

How the Employee Experience Shapes Government and Community Outcomes

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What We'll Cover

- The challenge of attracting and retaining talent
- The response – positive employee experience
- Why the workforce matter to the government's bottom line: groundbreaking new research
- The Rancho Cucamonga experience



**Globally, the top
priority for CEOs is ...**

**... attracting and
retaining talent**

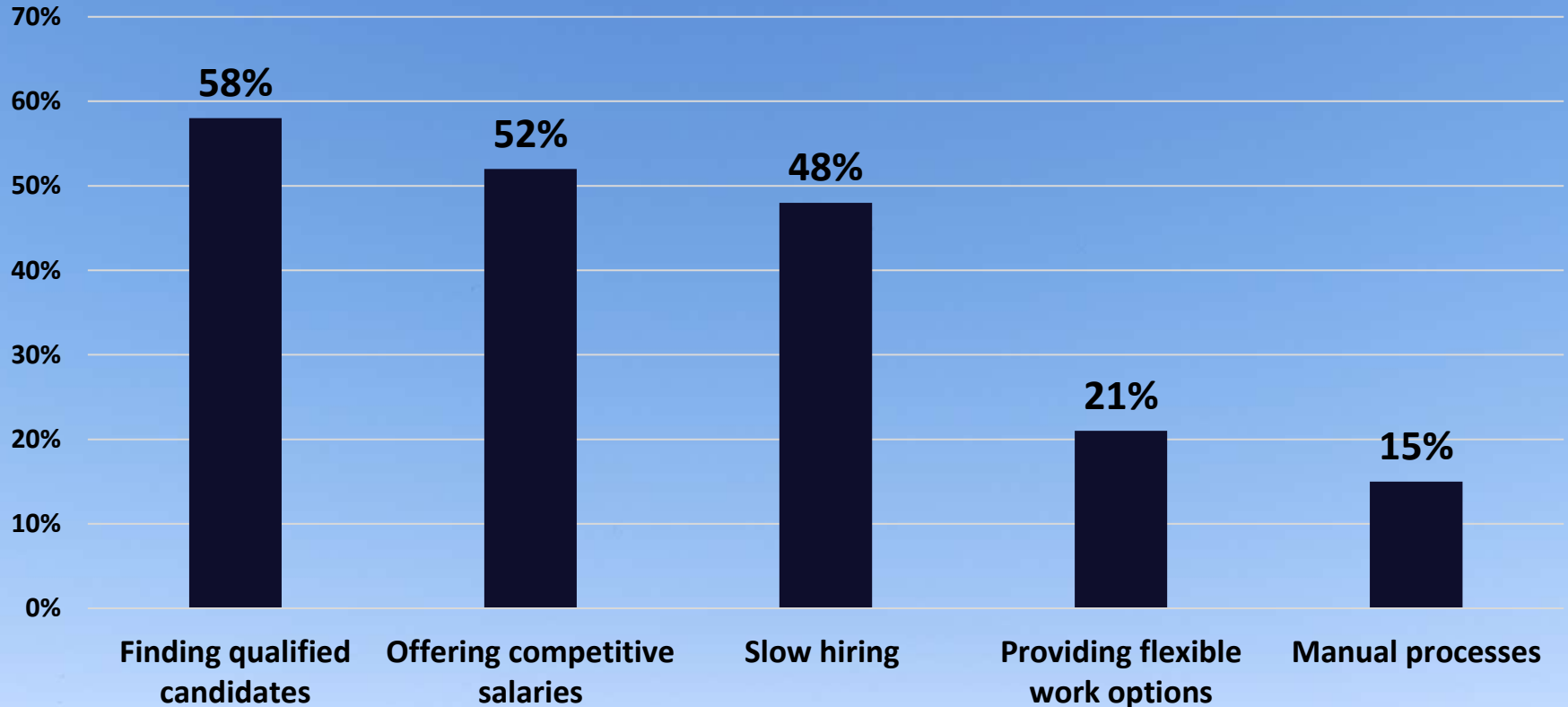


**75% of employers
globally struggling to fill
open positions**



Future State: The U.S. Talent Deficit Worsens

2026 State/Local Recruiting Challenges



Government Also Struggling to Retain

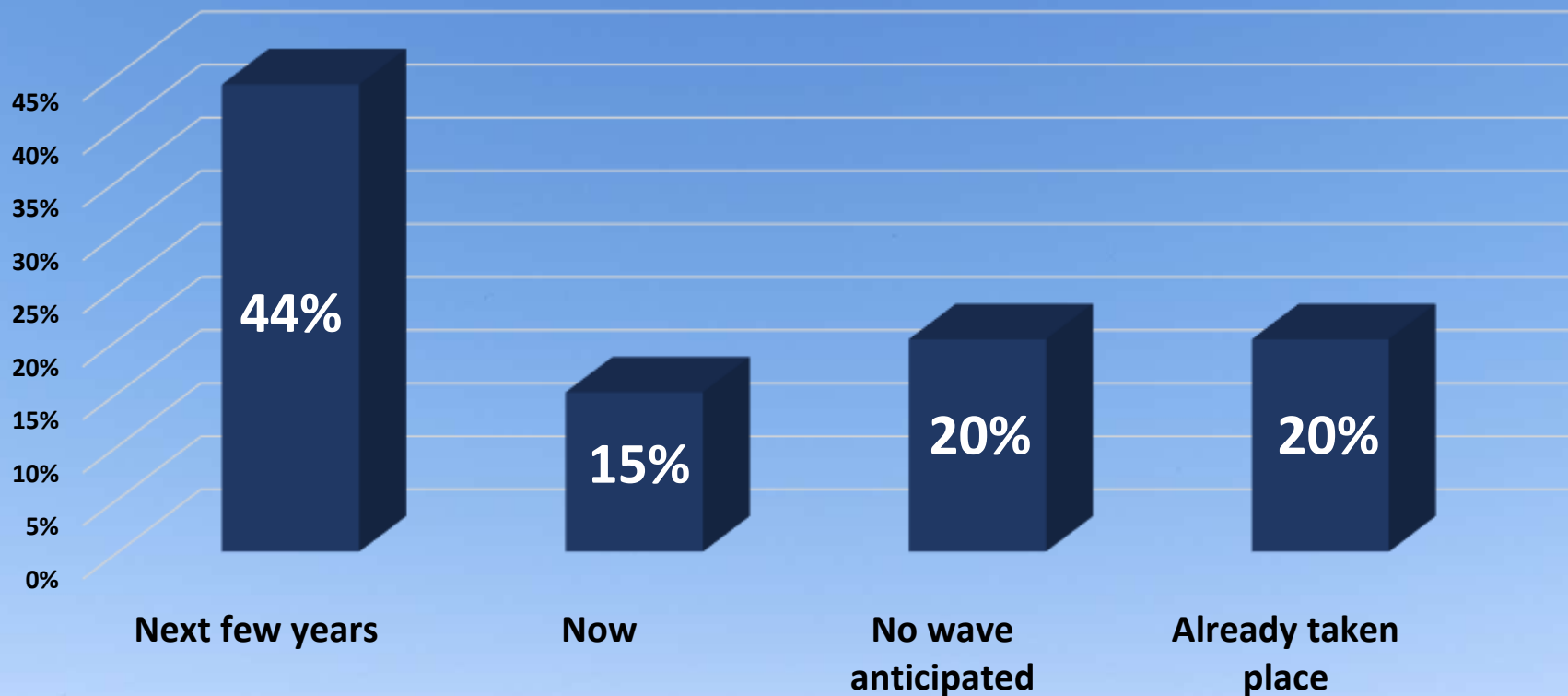
“60% of nonprofit, government and education leaders say talent retention is their toughest challenge for 2026”



State/local government:

- 467K vacancies
- Only 181K hires

S/L Government Retirement Wave



To Be An Employer of Choice



Create a Positive Employee Experience

The Employee Experience



Positive Employee Experience: The Business Case



Why the Workforce Matters: New Research





Building Better Government from Within

Workforce Excellence and Resident Satisfaction

A study by UKG and Polco
Whitepaper by Barrett and Greene



What Does Research Show About the Workforce's Impact on Business Outcomes?

Private Sector

“We found relationships between HR management effectiveness and productivity, cash flow and market value”

Huselid, Mark A.; Jackson, Susan E.; and Schuler, Randall S., “Technical and Strategic Human Resource Management Effectiveness as Determinants of Firm Performance,” *Academy of Management Journal*, 40:1, pp. 171-188, 1997

“Measures of accounting profits or cash flow were on average in firms having HR practices one standard deviation above the mean on dimension such as HR effectiveness”

Gerhart, Barry; Wright, Patrick M.; McMahan, Gary C.; and Snell, Scott A. “Measurement Error in Research on Human Resources and Firm Performance: How Much Error is there and How does It Influence Size Estimates?” *Personnel Psychology*, 2000

“Companies in the top quartiles of EX developed more successful innovations, deriving twice the amount of revenue from their innovations as did those in the bottom quartile”

Yohn, Denise Lee. “Engaged Employees Create Better Customer Experiences.” *Harvard Business Review*, April 5, 2023

What Does the Research Show About Workforce's Impact on Business Outcomes?

Public Sector



Background

Research question:

Do effective workforce practices positively affect residents' satisfaction with quality of government services, confidence in government, and quality of life in the community?

Research partners:

- Polco (National Community Survey)
- UKG
- Barrett / Greene



Methodology

- **72-item survey to assess workforce/HR policy and practice effectiveness**
- **Surveyed cities where Polco had conducted NCS 2022-24**
- **52 responses – scored 0-100**
- **Analyzed HR scores with Polco NCS scores – also 0-100**
- **Interviewed HR directors of highest-scoring cities**



Results

Statistically significant positive correlations between specific workforce practices and resident satisfaction

	Municipal Customer Service	Quality of municipal services	Confidence in municipal government	Quality of life in the community
Employee performance management	✓	✓	✓	✓
HR staff capability	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employee well being	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruiting and hiring	✓	✓		✓
Compensation and benefits	✓	✓		

The Effective Practices



Performance Management

Ongoing communication between manager/supervisor and employee to accomplish organization's strategic objectives

- Limit number of goals and link to strategy
- Conduct periodic evaluations and monitor compliance, with more frequent performance check-ins
- Conduct stay chats/interviews
- Recognize superior performance, but address poor performance / discipline, especially during probation

*“How can I, as your supervisor, better enable you to carry out your mission?
Is it education? Training? Direction? Or is it just staying out of your hair?”*

Value and Recognition

When employees believe they will be recognized, they are 2.7 times more likely to be highly engaged



Recognition “Without Spending a Dime”

- Recognize employee achievements at staff meeting
- Surprise employee with Post-it note of thanks
- Put thank-you note on department bulletin board
- Compliment employee within earshot of others (and word will spread)



Recognition “Without Spending a Dime”

- Mail handwritten note to employee's home
- Send department-wide email praising employee or team
- Start meetings by recognizing employees and ask employees to recognize each other
- Pull employee aside and ask for her/his opinion



Recruiting and Hiring

Streamlined process, positive branding, mobile-friendly applications and communicating with applicants throughout the process

- Aggressively market opportunities – purpose / fulfillment
- Eliminate degree / experience requirements, focus on skills and OJT
- Monitor time-to-hire and hire quality – and then act
- Apply technology
- Communicate about the process



“We put the dates of everything, including the interview, in the posting. That way, candidates know to set aside time, and they know exactly when we know we’re going to hire.”

What Job Seekers Want

- **Jobs posted on job boards – with appealing descriptions**
- **Apply in 30 minutes or less – on handheld device**
- **Confirmation in one day**
- **Follow-up in two weeks**
- **Self-schedule interviews**



Job Ads

This?

- 39 job responsibilities and 23 requirements
- *Include, but not limited to, stooping, kneeling, crouching, squatting, twisting, crawling, and lifting. Required to use hands to finger, handle, or feel objects. The employee is frequently required to stand, walk, sit, reach with hands and arms, climb, or balance. The position is required to be exposed to darkness.*

Or This?

“Join our dynamic team and be part of an organization that values your unique talents. Experience a fulfilling career where you can make an impact and thrive alongside a community of like-minded individuals. Take advantage of this incredible opportunity.”

Definitely Not This!

Provides assigned departments/agencies with advice and guidance to facilitate the development of their respective annual budget; interprets budget guidelines and instructions formulated and disseminated by the Bureau, assist in the development of meaningful and realistic program goals, objectives and workload outputs consistent with the department/agency mandated missions; scrutinizes department/agency budget request for accuracy and consistency with established guidelines; prepares analysis and recommends realistic funding levels consistent with executive policies and priorities, attends legislative budget hearings to support the department/agency budget request on the Bureau's behalf. Prepares impact analysis of department/agency budget appropriations approved by the Legislature for the Governor's consideration develops appropriation and control records of authorized funds; interprets executive policy and legislative intent pertaining to the use of appropriations, expenditure funding, transfer of funds to departments/agencies. Reviews federal grant applications for compliance with state clearinghouse regulations; evaluates and makes recommendations on the need for requested program based on territorial state plans and priorities; coordinates with planning agencies in the review of grant applications; monitors grant awards and maintains budgetary control records. Monitors capital improvement project; insures compliance with established policies and requirements governing and processing and expenditure of funds. Reviews, analyzes, and recommends approval or disapproval of department/ agency requests for personnel actions, travel authorizations in accordance with executive policies. Prepares legislative testimony for the Director or Governor as assigned. Prepares budget narratives to reflect supporting analytical presentations. Conducts analysis to determine the most economical method of obtaining services (i.e. lease vs. purchase). Analyzes department's organization, mission or functions and makes appropriate recommendation on methods to achieve effectiveness, efficiency, and economy of operations. Analyzes existing or proposed functional charts to detect and eliminate duplication of functions in organizational units and to clarify organizational relationships. Reviews proposed organizational changes relative to consolidation, addition, deletion of transfer or organizational units to determine budget and/or programmatic impact. Performs management analysis of governmental organization to ensure efficiency in operations and resource allocation. Prepares revenue and expenditure projections. Assist in the development of guidelines for policies established by Executive Order or Legislative mandates. Analyzes and updates BACIS records affecting assigned departments/agencies. Reviews financial statement/reports to ensure expenditures are in consonance with established policies. Reviews and comments on proposed legislation, writes up proposed legislation to address assigned department/agency needs. Coordinates research, management studies and special projects. Represents the Bureau at Legislative Budget Hearing to answer queries by Senators on budget related matters. Performs related duties as required.

Great Places Attract Talent

“Engaged cultures will attract people from outside the organization who want to join. What happens internally goes external pretty quickly.”



Actual Employee Reviews – These?



1.0 Horrible Department

1.0 Very stressful and unfair environment

1.0 Miserable place to work

1.0 Not a good place to work at

1.0 Join for the mission and leave because of management

Or These?



5.0 Loved it!

5.0 Great environment and people

5.0 Perfect Place to Work

5.0 Love working here

5.0 Fun management!

5.0 Great agency

5.0 Working with people who are as passionate as I am

**59% of job seekers would not *apply* to an organization with a bad reputation
– even if they were unemployed!**

Expand Talent Pipelines

Where feasible, assess candidates based on skills and abilities, not academic qualifications or years of experience

Mine the workforce to find critical skills in unexpected places

RETAIL • RETAIL

Costco's CEO started his career as a forklift driver. Now he's leading a \$254 billion giant rising up the Fortune 500



By Marco Quiroz-Gutierrez
Reporter

June 4, 2025, 6:07 AM ET

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Focus on Mission and Purpose

“I help send men to the moon”



Employee Wellbeing

No longer just “nice to have” – prioritize employee mental health, physical wellness, financial literacy, work-life balance

- **Offer comprehensive, well-publicized and easily accessible EAP with wellness and financial literacy programs (e.g., wellness coordinator)**
- **Reward employees for preventative health**
- **Offer flexible work arrangements**

“Happy employees do a better job than disgruntled employees. And if they’re happy about what they’re doing, then that’s going to result in happy residents.”

“We’re constantly pushing out content about employees taking care of themselves physically, emotionally and financially, to cover all bases.”



**76% of U.S. workers
reported at least one mental
health condition**

**84% said their workplaces
had contributed to at least
one mental health challenge**

**81% reported they will be
looking for workplaces that
support mental health**

US Surgeon General

Compensation and Benefits

Regular market surveys, total compensation, fix pay compression

- Design comp/benefits to respond to generational needs (e.g., provide new employees with immediate vacation and sick leave)
- Calculate and communicate total comp
- Regularly assess pay equity
- Provide hiring and retention bonuses
- Simplify classification systems



“Our classification system was reformed to reduce 16 steps to 8. This can reduce the turnover of young employees. Research pointed out the importance of keeping a new employee for four years, which exponentially increased the odds they wouldn’t leave.”

HR Capability

High-performing HR departments: staff members who have the right motivation, attitude, skills, education and experience

- **Assess competencies and strengths of HR staff**
- **Fund and support training (e.g., soft skills, conflict resolution), certifications, cross-functional learning, staff rotations**
- **Provide onboarding that connects HR staff to mission and strategy**

“Every member of HR, at one time or another, visits departments to help with HR questions and be the face of HR to other parts of the organization.”

***“We’ve done a lot of customer service training.
If we see something going wrong, we see what we can do.”***

Why This Research Matters

- Groundbreaking empirical evidence that the workforce influences government's "bottom line"
- Bolsters the argument that the workforce is an asset to invest in, not simply a cost to be reduced or controlled
- Identifies areas that positively impact residents and communities

"The HR team is all about service and we provide that service to the employees so they feel cared for, and it flows from them to the residents"

Rancho Cucamonga: Putting Research Into Practice



Team RC: Culture Is the Employee Experience

The research identifies five workforce practices tied to resident satisfaction.
Team RC makes those practices visible in the everyday employee experience.

Performance Management

MAPs replace a once-a-year evaluation mindset with ongoing conversations, goals, coaching and development

Recruiting and Hiring

Purpose-driven outreach, personal networking and pathways into public service broaden the talent pipeline

Employee Wellbeing

Flexibility, appreciation, connection and safety/wellness practices reinforce employees are people first

HR Capability

A focus on continuous learning and a strategic-partner model bring HR closer to departments

Compensation and Benefits

Competitive practices paired with recognition, growth opportunities and a culture employees want to stay in

Performance Management: From Evaluation to Conversation

My Action Plans (MAPs) – We replaced evaluations with Professional Development Plans

Frequent check-ins

Managers and employees talk throughout the year rather than waiting for an annual rating

Strategic alignment

Goals connect individual work to department priorities and the City's mission

Growth mindset

Professional development and coaching are part of the conversation—not an afterthought

Two-way accountability

Employees can discuss what support, clarity or resources they need to succeed

Recognition: Make Appreciation Part of the Culture

Recognition works best when it is timely, personal and woven into normal work

Everyday appreciation

Employee of the Month, Year-end employee awards, staff shout-outs for birthdays and anniversaries, celebrations and visible appreciation reinforce contribution

Milestones matter

Promotions, new hires, service anniversaries and team accomplishments are intentionally celebrated

Peer connection

Employee mixers and cross-department activities create opportunities to recognize one another. Analyst Peer Group, Executive Assistant Team, Employees Activity Committee, and Employee Peer Group.

A little fun helps

Ice cream day, Bring Your Child to Work Day, City Hound Program (Hank the HR Dog) add warmth and humanity to the workplace

Recruiting and Hiring: Sell the Purpose, Not the Bureaucracy

Team RC's employment brand connects candidates to meaningful public service and a distinctive culture

Pathways to Public Service

K–12, college, and community outreach show that there are many ways into local government

Personal outreach

Networking and employee ambassadors help candidates see the people behind the organization

Modern candidate experience

Job flyers describing what you will do rather than posting a job description. Modern Processes (NEOGOV & Workday), clearer communication, and process metrics support a more responsive hiring experience.

Opportunity over pedigree

Part-time-to-full-time pathways AND Education equivalencies create entry points and build future talent

Onboarding and Belonging: Start the Experience Before Day One

Strong first impression helps employees understand the work and what it feels like to be part of Team RC

Welcome with intention

New Employee Mixer creates early relationships beyond the employee's immediate department

Connect to culture

New employees learn about Team RC through HR and their Departments onboarding and are connected to it via their initial evaluations and subsequent MAPs

Build networks

Cross-department connections make it easier to find help, expertise and collaborators

Create belonging

Shared experiences, like SDI and HPO, communicate you are part of Team RC, not simply filling a position

Employee Wellbeing: Flexibility + Connection + Care

Team RC supports wellbeing through both policy and culture.
The surveys findings link employee wellbeing to resident satisfaction.

Flexibility

4/10 schedules and remote-work options and alternative work schedules where appropriate, Dress for Your Day and a Personal Leave promote flexibility

Connection

Mixers, development events, and activities reduce isolation and strengthen relationships

Safety & wellness

Training, injury prevention, heat-illness practices and wellness resources support employees on and off the job

Psychological support

A culture of coaching, listening and assuming positive intent helps employees raise issues and ask for help

HR Capability: Strategic Partner, Not Back Office

Team RC's HR model reflects the research finding that HR capability is associated with better community outcomes

HR Business Partner model

HRBPs work directly with departments on recruitment, employee relations, and benefit needs

Continuous learning

Certifications, conferences, peer learning and cross-functional development keep HR capability current

Technology + data

NEOGOV and Workday optimization and time-to-hire metrics help HR move from transactions to insight

Service orientation

HR's mission is to cultivate an empowered, engaged, high-performance workforce

Compensation / Benefits: More Than a Paycheck

Competitive compensation matters—but the total employee value proposition is broader

Competitive foundation

Market awareness, benefits and classification/compensation work help keep Team RC competitive

Choice & flexibility

Scheduling and workplace flexibility can be as meaningful as cash for many employees

Growth opportunity

Development, promotions and career pathways increase the value of staying and growing with the City

Total experience

Culture, purpose, recognition, relationships and meaningful work complete the employee value proposition

Continuous Learning Builds a Future-Ready Workforce

Team RC treats learning as part of the job—and as a retention and succession strategy

Staff Development Day

Shared learning experiences build resilience, common language and cross-department connection

Leadership development

Leadership expectations, supervisor development and coaching strengthen the employee experience at its most important touchpoint

External partnerships

Cal Cities, USC MAPP projects and professional associations bring new ideas into the organization.

Succession & knowledge transfer

Development creates internal bench strength as experienced employees prepare the next generation

The Team RC Flywheel:

Employee Experience → Community Experience

The research provides the evidence. Team RC provides the lived example.



Invest in the workforce → strengthen the community

Data Drive Decision-Making

High-performing government organizations don't guess – they listen, measure, and act using credible, defensible data

National Employee Survey (NES)

- Employee engagement and morale
- Trust in leadership and communication
- Workplace culture and belonging
- Job satisfaction, retention risk, and alignment
- Perceptions of fairness, equity, and growth opportunities



info.polco.us

National Community Survey (NCS)

- Residents' opinions on range of topics (quality of life, community characteristics, governance, public engagement)
- Representative, statistically valid insights
- Benchmarked against hundreds of other communities

Key Takeaways

- **Adapt to the new world of work**
- **To become an employer of choice – deliver positive employee experience**
- **Effective workforce practices drive resident satisfaction**
 - **Performance management**
 - **Recruiting and hiring**
 - **Employee wellbeing**
 - **HR capability**
 - **Compensation and benefits**



FORTUNE



100 Best Companies to Work For

For More Information

White Paper:

***Building Better Government From Within:
Workforce Excellence and
Resident Satisfaction***



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