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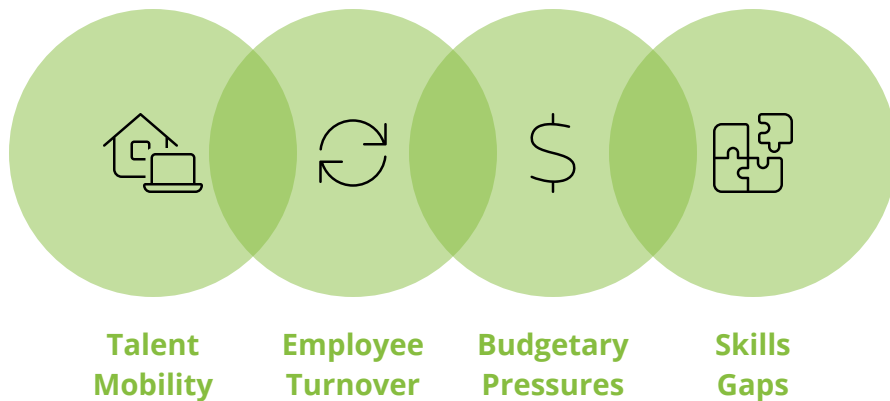
A Transformational Vision for Government Learning

June 2022

# Government workforce in crisis

**Federal, state and local agency leaders** recognize the crisis: scores of open positions, underskilled workers and people transitioning away from government service. These leaders are asking, “How can we best recruit, develop, and retain an evolving workforce to meet current and future challenges.”

Not only is the workforce transforming, the workplace itself is changing—as are the threats facing the nation and the demands from constituents. For the workforce to be resilient and ready for whatever comes next, agencies must embrace a culture of learning where individual improvement and accomplishment mesh with the needs of the organization.



People often choose public service to create positive change, but they also want careers that allow them to thrive. Often, government positions only provide one or the other.

This tension between personal growth and a sense of duty is not a new situation: since 2001, the Government Accountability Office has identified strategic human capital management as a high-risk list challenge—the result of difficulties hiring and retaining committed workers with the skills necessary to accomplish agency missions.

*These elements combine to create immense barriers for agencies to recruit, retain and develop their workforces.*



## Defining the challenges

Agencies are under tremendous pressure to fill open positions and keep their most effective employees. But in the wake of the pandemic, four key factors are impacting the government's ability to recruit and retain the workforce needed for the long term.

**Talent Mobility.** It's now clear that many jobs can be performed remotely. While government agencies can now hire from a broader talent pool, it also makes the competition from commercial employers significantly greater. Recruits can now select jobs that suit their career plans and allow them to live wherever they choose.

**Employee Turnover.** As generational changes take hold within agencies nationwide, demographics play a key role. Retirement among long-time employees is on the rise, fueled in part by the pandemic. Replacing those workers—and their knowledge—is crucial to fulfilling agency goals.

**Budgetary Pressures.** The need for training simply to meet compliance standards is substantial, and providing more than basic job skills for a geographically-dispersed workforce adds to the burden on already-stretched budgets. Too often, limited funding means training becomes a punishment or a reward for some employees; neither addresses the issue of supporting the entire workforce.

**Skills Gaps.** Traditional concepts of learning and training aren't designed to empower your workforce for both career growth and achieving agency objectives. With both technology and challenges evolving faster than ever, agencies are hard-pressed to keep up with changes, and may never fully develop the greatest resource at their disposal: the people who fulfill the mission.

# 29%

US federal civilian workforce over 55 years old, many with outdated skill sets. In contrast, only 8.3 percent are under 30.\*

# 94%

Business leaders who expect employees to learn new skills on the job, a distinct rise from 65% in just two years.+

\*Source: The White House, [Strengthening the Federal Workforce](#); statistics as of Sept

+Source: World Economic Forum, [The Future of Jobs Report 2020](#)

# Agencies at the crossroads

Every agency is at a different point in the journey to modernize their learning capabilities. Some are focused solely on compliance, while others look to advance the state of learning and development to create a more capable and agile workforce—and many agencies are somewhere along that spectrum.

Faced now with the fast-growing challenges of recruitment and retention, agencies have three distinct options:

## Opportunities and Choices

1	<b>Do nothing:</b> continue the status quo with small, incremental improvements
2	<b>Pursue piecemeal solutions:</b> targeted improvements that will improve targeted learning aspects
3	<b>Apply a holistic approach:</b> modernize enterprise learning, establish a learning culture, and offer learning in the flow of work

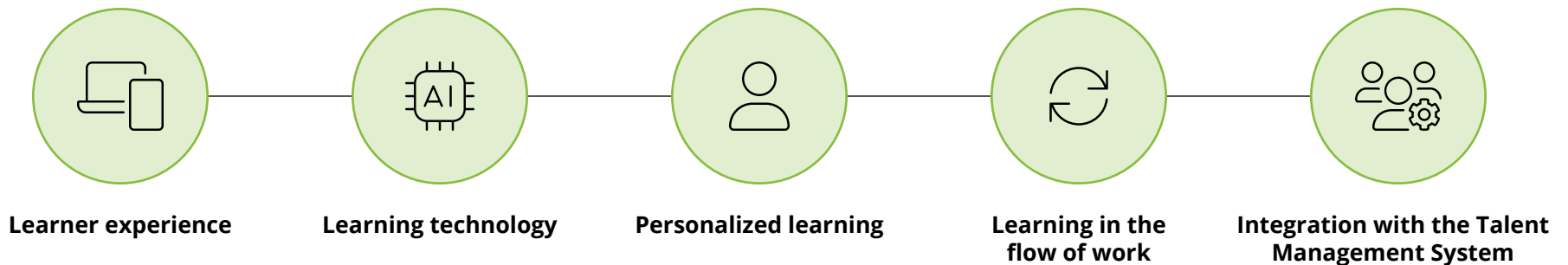
A holistic approach uses human-centered design, embraces evolving technologies, and meets the needs of today and tomorrow.

Learners today want tailored learning content that is empowering and actionable so they can contribute to meeting the mission while working toward personal goals.

The goal is to create a learning culture where managers reinforce learning with coaching, support career ambitions, and embrace their roles as developers of people.

# Vision for a New Government Learning Ecosystem

The future of work meshes work, workers, and the workplace to prepare for new challenges and requirements. The key to success is establishing a new learning ecosystem built on **5 critical components**:



## 1. Learner experience

For the generations of digital natives now joining the government workforce, learning is expected to be mobile, interactive, and immersive. Many users will be working remotely going forward, so the user's device of choice will likely be anything but a desktop PC. This is also true for employees who have always been in the field, such as inspectors, emergency responders, and security personnel.

Self-service needs to be supported as well, so that training can become an on-demand resource—easy access and 24/7 availability are essential. By including a social component to the learning environment, users can easily support their co-workers, creating community and increasing engagement.

## 2. Learning technology

Instead of traditional learning management systems (LMS), integrated learning systems, course catalogues, learner records, and recommendation engines can all tie together in a data-driven learning environment—and artificial intelligence (AI) may soon play a large role as well.

Delivering learning when, where, and how it's most effective takes an enterprise view. Learning technology has to interact with potentially dozens of other systems, including multiple legacy systems. That connectivity must be seamless and easily managed to ensure assets are available as needed.

# Vision for a New Government Learning Ecosystem

## 3. Personalized learning

Enabling your people to expand on their talents and interests requires a shift in culture. Curated learning steers learners to the right resources based on immediate needs or long-term goals.

Learning should be easy, fun, and engaging, to encourage people to go further. Experiential learning takes users out of the classroom and into the real world, often (and ironically) using tools such as augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR). Individual development goes hand-in-hand with building team competencies. If everyone is performing at their highest level, their results can resonate across the agency.

## 4. Learning in the flow of work

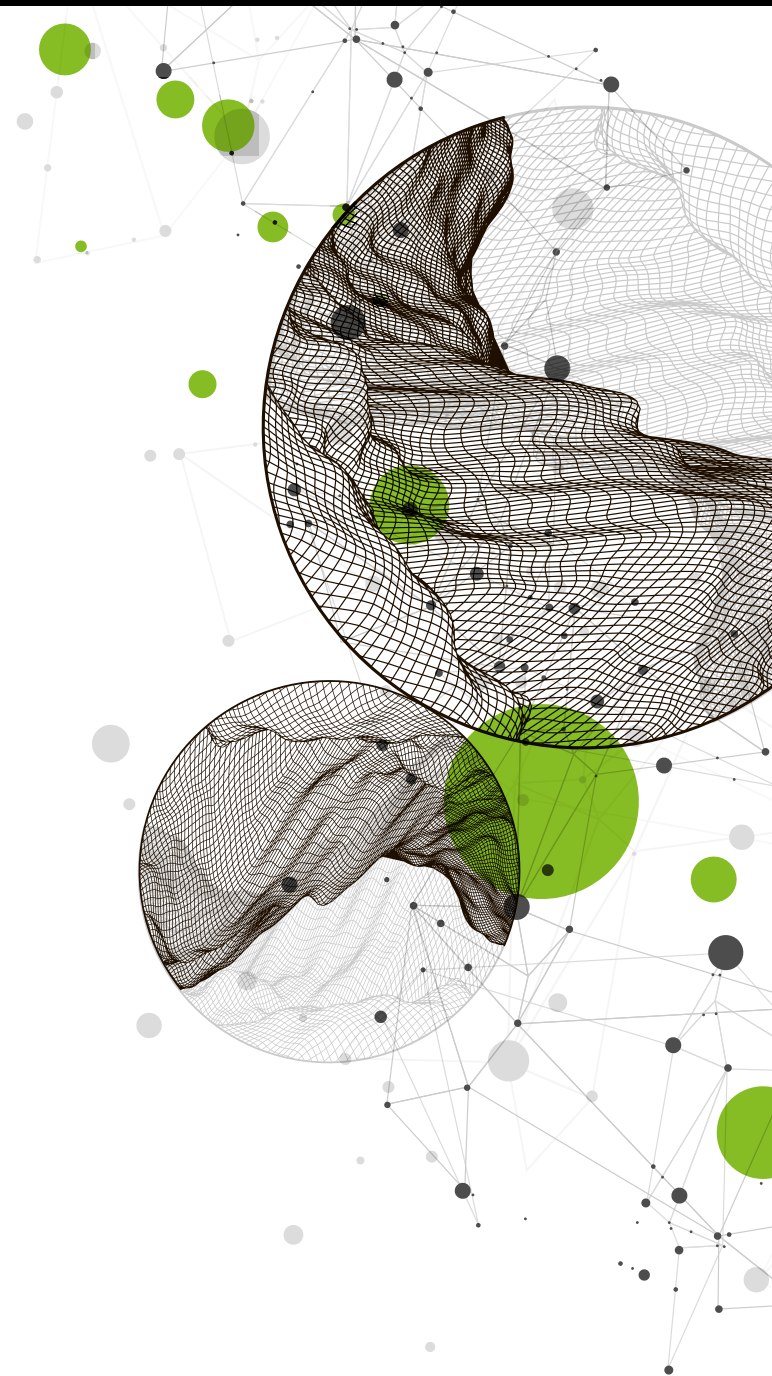
It also needs stakeholder commitment, an appropriate budget, and access—you don't leave work to "do learning;" it's something you do every day as part of work, to augment a current skill or develop a new area of expertise.

Continuous, on-demand learning supports learning in the flow of work: "micro-learnings," for example, are delivered just in time when and where needed, providing the skills to address immediate requirements. This makes learning dynamic and responsive to changing needs without interrupting the rhythms of the workplace.

## 5. Integration with the Talent Management System

From recruiting and onboarding through their entire career, an employee's learning journey should be inseparable from their career path.

With an integrated mindset, learning becomes a natural extension of career progress—enabling agencies to support strategies that are as focused on positive culture change as on technology.





# Empowering the Future Workforce

Skilled, engaged employees are essential to the future of every agency's mission. Organizations that enable people to be more adaptive—and more human—can better handle change. Three areas have emerged as central to creating a more agile workforce.

## Reskilling and upskilling

The type of work government employees perform, the demographics of the workforce, and the workplace itself are all shifting rapidly. The impact of these changes will require significant reskilling and upskilling for employees in the next three years.

With the hiring challenges faced by both civilian agencies and the Department of Defense, it's vital to make sure that current personnel will be able to fulfill mission requirements. Across government, employees are fine-tuning the skills needed for their current positions while looking for opportunities to learn new skills that can help them follow their desired career paths.

## Intrinsic Human Capabilities

When people talk about skills atrophy, they usually focus on the technical, such as using an application or maintaining a system. Agencies should value and emphasize intrinsic human capabilities just as much. These are the qualities that people bring to their work and lives that machines can't—qualities such as curiosity, empathy, communication, servant leadership, passion, and purpose—which can create a more engaged, productive workforce.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Using predictive analytics, machine learning and AI capabilities, agencies will gain increased workforce agility and higher numbers of mission-ready workers. AI and automation can empower employees to focus on high-value work and experience greater satisfaction.

With the increased use of automation, intrinsic human capabilities become more important to develop. AI can apply here as well: an AI-based system could analyze how learning resources are being used, then recommend additional courses to individual users—not just to grow technical skills, but leadership and other so-called “soft skills.” This can keep employees immersed in the culture of learning and help them become better problem solvers and teammates.



# Case Study – Reskilling for the Future of Data Science

For a federal agency dependent on the accuracy, speed, and problem solving ability of its data scientists, ensuring up to date skill sets is crucial to mission success. This agency wants to be a leader in data science practices. They determined that workforce assessments and refined business processes were essential to achieving this goal.

Deloitte worked with the agency to conduct an in-depth analysis of workforce planning issues. This process identified critical skills that needed to be represented in the workforce.

The analysis supported the Deloitte team in developing a series of Data Science Personas to help agency leadership define the future workforce. The team then created a curriculum for a Data Science Training Pilot Program, an end-to-end plan to reskill current employees, and a comprehensive dashboard to visualize and predict hiring needs.

This program enables the agency to keep up with rapidly evolving trends—while also engaging data science personnel with a renewed commitment to their careers.

## 53%

Organizations that believe half to all of their workforce needs to be **reskilled in the next 3 years**

## 52%

Organizations that believe **hiring great learners who they can develop** for future jobs is part of their workforce strategy

## 74%

Organizations that say reskilling the workforce is important or very important for their success over the next 12–18 months, but only **10 percent say they are very ready to address this trend.**

Source: [Deloitte 2020 Global Human Capital Trends report](#)





# The Path Forward: Accelerating Your Learning Transformation Journey

Creating a culture of learning is central to the future of work. It's also the key to shaping an agency that is more adept and agile, and more competitive as an employer.

The future government learning ecosystem is an integrated set of products and services—along with changes to culture and process—that empower and enable all stakeholders in the delivery, management, and experience of learning. But getting there quickly is a tremendous challenge.

Building this on your own is possible, if you have the time, expertise, and resources. But doing nothing isn't an option—without a learning strategy, agencies will continue to fall behind, putting the mission at risk.

## The Value of Partnership

Calling on a strong partner right from the start can make all the difference. The right partner brings deep experience in your market along with the best practices, tools, alliances and mission focus, helping you understand the choices and changes needed to build an optimized learning environment—and then implementing the frameworks and change management processes that deliver real, meaningful outcomes.

In this new ecosystem, learning is on-demand, contextual, and embedded in agency culture and the flow of work. Instead of a chore or obligation, learning becomes an enabler of success, for both your mission and the people who are committed to achieving it.

## Contact Us

It's time to create a true learning ecosystem. The journey starts with a single step: contact us today, and let's talk about what the future of work can mean for you. GPS Learning and Leadership Team: [gpslearningandleadership@deloitte.com](mailto:gpslearningandleadership@deloitte.com)



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