
NEOGOV
5 Best Practices for
RECRUITING TOP TALENT
Today

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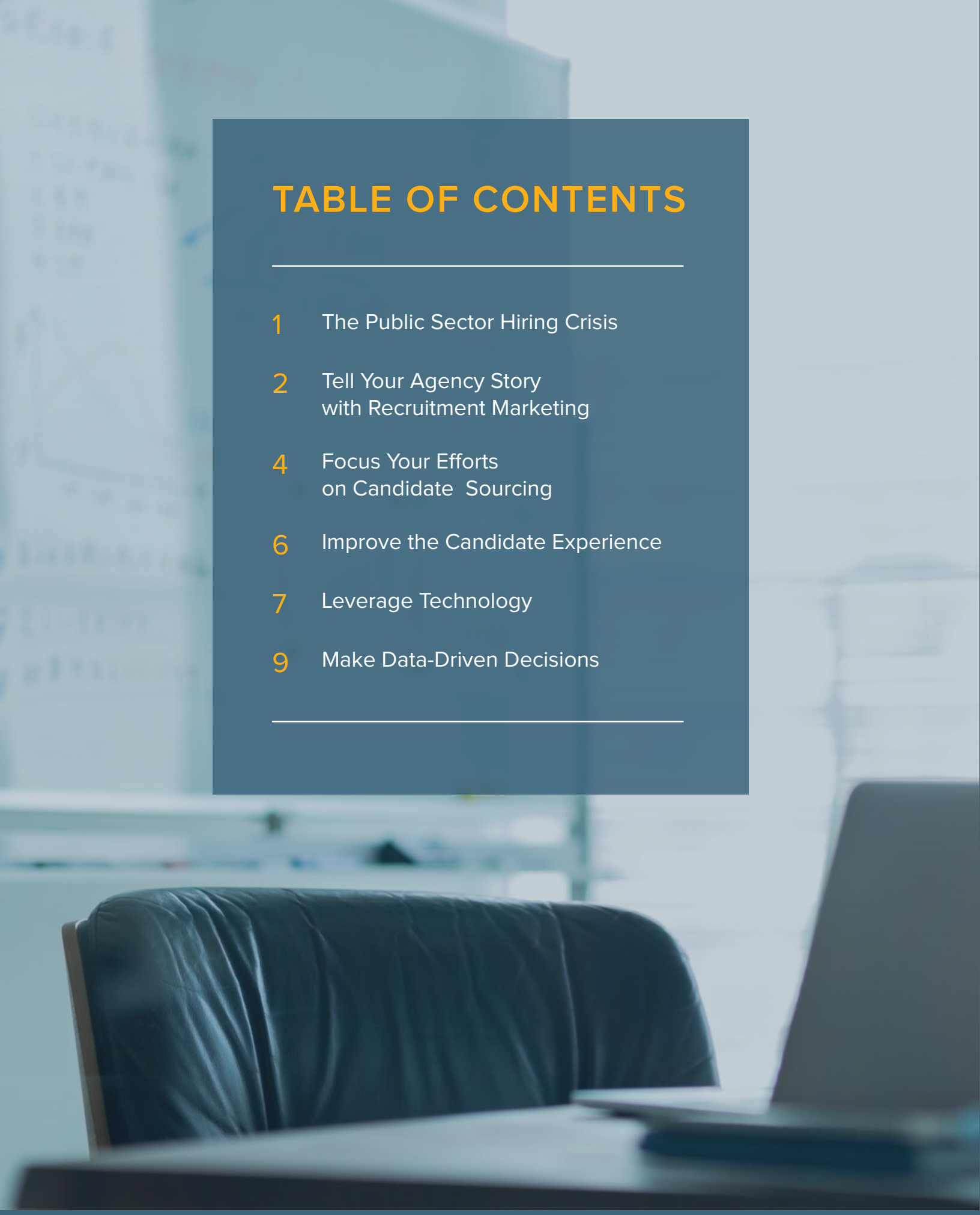
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THE PUBLIC SECTOR HIRING CRISIS

The public sector is in the midst of a hiring crisis. Since the pandemic, the job market has rebounded. Yet, public sector organizations are still grappling with unprecedented hiring challenges.

In the past year, the number of public sector job openings grew by 45%, but the number of applicants for those jobs dropped by 56%. Not only are there fewer applicants for a growing number of open positions, but the number of qualified applicants are few and far between.

Many public sector organizations are spinning in exhaustive hiring cycles. Droves of employees left the public sector during The Great Resignation. Most voluntarily resigned for more flexibility and better pay. Between voluntary resignations and Silver Tsunami retirees, public sector organizations are struggling to keep positions filled.

During the pandemic, many people dropped out of the workforce and haven't re-entered. That combined with retirees leaving the workforce, nationwide labor force participation is at an all time low. To get back to pre-pandemic levels, we need an additional 3.2 million workers entering the workforce.

IN THIS TOUGH, COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET, WHAT CAN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS DO?

We may not be able to reverse the current labor shortage, but we can respond to it proactively. To tackle today's hiring challenges, public sector organizations must take a forward-thinking approach towards recruitment.

By leveraging technology and implementing recruitment marketing strategies, you can improve the candidate experience and compete for top talent. Read on to discover best practices for recruiting top public sector talent in this challenging labor market.

TOP FIVE BEST PRACTICES

1. TELL YOUR AGENCY STORY WITH
RECRUITMENT MARKETING

There are many benefits of working in the public sector. From robust benefits to meaningful work, public sector employment is a great career option for many people. But in this uber-competitive market, it's hard for the public sector to compete on salary alone.

In our current job market, candidates wield the power. Low competition means that top talent can choose between multiple job offers, usually ones with higher compensation and better offer packages. How can public sector organizations stand a chance if salary is a top factor among candidates?

One way is developing a recruitment marketing strategy. An effective strategy tells your agency story and positions you as a top contender in a competitive market. Some of the most common recruitment marketing strategies involve creating employment branding campaigns, using multi-channel touchpoints to engage with potential candidates, and taking a long-term candidate nurturing approach.



But good news, you don't need a full recruitment marketing strategy to successfully recruit top talent. Here are a few ways you and your team can get started:

- **Adopt a marketing mindset within your human resources team.** This means focusing on promoting your organization as a desirable employer and showcasing candidate benefits.

  Train your HR team to think and act like marketers. Start by developing a strong employer brand and value proposition, writing compelling job advertisements and marketing materials, and leveraging social media, job boards, and networking events to engage with potential candidates.

- **Create feedback structures to gather vital information about your recruitment efforts.** It's really important to gather feedback from current and former employees, as well as job seekers, to know if your recruitment efforts are working. Anonymous surveys, performance reviews, and exit interviews can help you tailor your approach to resonate with your target audience.

  Consider using anonymous employee satisfaction surveys, onboarding surveys, and performance reviews to identify training and development needs, and exit interviews to understand why employees are leaving. Use those insights to address any recurring issues.

- **Write job descriptions focused on the job-seeker, not the position.** A well-written job description is crucial for attracting the right candidates. Write your job descriptions with your job seeker in mind. Do this by leading with the benefits of working for your organization. Emphasize your comprehensive benefits packages, a great work-life balance, or professional development opportunities.

  Job descriptions should showcase your organization's culture, values, and mission, so potential candidates know how they can contribute and thrive in your workplace. Be sure to highlight opportunities for growth and advancement, as this can help candidates visualize their future in your organization.

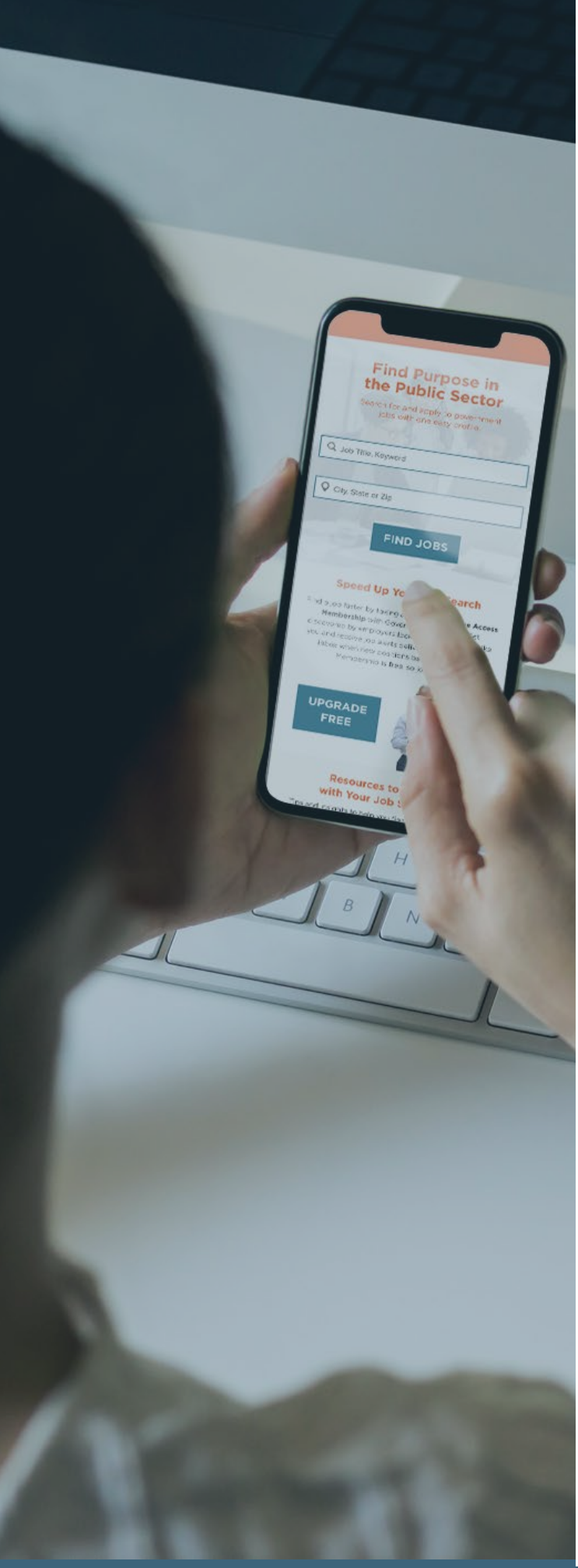
- **Optimize your career website to make a great first impression.** Your career site is the first point of contact between you and potential candidates. Make sure your site is mobile-friendly and easy to search and apply for job opportunities.

  Include helpful information about your organization and highlight testimonials from current employees. Incorporating relevant keywords into your web copy may help your website rank higher in search engine results and increase visibility to job seekers.

- **Stand out as an employer of choice.** Market your organization as a desirable place to work by cultivating a positive employer brand. Start by offering competitive compensation and benefits packages and ongoing training and development opportunities. You can also encourage work-life balance, and offer flexible working arrangements where possible.

  Positioning your organization as an employer of choice also involves fostering a supportive, inclusive, and growth-oriented workplace culture. While this takes time, you can start by committing to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and recognizing and rewarding employee achievements and contributions.





2. FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS ON

CANDIDATE SOURCING

Finding qualified candidates to fill open positions is a challenging aspect of public sector recruitment. NEOGOV recently analyzed 67,000 job applications from GovernmentJobs.com and found an average of only 14.3 applicants for every open job. Among those applicants, few are qualified for the role.

So, what can public sector organizations do to find qualified applicants? The answer might be candidate sourcing. Candidate sourcing is the step before recruitment. It's the process of creating a qualified pool of candidates with the requisite skills and experience needed to succeed in the role.

There are two strategies to consider when sourcing candidates: active candidate sourcing and passive candidate sourcing. Active candidate sourcing targets candidates who are actively job searching, whereas passive candidates are not actively looking for a new role, but may consider a great opportunity.

In this competitive job market, sourcing both active and passive candidates is critical due to the lack of available talent. While active job seekers may be more motivated and engaged throughout the recruitment process, passive candidates may have experience better fit for the role you are trying to fill.

Both sourcing strategies can help you develop a list of qualified candidates. Tapping into unexpected talent pools not only enhances your sourcing strategy, but also broadens your access to diverse talent.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Here are a few additional - and unexpected - candidate pools to consider while sourcing:

Past Applicants:

Even though they were passed over for a previous role, past applicants may still be a great fit for your organization. Because they've already been through parts of your recruitment process, past applicants are already familiar with your organization and what you have to offer.

You can also use this opportunity to improve their candidate experience, especially if you didn't offer them a job last time. Re-engaging with past applicants can leave a positive impression, and showcase your commitment to finding the right opportunities for each individual.

Baby Boomers & Retirees:

Even though there's little interest in recruiting older candidates, baby boomers and retirees often bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the workplace. Sourcing older workers may be a good option if you need to fill a more senior position, or one that is rooted in institutional knowledge. By offering flexible work arrangements, such as part-time roles or consulting opportunities, you can more easily recruit baby boomers and retirees, while filling a critical role.

Veterans:

Military veterans bring unique skills, discipline, and adaptability to the workplace, making them valuable assets to public sector organizations. When they retire from military service, most veterans are in their prime working age. Not only can veterans bring incredible value and work ethic to your organization, but veterans are also easier to hire in a competitive market. Through the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) program, government agencies may be able to appoint a veteran to a position and avoid the traditional hiring process.

Boomerang Employees

Former employees who return to an organization after working elsewhere, known as boomerang employees, can offer valuable insights and perspectives gained from their time away. They already know your organization and how it works, and they may bring back strategies to improve upon institutional knowledge. Stay in touch with former employees through alumni networks, social media, and professional networking events.



3. IMPROVE THE

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Creating a positive and memorable candidate experience is a critical component of public sector recruitment. With staggeringly low numbers of qualified applicants, every interaction you have with a candidate matters.

By focusing on the candidate experience, you can create deeper connections with candidates and ensure the hiring process moves along quickly. Young, tech-savvy candidates expect a fast and modern hiring process, and won't wait around for a non-competitive offer.

In this candidate-driven job market, improving the candidate experience can help your organization meet the high expectations of job seekers and position your agency as an employer of choice.

Here are a few ways to improve the candidate experience in your organization:

- **Walk in the candidate's shoes.** When was the last time you walked through your organization's recruitment process? If you don't already have one, consider mapping the candidate journey for your organization. Where did they first learn about the position? Does the job description sound attractive? Is it clear what's in it for the applicant?

  Consider each step from the candidate's perspective, and only make changes that will improve the candidate experience. You should also track how many steps it takes to submit their application, and what happens after candidates submit an application.

- **Prioritize communication and feedback.** Communicating with candidates openly and often can set you apart from other employers. Candidates appreciate potential employers who clearly communicate what to expect in the interview process, provide frequent updates, and offer constructive feedback.

  Candidates are more likely to engage in a relationship with a potential employer if they receive same-day feedback after the first interview. Bonus points if the feedback comes directly from the hiring manager. Better communication with candidates increases your chances of securing skilled talent, and develops strong relationships you can leverage in the future.

- **Streamline the hiring process and accelerate time-to-hire.** It's hard for the public sector to compete with private companies who shell out same-day offers. In 2020, NEOGOV reported the time-to-hire in the public sector was on average three times longer than in the private sector. Long time-to-hire greatly impacts the candidate experience, and sets the wrong tone for new hires.

  Approvals and budget adjustments can add days, weeks – even months! – to the hiring process, especially if you aren't using centralized HR technology. With the growing number of open positions, your agency can't wait months to fill critical positions. Transitioning from outdated, manual processes to cloud-based, automated systems will transform your hiring process and drastically reduce time-to-hire.

IN 2020, NEOGOV REPORTED THE **PUBLIC SECTOR TIME-TO-HIRE** WAS ON AVERAGE **3X LONGER** THAN IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.



4. LEVERAGE
TECHNOLOGY

In today's fast-paced and competitive job market, the public sector must find innovative ways to streamline recruitment. Outdated, paper-based processes are no longer viable in our tech-immersed world. Leveraging technology elevates your recruitment and hiring process, so you can compete with the private sector for top talent.

Technology rapidly advanced when the world went remote in 2020, and so did customer expectations. Even partially digitized processes, like PDF job applications, are no longer tolerated by young job-seekers accustomed to one-click delivery and slick online forms. Customers and applicants alike expect this level of modernism in every online experience, even with the government.

Transitioning your recruitment to digital-first may seem daunting, but creating the best hiring experience possible is easier than you might think.

Here are a few simple ways to leverage technology in your recruitment process:

- **Maintain a lean staff.** With a growing number of open positions in your organization, now may be the time to consider whether you need to fill every position. Advancements in technology and automation mean that some tasks can be performed more efficiently without additional staff.

  By maintaining a lean staff, you can save on costs and allocate resources more strategically. To determine whether a position is necessary, consider conducting a thorough job analysis to understand roles and responsibilities, and assess whether technology can be used to perform some of these tasks more efficiently.

- **Use job boards effectively.** Instead of randomly choosing a job board to advertise your open positions, find out where your ideal candidates are on the internet. Select job boards that cater specifically to the public sector, your department, or industry. Doing so will increase the likelihood of reaching your target audience.

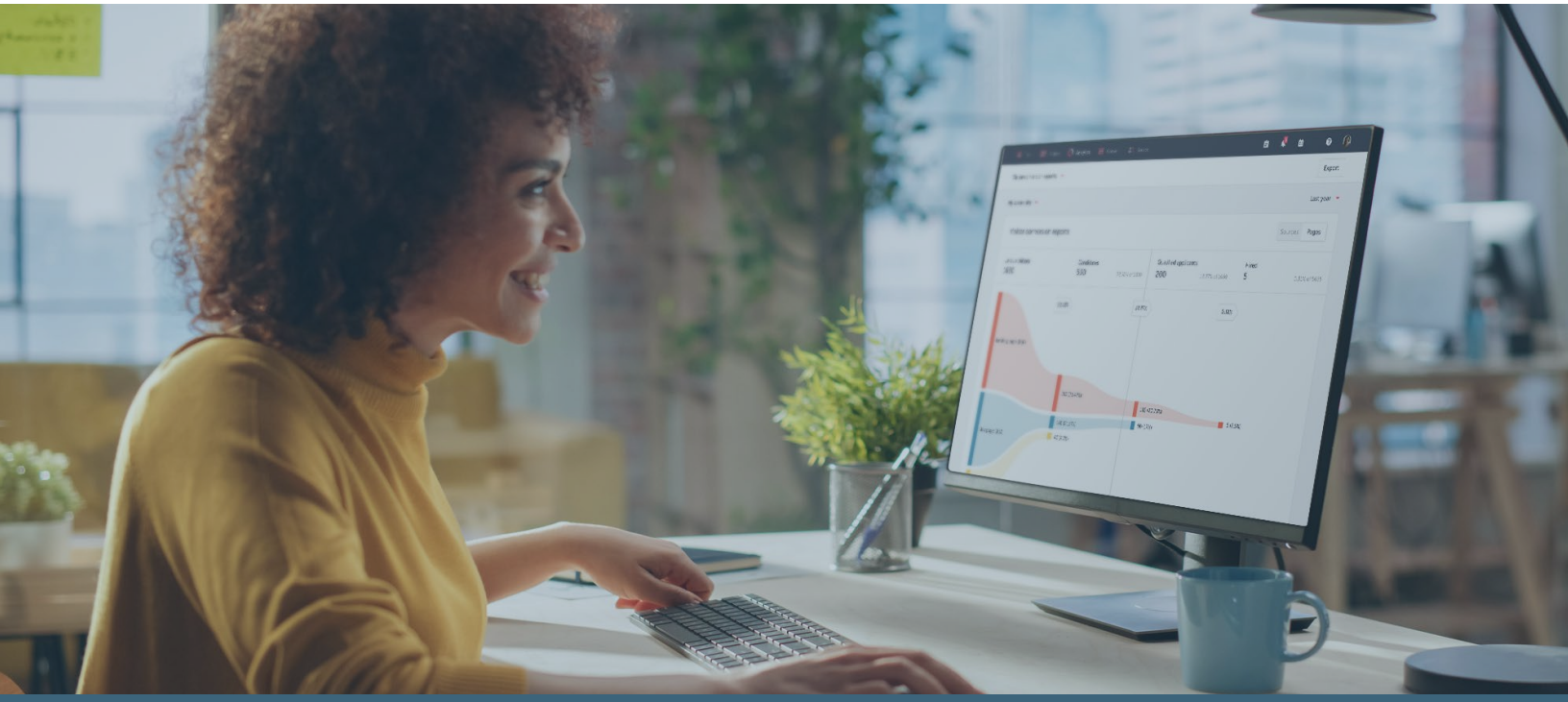
  Make sure your job posting is written for your target audience. Search for relevant keywords and answer every job seeker's question – WIIFM (what's in it for me?). After posting, regularly track the performance of your job listing to identify which job boards are generating the most interest.

- **Implement a Candidate Relationship Manager (CRM).** CRMs are software solutions designed to help organizations manage and engage with potential job candidates. But CRMs can do more than manage candidate relationships. These tools can showcase your employer branding efforts with custom landing pages, and allow you to communicate directly with candidates from one system.

  Capturing your entire recruitment funnel into a single CRM immediately streamlines your processes, resulting in a faster, more simple hiring process and improved candidate experience.

- **Utilize an Applicant Tracking System.** True to its name, applicant tracking systems give you insight into where candidates are as they move from sourcing to active hiring. Tools like NEOGOV's Insight offer applicant screening and automatic scoring, which makes it easy to narrow down qualified candidates.

  Self-service portals in applicant tracking software solutions empower candidates throughout the recruitment process. Candidates appreciate these straightforward, modern platforms that prioritize their experience and offer transparency into your hiring process.



5. MAKE

DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

There's nothing more frustrating than when excellent candidates reject an offer, or when a near-perfect hire turns out to be the wrong fit. The only thing more discouraging is when failed recruitment cycles happen repeatedly. In either case, it's time to turn to the data to assess where your recruitment went wrong.

But data collection and analysis can be challenging. It's tedious to capture data from manual or partially-digitized processes, and even harder to assess metrics without the proper tools.

Data-driven decision making is critical for effective recruitment. Using data, you can develop targeted strategies to attract top talent, identify bottlenecks, reduce costs, improve time-to-hire, and even reduce hiring bias.

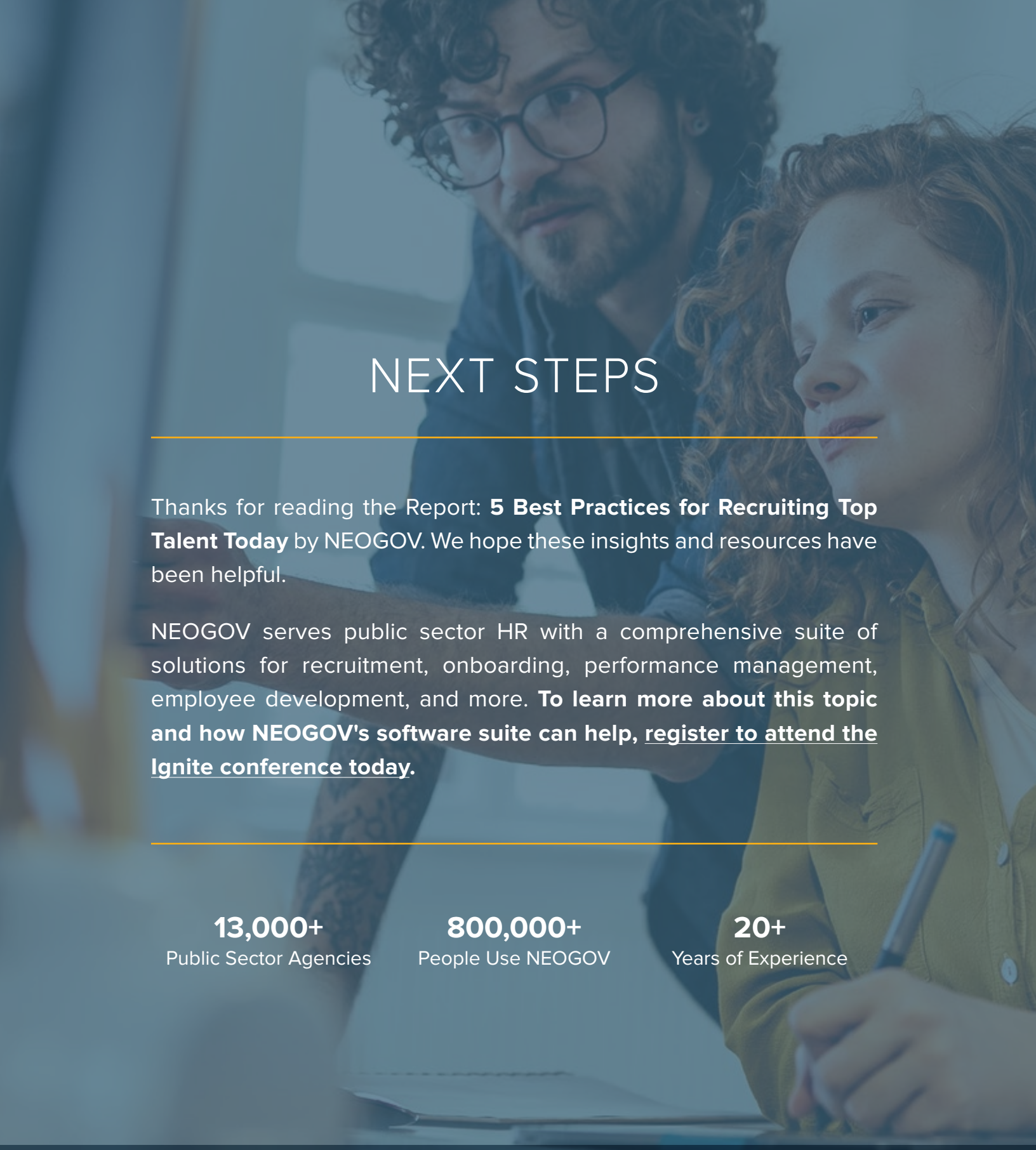
Here are ways to start making data-driven decisions about your organization's recruitment:

- **Tap into technology.** Data collection and tracking is tedious without technology. In just a few clicks, you can track important recruitment metrics like application completion rates, applications per job posting, time-to-hire, cost-per-hire, and more. Technology empowers you and your team to make transformative decisions about your recruitment strategy.

- **Analyze reports across the candidate lifecycle.** Once you've collected the right data, it's time to analyze it. Technology makes reporting effortless and more accurate than ever before. NEOGOV's Insight allows you to access nearly 100 reports, enabling you to deep-dive into your entire candidate lifecycle.

  In addition to applicant and recruitment reports, NEOGOV also offers workload and effectiveness reports. Track and analyze your staff's workload and effectiveness, as well as the quality of your applicants. Armed with these insights, you'll quickly make data-driven decisions and improve your recruiting efforts.





NEXT STEPS

Thanks for reading the Report: **5 Best Practices for Recruiting Top Talent Today** 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, employee development, and more. **To learn more about this topic and how NEOGOV's software suite can help, register to attend the Ignite conference today.**

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