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The Government Worker of 2035 — Transitioning to the Next Generation

Driving High Performance Using a Project-Based Workforce Model

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Introduction

Radical technology changes and new generational expectations regarding public service will likely change how Federal government work will be performed by 2035. New technologies such as wearable technology, augmented reality, and a more dynamic, sensory, symbiotic, and highly-interactive Internet experience will reshape the career sentiment and work requirements among younger generations. It is anticipated that work performed by millennials, and the yet–to-be defined next generation of "digital natives," will be more iterative, crowdsourced, predictive, borderless, and customer-oriented. Work tasks will align with advanced skills in new technological areas. The current notion of lifelong Federal employment may be replaced with a more flexible and fluid project-style employment, using a technology enabled "work from anywhere" workplace culture.

The first paper written on this topic, "*Government Worker of 2035*,"[1] describes new workforce trends and related implications for workforce planning and talent management practices. The new workforce model will challenge the traditional notion of lifelong agency employment by offering a more flexible career model. Rather than the lengthy and rigid recruitment process of the past, the new model promotes an open source talent model that enables employees to easily join and collaborate on projects. The new model calls for a "borderless" talent ecosystem, whereby individuals with the needed skills and experiences may contribute ideas, insights, and skills to the Federal government. The increasing technological advancement and shift in workforce demographics will continue to drive opportunities to realize the new workforce model. This paper can help agencies understand how to begin transitioning to a new workforce model that addresses these trends.

The time is ripe for agencies to begin this evolution based on three drivers that call for a new way of planning staffing resources. These drivers are:

1. **The U.S. President's mandate for agency cross-collaboration:** To improve performance and collaboration across the government, the U.S. Administration has introduced Cross-Agency Priority Goals in the FY 2015 Budget.[2]

2. **Generational work preferences**: To attract and retain the younger generation, agencies should provide them with clear opportunities to support the mission and encourage innovation.[3]

"In the Millennials' ideal work week, there would be **significantly more time devoted to the discussion of new ideas and ways of working,** on coaching and mentoring, and the development of their leadership skills."[3]
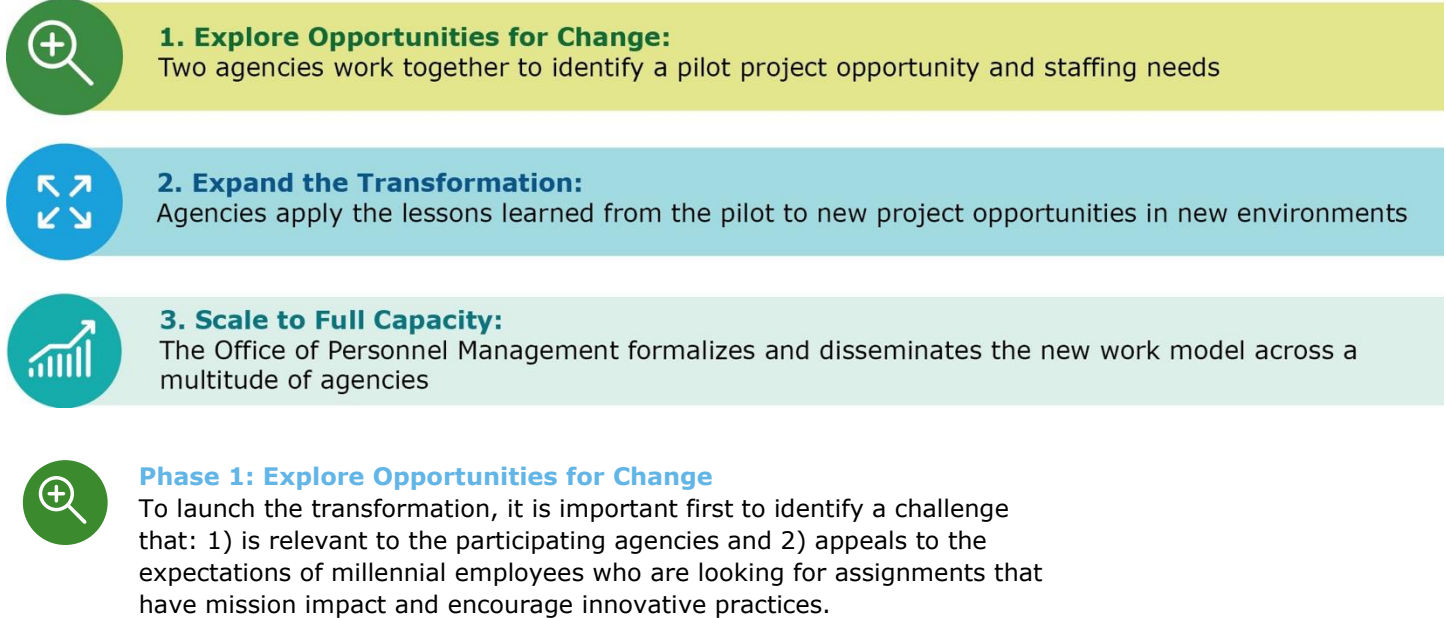
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[1] Deloitte Consulting LLP, The Government Worker of 2035, at http://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/public-sector/articles/the-government-worker-of-2035.html (last accessed, October 27, 2015).

[2] http://www.performance.gov/cap-goals-list?view=public (last accessed, November 20, 2015).

[3] Millennials, Finding Opportunity in Federal Service, United States Office of Personnel Management, at http://www.fedview.opm.gov/2014FILES/FEVS_MillennialsReport.pdf (last accessed, November 20, 2015).

3. **Increase in contract work**: The number of self-employed contractors and freelancers in the overall workforce is growing — projected to be 40% by 2023.[4]

Figure 1: Three Phases to Transformation

1. Explore Opportunities for Change:
Two agencies work together to identify a pilot project opportunity and staffing needs

2. Expand the Transformation:
Agencies apply the lessons learned from the pilot to new project opportunities in new environments

3. Scale to Full Capacity:
The Office of Personnel Management formalizes and disseminates the new work model across a multitude of agencies

Phase 1: Explore Opportunities for Change
To launch the transformation, it is important first to identify a challenge that: 1) is relevant to the participating agencies and 2) appeals to the expectations of millennial employees who are looking for assignments that have mission impact and encourage innovative practices.

Agency collaboration is not new for the Federal government. Typically, government-wide initiatives championed by the White House or the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), such as the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) Modernization Act of 2010, create ripe opportunities for collaboration. Additionally, Senior Executives of agencies with complementary missions can plan strategic visioning sessions to define project opportunities for collaboration. For example, the adoption of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010, required cross-agency collaboration among the Department of Treasury, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Department of Labor (DOL), to support the implementation of this legislation in terms of technology, process and support staff.

Building Strategic Partnerships
Building a strong collaboration structure bolsters the effective execution of the interagency pilot project by clarifying the key decision makers, as well as appropriate measures for to assess progress against the desired results.

A multi-level governance decision making framework helps to create oversight and accountability over the selected project. Effective governance bodies typically include: an executive governance review board for sponsorship, a steering committee for direct oversight and risk mitigation, a project manager for project operations, and a project team for execution, as illustrated in Figure 2.

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[4] Clark, Patrick. "Counting America's Freelance, Ahem, "Self-Employed' Workers." Bloomberg Business Week. September 10, 2013 at http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-09-10/counting-america-s-freelance-ahem-self-employed-workers (last accessed, November 20, 2015).

Figure 2: Project Governance in the New Collaborative Environment

Project Manager and Experts	Agency experts who focus on coordination resource management, monitoring, execution, and communication.
Project Manager	Individual who oversees project planning and execution and assesses service risks of participating agencies.
Steering Committee	GS-15 or equivalents who focus on articulating requirements and objectives, align the investments to strategy, resolve risks, and make recommendations to the Executive Governance Review Board.
Executive Governance Review Board / Sponsorship	Leadership champions who provide visibility and execute strategic decision-making on workforce strategy, resource investments, escalated decisions, risks, and issues from the steering committee.

Establishing a governance structure for the project can provides two potential benefits: On one hand, it could potentially increase transparency and promote accountability between the agencies by determining open lines of communications. On the other hand, it can enable both agencies to promote shared responsibility for the project.

In an on-demand, flexible hiring environment, success can be defined using quantitative and qualitative measures that capture the project's impact and efficiencies. Examples include: the number of innovative practices introduced, customer satisfaction, accomplishment of goals, and delivery time.

Recruiting for Project Teams
Identifying the expert resources and defining the performance expectations for the project team can be challenging in an on-demand staffing model if not planned correctly.

Partner agencies can join efforts to define the core skills for the team to include knowledge related to innovative capabilities, the use of big data, the "Internet of things", crowdsourcing, new technology areas, and collaboration practices. Also, Human Resources (HR) offices from collaborating agencies can help confirm that assignments support a "career advancement" or lateral development plan. Lastly, the agencies' leadership can play a key role in attracting young employees by reaching out internally and underscoring the critical nature of the project.

If internal candidates are unavailable, the partner agencies can consider sourcing external candidates with consulting-type skills. Today, agencies have access to various mechanisms under the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)'s regulations to recruit temporary staff, such as temporary appointments, Fellows, personnel service contractors, and the Digital Service Excepted Initiative.[5]

Implementing & Evaluating Projects
Successful implementation of a cross-agency project entails leveraging project resources in an effective manner and taking steps to confirm that the pilot objectives remain on track. Governance bodies can support this goal by conducting routine quality assurance checks, mitigating risks and sharing status updates with project sponsors. A key aspect of the implementation should focus upon maintaining a strong physical and virtual collaboration workspace, to get the team working together on ideas.

Evaluation is another critical step in the lifecycle of a project. Evaluation should measure the success of a project in achieving the defined outcomes, meeting the cross-agency goals, and providing critical lessons learned for the future.

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[5] Office of Personnel Management, Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, May 1st, 2015 at https://www.chcoc.gov/content/smarter-it-delivery-schedule-hiring-authority (last accessed, November 20, 2015).

Phase 2: Expand the Transformation
Often, closing out a project is considered a formality, rather than an opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges of the team. The team can consider documenting and publishing lessons learned in an effort to increase transparency around cross-agency projects. External social media can be a great platform to push findings out and raise awareness around new opportunities to collaborate among agencies.

Additionally, to help drive expansion of the pilot, agencies can engage in joint project ideation with the public to develop new ideas for collaboration. For instance, in 2015, USAID launched[6] an innovation grant program to elicit private solutions to address Ebola. As new agencies adopt the pilot approach, they should also collect lessons learned and share findings that can be leveraged across the government.

Phase 3: Scale to Full Capacity
The full transition to the 2035 model requires answering specific policy questions such as: *How does an agency measure performance in a project-style workplace environment?* Or, *how does an agency streamline recruiting and staffing for project assignments to accommodate perhaps higher turnover?*

To answer these questions, the Federal government should review its talent regulatory framework across the "hire to retire" lifecycle. OPM, in its role as the thought leader for human capital management and policy will play a key role in this part of the transformation. There are three ways to successfully formalize this model across the Federal government: (1) build an attractive brand, (2) drive results-oriented performance management, and (3) operate a flexible staffing resource allocation.

Building an Attractive Employer Brand
In a project-style workplace, timely access to talent is necessary. Agencies will need to manage both external and internal recruiting talent processes. In both cases, building an attractive project brand can enable agencies to connect with and build relationships with current and potential "new project hires."

The Federal government can capitalize on this recruiting shift and help agencies directly market on social media platforms, such as Twitter, to over 310 million monthly active users.[7] An internal Federal project marketing network can help promote a greater push/pull recruiting system by providing greater visibility into job needs and talent skills.

"Employer marketing is proving important with younger, socially minded employees today who say brand elements like innovation are significant to making an organization an employer of choice." [7]

Attaining Performance Excellence
Performance management in a project-style workplace will likely be constrained by current policies. Employees may have multiple supervisors or work for several agencies

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[6] USAID, Fighting Ebola, A Grand Challenge for Development, 2014 at https://www.usaid.gov/grandchallenges/ebola (last accessed, December 7, 2015).
[7] https://about.twitter.com/company (last accessed June 20, 2016)
[8] Deloitte Consulting LLP, Mind the gaps, the 2015 Deloitte Millennial Survey at https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-wef-2015-millennial-survey-executivesummary.pdf (last accessed December 7th, 2015).

in a performance year. Also, as some employees may not belong to any single agency, rewards and bonus policies may need to change.

One specific aspect of performance is regular feedback. Deloitte's research[9] shows that effective employee performance requires iterative goal formulation and conversations focused on "now" performance, regular check-ins, and coaching, rather than annual reviews of yearly defined goals and past performance. This approach to performance management is particularly important for flexible staffing projects and align better to millennial workers' pursuit of opportunities to do impactful and visible work.

New policies and processes can also support multiple "results-focused" performance reviews in a year, based on the project work delivery model. The process should be administratively light, automated, and designed to encourage more frequent, yet minimally viable performance reviews.

Staffing in Real-Time
The fluid movement of employees into positions for project-style work will likely require new resource management processes, such as position classification and staffing. The aperture should be wide and embrace all positions in the various government talent systems to allow the free flow of talent. This includes military (Active, Guard, and Reserve forces), civilian (all funding sources), and contractor staff.

A new flexible classification and staffing policy can allow agencies to plan for how, when, where, and in what combination talent resources will be applied. For example, not every agency will need IT or cyber resources on staff permanently, but if needed for a short term project, the classification and staffing policy could allow for quick and effective staffing of any talent type, grade, and from any segment or location.

The "work from anywhere" workplace will require a new type of Federal policy and resource management system across the agencies. This new system could help build new collaborative relationships across agencies and make the government a much more attractive career choice.

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[9] Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall, Reinventing Performance Management, Harvard Business review, April 2015 Issue at https://hbr.org/2015/04/reinventing-performance-management (last accessed November 20, 2015).

Conclusion

As documented in the [Government Worker of 2035](#)[10], radical changes in technology and demographics will likely transform the Federal workplace. Agencies should consider rethinking how they define and implement Federal projects, as well as plan appropriately for mapping their workforce needs.

The following are key actions for standing up a collaborative inter-agency project of the future:

- Identify a strategic project for participating agencies to collaborate on and support common mission goals
- Attract a talented team from agency's existing staff and outside labor market to collaborate on project assignment
- Define upfront strong executive sponsorship and project governance structure to inspire change and encourage participative decision making

To respond to evolving Federal mission needs and generational preferences for public service jobs, agencies should start today planning for a leaner, on demand resource allocation model while transitioning to a cross-agency, project-based environment.

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[10] *See* supra 1.