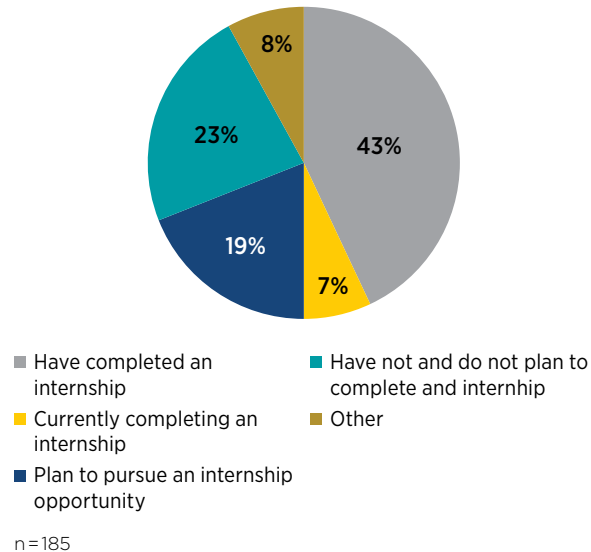
Factors and Attributes Influencing Career Opportunities

When respondents are assessing career opportunities, different factors have greater importance. Figure 10 shows that 75 percent rank the *ability to achieve professional goals* as the most important factor, followed closely by *positions that allow for a contribution to society.*

When asked to identify the five most important attributes respondents consider when job hunting, more than 50 percent identified *competitive salary, opportunity to make a difference, opportunities for promotion and advancement,* and *work-life balance.* The following list summarizes all responses.

1. Competitive salary (59% of respondents consider this *one of the five most important attributes*)

2. Opportunity to make a difference (58%)

3. Opportunities for promotion and career advancement (57%)

4. Work-life balance (52 %)

5. Variety of work to keep job interesting (42%)

6. Location (36%)

7. Opportunities to learn/training opportunities (35%)

8. Working with talented colleagues (32%)

9. Reputation of the organization (29%)

10. Reasonable commute to work (28%)

11. Health/dental insurance benefits (25%)

12. Flexible work arrangements (25%)

FIGURE 9. Internships

- Have completed an internship
- Have not and do not plan to complete and internhip
- Currently completing an internship
- Other
- Plan to pursue an internship opportunity

n = 185

Note: Other responses included currently in career position, no opportunities available, and requirements and/or stability of current job prevent participation in an internship.

FIGURE 10. Factors Influencing Career Opportunities

■ Most important ■ Somewhat important ■ Least important
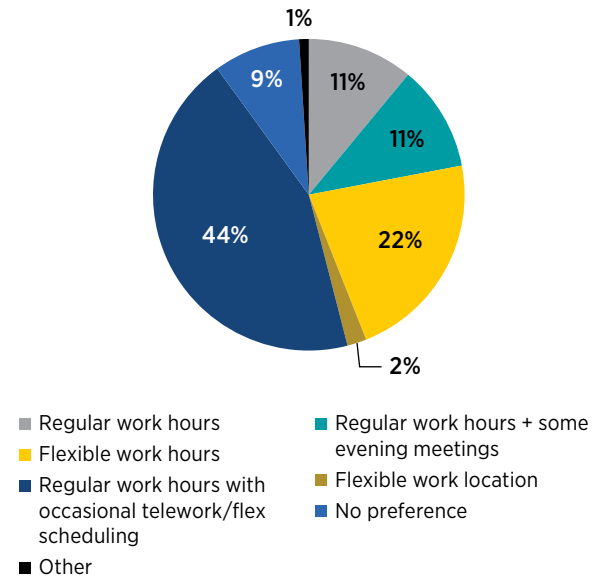
n = 185
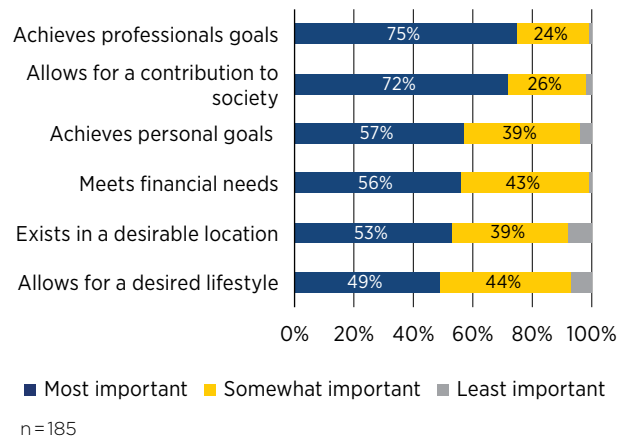
Other attributes mentioned include defined contribution plan (10 percent), work-related travel opportunities (10 percent), traditional defined benefit pension plan (9 percent); access to the latest technology (7 percent), and tuition reimbursement (5 percent).

When asked what job factors might motivate them to pursue a position in local government, *desire to make a difference in the community* and *desire to make a difference in people's lives* were mentioned by more than 70 percent of respondents. The following list summarizes all responses on motivating factors.

1. Desire to make a difference in the community (75%)

2. Desire to make a difference in people's lives (71%)

3. Opportunity to learn and grow (67%)

4. Values/organizational culture (55%)

5. Challenging work (53%)

6. Attractiveness of compensation package (52%)

7. Job security (42%)

8. Diversity of workplace (25%)

9. Clear rules and procedures (13%)

Against the backdrop of the most important attributes and factors, 44 percent of respondents prefer a position that has regular work hours with occasional telework and flex scheduling, and 22 percent preferred flexible work hours. Only 11 percent preferred more traditional hours.

FIGURE 11. Job Schedule Preferences

FIGURE 11. Job Schedule Preferences

- Regular work hours
- Flexible work hours
- Regular work hours with occasional telework/flex scheduling
- Other
- Regular work hours + some evening meetings
- Flexible work location
- No preference

n = 185

Community Attributes

Two-thirds of respondents said that population size and type of community may influence their career choices. Thirty percent (30 percent) prefer to work in a community with more than 100,000 residents, while 29 percent prefer a community with 25,000–100,000 residents. More than 40 percent say they want to work in an urban environment.
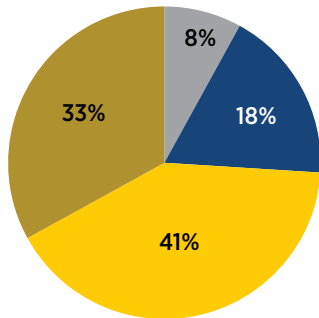
FIGURE 12. Community Size Preferences
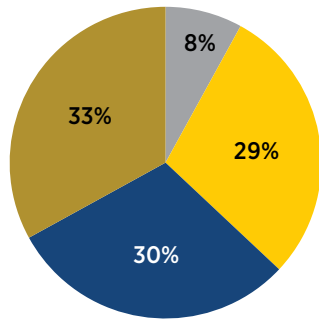
- A community with a population of less than 25K
- A community with a population of 25K–100K
- A community with a population of over 100K
- No preference

n=185

Tenure Expectations

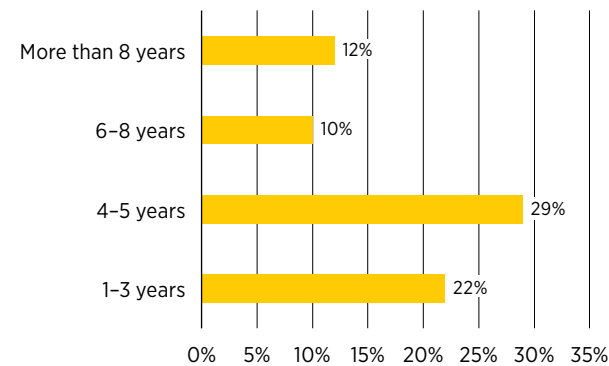The survey confirms that younger workers expect to stay in jobs for shorter tenures than their baby boomer counterparts. More than 50 percent of respondents said they expected to stay in a local government position for five years or less. Reasons mentioned for leaving their initial local government employer included better opportunities elsewhere; external promotion and growth opportunities; family needs; professional ambitions and new experiences; private and non-profit sector experience; state and federal government experience; slow career progression; salary increase; local government bureaucracy; lack of scheduling flexibility; change of location; and to minimize stagnation.

FIGURE 13. Community Type Preferences

- A rural community
- A suburban community
- An urban community
- No preference

n=185

**FIGURE 14.** Expected Tenure with Local Government Employer

n=185

Career Goals and Plans

When asked about long-term goals and plans, a majority of responding students said they plan to work in a variety of sectors throughout their careers, with a majority aspiring to be in top-level management. More than a third (36 percent) expect to work in various levels of government.

Underpinning career goals and plans are opinions about professional growth opportunities. Nearly 60 percent identified employer-paid conferences as one of the three most important professional growth opportunities, followed by serving on committees and task forces (45 percent) and external training opportunities (43 percent). The following list summarizes responses on professional growth opportunities.

1. Employer-paid conferences (58%)

2. Serving on committees and task forces (45%)

3. External training opportunities (42%)

4. Formal mentoring programs (33%)

5. Tuition reimbursement (31%)

6. Internal training opportunities (29%)

7. Employer-paid membership in professional organizations (29%)

8. Organization-wide assignments (24%)

9. Coaching programs (21%)

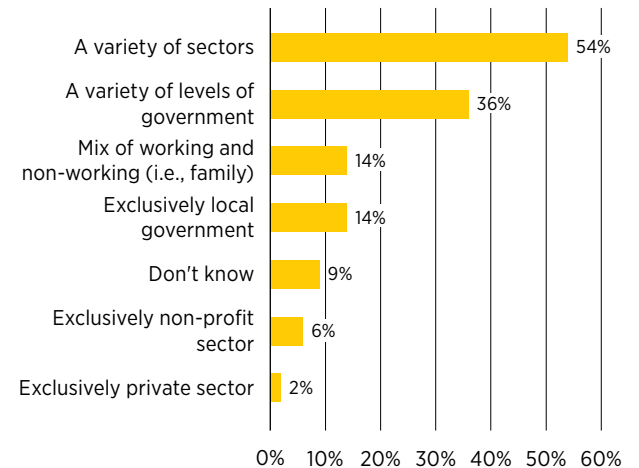10. Management rotations (18%)

11. Self-tailored training (14%)

FIGURE 15. Career Aspirations
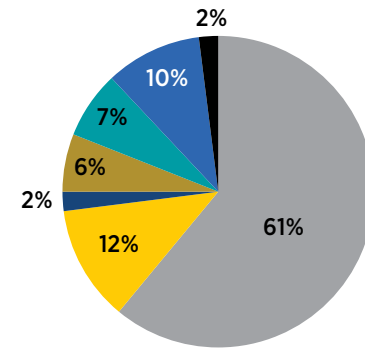
- Top-level management
- Mid-level management
- Non-management generalist
- Other
- Non-management specialist
- Elected office
- Don't know

n = 185. Other responses were top-level research and management, professor, and government contract work.

FIGURE 16. Long-term Career Goals

A variety of sectors	54%
A variety of levels of government	36%
Mix of working and non-working (i.e., family)	14%
Exclusively local government	14%
Don't know	9%
Exclusively non-profit sector	6%
Exclusively private sector	2%

n = 185

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