NEOGOV



10 Ways to Improve the

NEW HIRE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE

Over the past several years, HR professionals have faced unprecedented hiring and retention challenges, forcing them to focus on important tasks like recruitment, staffing, and employee relations. Comparatively, onboarding can be perceived as a formality or a minor phase of the hiring process – but it shouldn't be overlooked. In the midst of a hiring crisis, onboarding becomes more important than ever.

Multiple studies have shown the benefits of a quality onboarding process. Although the exact statistics may vary, the general truth is clear: onboarding has a direct correlation to retention and productivity.

- According to the Harvard Business Review, a standardized onboarding process can improve new hire retention by 50% and employee productivity by 62%.
- The Brandon Hall Group found that an effective onboarding process can increase retention by 82% and productivity by more than 70%.

Why is onboarding so impactful? It provides a first and lasting impression of your agency. A structured process gives much needed direction to new hires, building trust and instilling purpose. Effective onboarding also familiarizes employees with agency culture and sets expectations so they know how they can contribute.

Combined, these benefits help new hires feel confident in their decision to join your agency, a belief that fosters loyalty early on. For these reasons, more and more public sector agencies are realizing these benefits and prioritizing an investment in onboarding.





ONBOARDING TRENDS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

An increasing number of government agencies are treating onboarding as a strategic investment. Specifically, they are exploring new ways to automate and standardize the onboarding process to improve operational efficiency, employee engagement, and their employer brand.

According to NEOGOV's HR Trends Report, **43% of public sector agencies are optimizing the onboarding process** to become more attractive to employees. Similarly, **50% of agencies plan to increase employee engagement and retention by improving their onboarding process.** The Brandon Hall Group had similar findings in their 2024 study, which revealed that 61% of employers (not just public sector) plan to invest heavily in onboarding improvements.

The early bird gets the worm, and the same can be said about early adopters. By investing in onboarding before other government agencies, you can differentiate yourself in the applicant market. Next, let's explore 10 innovative best practices in onboarding that can help you make a great impression on new hires.



10 CREATIVE WAYS TO **IMPROVE THE NEW HIRE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE**

1. ASSIGN NEW HIRES AN "OFFICE BUDDY"

During the onboarding process, new hires may feel like outsiders, swept up in an overwhelming current of unfamiliar responsibilities and team dynamics. **By pairing new employees with a seasoned coworker, mentor, or buddy, they feel welcomed and valued from the start.** You can even connect new hires with their buddy in advance so they see a familiar face on day one.

Over the first few days, their office buddy will show them around the office and introduce them to other team members, but the role of a buddy can extend for multiple weeks. Even a month in, buddies can still provide guidance and a safe place to ask questions.

Is your new hire remote? Buddies can offer valuable support in a virtual setting as well. They can set up weekly calls with your new hire to answer questions, explain other employees' roles, or use screen-sharing to showcase important tools.

2. DEVELOP A PREBOARDING PROCESS

Ideally, the onboarding process starts before an employee's first day. This provides flexibility for your HR team, a better experience for new hires, and faster time to competency.

Also called preboarding, it lets new hires begin their onboarding paperwork and learn about your agency before day one so they can make the most of their first few days on the job. **Instead of being bogged down by paperwork, preboarding creates space for them to learn new tools, adjust to expectations, and meet their coworkers.**





3. ASSIGN JOB-SPECIFIC ONBOARDING CHECKLISTS

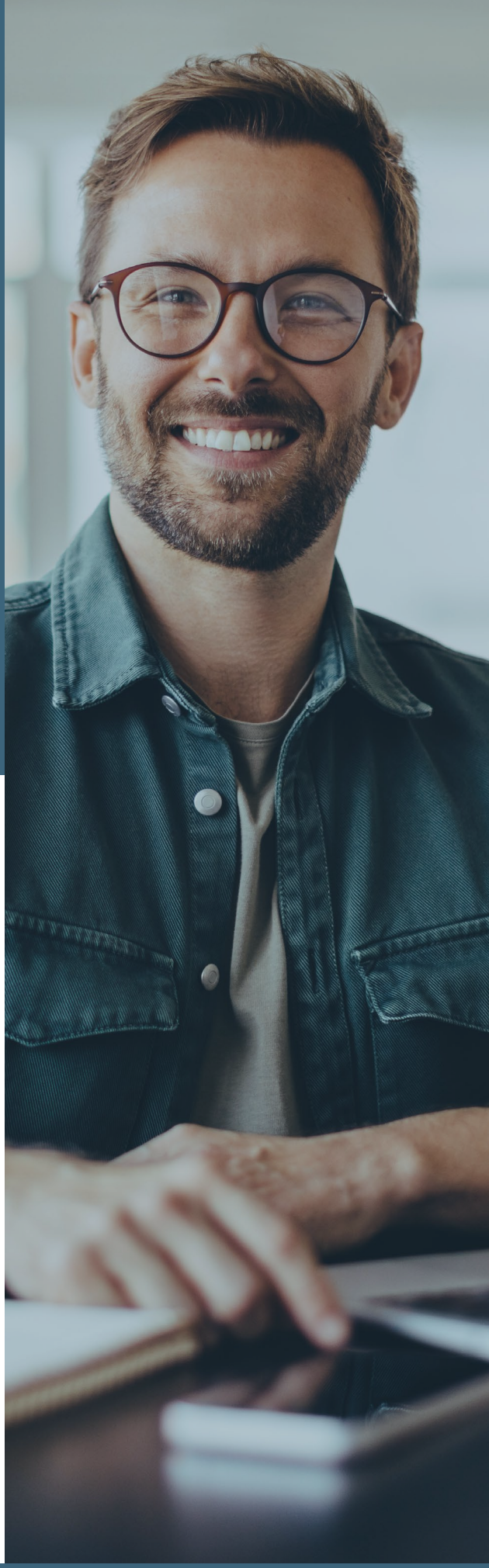
Different jobs may require different onboarding tasks and paperwork for new employees. So creating a checklist of to-dos for every type of job at your agency can **help them stay organized and focused on what's relevant to their role.** With the right tool, these onboarding checklists can even be auto-assigned based on the new hire's job type or department.

It may sound like a small convenience, but when you multiply these time savings by every new hire over the course of a month, quarter, or year, it adds up. It also **fosters a smooth onboarding experience for employees**, who will understand exactly what they need to complete and when.

4. PROVIDE AN ONBOARDING PORTAL

During the onboarding process, new hires can benefit from resources like a phone/email directory, PTO policy, org charts, new employee forms, and more. Instead of sending this information to employees one by one, **create a self-service portal that centralizes these resources in one place that new hires can access anytime, anywhere, at their convenience.** You can even organize portals by department, class specification, resource type, etc. to make things easy to find.

Is your new employee from out of town? Surprise them with a list of the best restaurants, fun activities, and local hot spots to get them settled in the area. To go above and beyond, consider personalizing the onboarding portal with a welcome message from their team or manager.



5. GAMIFY ORIENTATION

By gamifying orientation, you can make a mandatory requirement into something fun and interactive. Some entertaining ideas for new hire orientation you could explore include:

- **Create a "Jeopardy" game** with information the new hire needs to know, such as your mission and values.
- **Plan a scavenger hunt** that requires new hires to visit coworkers for clues about different departments, organizational goals, etc. You can even include a map of the office to help them get to know their way around!

Do you want new hires engaging with your social media accounts? Ask them to take pictures and videos during the orientation game. They can share it on their accounts and tag your organization, or you can compile and select photos to share on your social platforms and tag them.

6. INVEST IN EMPLOYEE-MANAGER RELATIONSHIPS

According to a study by McKinsey & Company, **75% of employees cited their boss as the most stressful part of their job.** Similarly, a DDI survey (Development Dimensions International) found that 57% of employees quit because of their manager.

There's clearly a **correlation between employee-manager relationships and retention**, and onboarding is the perfect opportunity to start investing in that relationship.

Encourage managers to take new hires out to lunch on their first day, or send remote employees a digital gift card so they can enjoy a virtual lunch together. Managers may also consider scheduling casual "coffee chats" with new employees once a week for the first month. This intentional time will **encourage open communication, make managers more accessible, and build a strong employee-manager relationship early on.**



7. PLAN FUN ONBOARDING ACTIVITIES

New hires can feel like the odd man out during their first weeks on the job. By planning fun group activities for new employees, you make it easier for them to connect with others who are in the same boat. T**his also helps them learn more about other roles and departments within your agency, as well as promote cross-department collaboration.**

Activities could be on-site or offsite, and don't forget to consider options for your remote employees, too. Some ideas for onboarding activities include:

- Roller skating or bowling
- A community sporting event
- Happy hour
- Paid lunch over a video call or at a local restaurant
- An in-office potluck
- Amusement parks
- City bus/segway tours
- Anything unique to your area

8. GIVE AWAY BRANDED SWAG

Who doesn't love free stuff? Most people are excited to rock their new employer's shirts, hoodies, backpacks, mugs, and hats. Consider giving these away during new hire orientation. The more valuable items can be used as a reward for winning a game, answering a question correctly, etc. (See #5 above.)

The higher the quality, the more people will use and appreciate it. Branded swag **helps new hires feel included and valued, and it promotes your organization when they wear it around town** – win-win.



9. LET NEW HIRES SHARE ABOUT THEMSELVES



Everyone wants to be known and valued. You can help facilitate this by giving new hires an opportunity to share about themselves. Here are a few examples:

- **Create an onboarding form for new employees to answer questions** about their work preferences (i.e. communication via email, phone, in-person, or chat tool), personality traits, favorite things (coffee order, snacks, movies, etc.), and more.
- **Share new employee spotlights** with the team each week via email, meetings, or chat tools.
- **Conduct a team-building exercise** where the entire department completes a personality test like StrengthsFinder or the Enneagram and shares their results.
- **Have new hires (and their team) create and present a slide deck** with bullet points and photos about their interests, hobbies, family, and history.

These strategies have multiple benefits. First, they help new hires feel known and accepted, which **increases job satisfaction** (a little transparency goes a long way). They also promote team building and improve working relationships, which **contributes to a positive workplace culture.**

10. SET UP AN OFFBOARDING PROCESS

Whether an employee is leaving your organization or transitioning to another position, **a formal offboarding process ensures nothing slips through the cracks.** As most employees transition, some level of knowledge sharing or documentation is often necessary to keep operations running smoothly once they leave, not to mention all the HR-related tasks.

With an offboarding checklist, you can **be confident that every critical task has been completed**, including the exit interview. If taken seriously, the exit interview can offer invaluable feedback about jobs, departments, managers, and your agency overall. The right tool can automate many of these tasks and facilitate a smooth offboarding process.

11. BONUS TIP:
USE SOFTWARE TO STREAMLINE THE ENTIRE ONBOARDING PROCESS

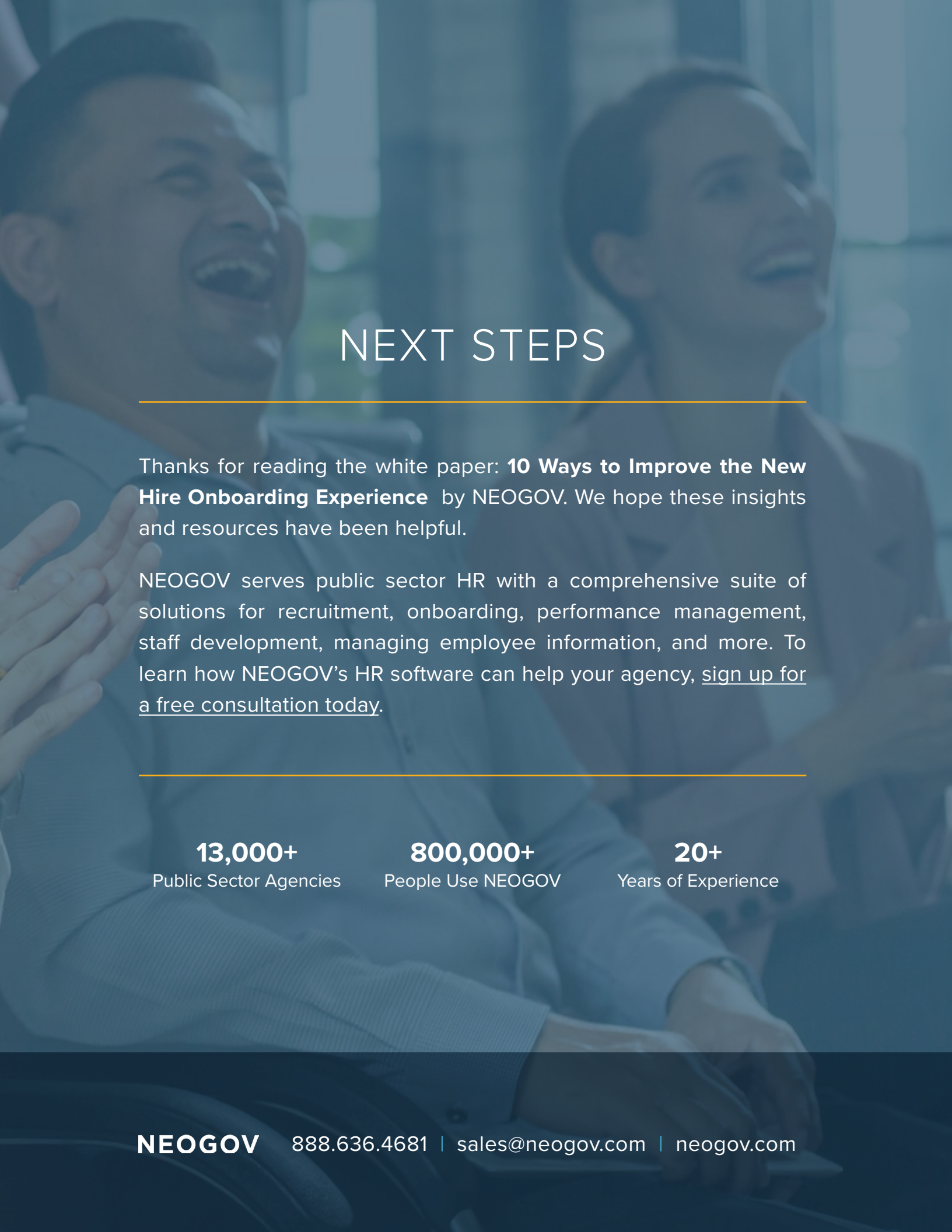
Operational efficiency is important for any organization, but especially for government agencies struggling with staffing shortages and high turnover. According to NEOGOV's HR Trends Report **automating the onboarding process is the #1 way public sector agencies plan to improve operational efficiency.**

Are you ready to improve retention rates for new employees and accomplish more with current resources? NEOGOV's onboarding solution, Onboard, can support your organization by:

- Giving new employees **24/7 access to an online portal** (with a personalized welcome message) where they can complete and submit paperwork digitally.
- **Automatically assigning task checklists** for preboarding, onboarding, and offboarding to employees based on their job type, department, or other criteria as specified by your organization.
- Offering **unlimited resource portals that you can configure** to your specific needs, including documents, links, videos, org charts, etc.
- And much more.

Schedule a free consultation today to learn how Onboard can help your agency keep employees longer, save time, and optimize processes.





NEXT STEPS

Thanks for reading the white paper: **10 Ways to Improve the New Hire Onboarding Experience** by NEOGOV. We hope these insights and resources have been helpful.

NEOGOV serves public sector HR with a comprehensive suite of solutions for recruitment, onboarding, performance management, staff development, managing employee information, and more. To learn how NEOGOV's HR software can help your agency, sign up for a free consultation today.

13,000+
Public Sector Agencies

800,000+
People Use NEOGOV

20+
Years of Experience

NEOGOV 888.636.4681 | sales@neogov.com | neogov.com