



*CONVERGENCE ROUNDTABLE ON
MODERNIZING CIVIL SERVICE*

Discovery Report

CONVERGENCE



MAY 2023

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Acknowledgements

This report was generously supported by [Hewlett Foundation](#) and [Democracy Fund](#).

This report would not have been possible without the insights and time of those interviewed and the tireless work of Convergence staff (Senior Director, Civil Service and Policy Affairs, Caroline Chang; Senior Manager, Democracy Initiatives, Omar Elkhatib; and Interns, David Ta and Benjamin Amster).

About Convergence

Convergence is the leading organization bridging divides to solve critical challenges through collaborative problem solving across ideological, political, and cultural lines. For more than a decade, Convergence has brought together leaders, doers, and experts to build trusting relationships, identify breakthrough solutions, and form unlikely alliances for constructive change on seemingly intractable issues. Our process is improving the lives of Americans and strengthening democracy for a more resilient and collaborative future.

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Overview

An agile, resilient, and sustainable civil service workforce, well-equipped to address swiftly evolving challenges with 21 century skills, is essential for government to effectively support our communities and pursue our domestic and international agendas. Yet, despite widespread agreement that critical upgrades are needed, competing perspectives on the role of the federal workforce and how to strengthen it, abetted by political gridlock, have largely stymied civil service modernization efforts over the past 40 years.

The price we are paying for this cumulative stubbornness is too high: alarming gaps in recruitment, retention, and productivity, against the backdrop of a worrying decline in public trust.

Leveraging Convergence's deliberative methodology of Discovery and Collaborative solution-seeking, the **Convergence Roundtable on Modernizing Civil Service** brings diverse, expert federal workforce leaders and observers together across divides to break this logjam. The Roundtable seeks shared interests and builds trust across unusual allies to consider short and longer fuse pathways for modernizing a workforce that balances efficiency, equity, and accountability as the scope and expectations of the federal government continue to evolve.

Discovery and Planning

In 2021 Convergence began its unique Discovery process, encompassing a thorough assessment of the civil service landscape and interviews with experts spanning administrations and sectors. Convergence found a universal appetite and enthusiasm to break through the gridlock to find processes and policies to ensure that the nation's largest employer has a contemporary workforce aligned with the needs and challenges ahead.

The purpose of the Convergence Discovery process was to determine whether a longer-term, cross-stakeholder forum designed to build trust and alignment around finding solutions could yield insights and recommendations that would advance civil service modernization. In addition to affirming the value of deeper work, the Discovery also set out to identify fresh ways to frame why this issue matters to broader sets of stakeholders, including the American public. With funding support and consultation from the [Hewlett Foundation](#) and [Democracy Fund](#), Convergence began its Discovery by partnering with the [Volcker Alliance](#) and the [Partnership for Public Service](#) in the summer of 2021 to build a foundation of knowledge and connections, including a literature review of research and advocacy reports issued over the last two decades, and introductions to select stakeholders in the academic, research, and policymaker communities. Adding personnel-management consultant

and former Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Katherine Archuleta to its team of collaborators, Convergence prioritized an understanding of the role of equity, diversity, and inclusion within each possible path to impact.

Convergence staff conducted over 100 one-on-one Discovery interviews with widely diverse leaders and experts from both public and private sectors; lawmakers; think tanks; academia; labor unions; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) groups; veterans' advocates; and state and local governments. Convergence also facilitated virtual listening sessions with groups of federal employees in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City, as well as "drill down" sessions with expert groups to test highest value areas of interest, DEI considerations, and paths to impact.

This report provides an anonymized summary and analysis of key themes from across the individual and group conversations (all of which were held off the record). In addition to representative examples of the concerns surfaced in each thematic area, this report introduces possible lines of inquiry drawn from interviewees and background research.

This Discovery report serves as the foundation for the Convergence Roundtable on Modernizing Civil Service, from identifying prospective participants and advisors to key opportunities for collaboration around creating and supporting a federal workforce better able to serve America's needs.

Key Findings

One Discovery finding was overwhelming and obvious: the amount of change America and the world have seen since Congress passed the laws governing the civil service in 1978 is nothing short of staggering.

01 RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE

The effects on workers of the Internet and digital tools alone are transformative – and the federal workforce must also adjust to advances in globalism, the transition to an information economy, wildly different expectations of younger workers, meaningful changes in government and citizen safety and security, quickly evolving needs of citizens and consumers, and more. Where market-focused workforces have adapted strategically to stay current and competitive, the federal government has instead taken a band-aid approach with workarounds, creating confusion and fragmentation across the civil service human resources and management cadres.

02

DESIRE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF VETTED SOLUTIONS

Convergence discovered that few interviewees were proposing ideas that were radically new, since, over the last two decades, multiple efforts have studied opportunities for civil service reform. Rather, these leaders advocate for adoption of different previously-explored solutions. The intractability of the issue arises less from a want of ideas and more from poor alignment, a failure of political will, a lack of urgency, challenges bringing all interests to the table – and only a few, unsuccessful attempts at intentional collaboration across perceived divides.

03

POTENTIAL FOR NEAR- AND LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Stakeholders of America's civil service identified multiple opportunities for short-, medium- and long-term pilots, as well as intentional changes in the cultural, administrative, and legislative structures. The recurrence of themes across divergent perspectives supports the value of convening diverse voices in a Convergence Roundtable forum to incubate and test civil service modernization ideas in a collaborative space.

04

AGREEMENT ACROSS DIVIDES

We found a few important areas of agreement, even across different ideologies and sectors, that open doorways to collaborative dialogue across differences. For example, virtually all stakeholders are aligned on a vision of a federal workforce able to keep up with and get ahead of rapidly changing global demands, doing so with the right technical and leadership skill sets. Additionally, coordinated attention to recruitment and hiring of younger, more technically savvy, and demographically diverse populations was top of mind for the great majority of stakeholders Convergence interviewed. Engaging and fully empowering the current workforce was also a primary concern for almost all interviewees.

A Fresh Frame for Modernizing the Federal Civil Service

The Discovery process validated strong enthusiasm and cautious optimism across the spectrum of stakeholders that a Roundtable-style forum could generate sustained engagement and impact from practitioners and policymakers invested in a modern and responsive federal workforce.

→ **Ideologically Inclusive and Diverse.** Several stakeholders underscored that Convergence's lack of an organizational agenda and emphasis on convening inclusive and divergent stakeholders could be the necessary elements to build trust and break through past impasses, and many highlighted the timeliness, urgency, and potential of bringing together perspectives across partisan, ideological, sectoral, and other divides.

→ **Responsive to New and Emerging Challenges.** Stakeholders also coalesced around the need for a fresh frame that addresses a world that is much changed on everything from technology and automation to labor trends and globalization since 1978, when the last set of comprehensive laws underpinning the federal workforce were issued. This is important for those responsible for making and implementing changes, but also timely given declining public trust and understanding of why it matters to have a vital civil service.

→ **Range of Solutions at Different Scales.** There was near unanimity that the sheer size and scope of these issues logically point to consideration of a range of short-, medium- and long-term administrative and legislative actions that could be executed separately, or in tandem, to be most productive and impactful.

Based on these findings, in combination with the substantive learnings, Convergence launched the Roundtable on Modernizing Civil Service.

The frame centered the talent lifecycle, specifically the need for the federal government to attract, develop, engage, and retain diverse talent pools from across generations to achieve an agile, skills-based and mission-oriented workforce to meet America's needs today and into the future.

This forward-looking frame allows participants to identify and orient themselves around shared priority areas. Convergence will work with Roundtable participants to build trust, alignment, and the ability to find agreement on longer-term and ever-more complex aspects of modernizing the civil service, such as compensation and job classification among participants who currently hold divergent views on these issues.

Substantive Themes, Interests, and Issues for the Roundtable to Interrogate

Convergence’s interviews with a broad and varied group of stakeholders highlighted that irrespective of their positions, they were energized by the prospect of meaningful change. They agreed that certain paths for modernization are best pursued through administrative-level changes within current authorities (agency-level, or possibly issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), or by Executive Order) while others will require legislative action. At the same time, stakeholders predicted that a hybrid suite of actions will have the greatest likelihood of sustained impact.

Further, Convergence found that despite sometimes divergent and even conflicting views, the primary gaps and potential solutions stakeholders identified when imagining a next-generation federal workforce free from current constraints to deliver the best and most needed services to the American people fit into the following broad categories:

- Opportunities to enhance the applicant and employee experience, from recruitment and the application process, through leadership development, and ultimately separation or retirement; and
- Opportunities for structural changes, such as cross-government information sharing, as well as incentivizing collaboration and accountability systems that could improve efficiency, mission delivery, and impact.

The remainder of this report offers a summary of considerations gleaned from interviews and research for further interrogation, organized by themes that fall under these two broad categories. DEI was generally articulated as being interwoven through these themes rather than as a stand-alone piece, and Convergence anticipates that deeper discussions of eventual impact paths will similarly reflect the environment in which we live, including a civil service workforce that closely resembles the demographic make-up of our country.

01 RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is decentralized across federal agencies and the civil service, although OPM manages the USAJobs portal, which offers some background information for jobseekers as part of its core function as a job search engine and application pass-through.

- Anecdotally, agencies “post and pray” to fill vacant positions as staff leave, rather than engage in workforce planning to predict and plan strategically for the skill sets they will need in the near and long-term. This lack of workforce planning is attributable to many factors, including the appropriations process and continuing resolutions, and shifting priorities.

- When agencies engage in active recruiting, it tends to be siloed in nature, rather than multiple agencies coordinating or collaborating on outreach to fill similar skill needs.
- Recruitment tends to be relational due to limited budget and capacity, and as a result there tends to be insufficient recruitment of under-represented groups.
- Recruitment for scientific, technical, medical, legal, and mid-career or senior level positions looks different than general recruitment; strategic recruitment of students and interns poses yet another opportunity for innovation.
- Select agencies and opportunities – such as the State Department’s Foreign Service – invest in targeted recruitment, but the flipside is that these specialized hiring programs and departures from the standard competitive process create confusion not only among potential applicants but also hiring managers and HR specialists.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Are there opportunities for whole-of-government coordination around mission critical hiring needs, regional recruitment efforts, campaigns for populations less familiar with federal jobs such as at community colleges? How can recruitment be tied more systematically to strategic workforce planning?

02 HIRING

Hiring is considered by many to be excessively time intensive, confusing to the applicant, and inconsistent in yielding the most qualified candidates. The normalization of USAJobs and automated applications and reviews would seem to democratize the job opportunities, but that is not borne out by the results.

- Typical applications through USAJobs use self-assessments for screening, which allows for gaming; “government speak” disadvantages those from under-represented communities who may be deterred or less comfortable answering questions.
- There are promising lessons to be examined, including the Subject Matter Expert Qualification Assessment (SME-QA) and the new Cyber Talent Management System (Title 6).

- High volumes of applications relegate HR specialists to compliance review rather than strategic partnering; several stakeholders cited complaints of always being in a reactive mode rather than in a proactive, customer service (to the internal customer) mode.
- Veterans' preference is also perceived as a "block" for more qualified, non-veteran applicants, and was cited by some as creating an unintended consequence of limiting access for women and other demographic groups.
- There is a disincentive to hire at the entry level and a corollary incentive to "poach" higher levels from other agencies. This creates competition rather than collaboration across agencies.
- Haves and have-nots with respect to special hiring or pay authority also creates disparity and competition across agencies rather than an incentive to cooperate or collaborate on recruitment, hiring, and training.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the highest-value ways to increase efficiency in hiring, such as better descriptions and assessments so that fewer positions need to be re-posted, pooled hiring or open certificate hiring, and targeted use of term appointments? Does the "Chance to Compete Act" address some of the gaps - what are different stakeholder groups' views on that bill?

03 PAY AND COMPENSATION

There is broad agreement that the General Schedule (GS) system created nearly 75 years ago, and the method used to create the pay scale, is outmoded for today's economy. However, chasms emerge as to the relative priority of pay reform and what a modernized pay approach would look like.

- Past demonstration projects moving away from GS have not been scalable (DOD, DHS).
- Empirically, critiques of underpaid and overpaid (compared to similar jobs in private sector) are both true, depending on the level of position and type of position; on average, administrative and wage grade positions are paid at or above market rate whereas the cap on federal salaries creates compensation below market for law enforcement and many senior-level management and scientific positions.

- Tension exists between performance-based pay and concerns about discrimination. Market-based pay would be more equitable but also more complicated.
- Pay equity issues emerge when looking at DEI; beyond GS-11 there is a noticeable divergence in pay across demographic groups due to under-representation at senior levels.
- Unions are concerned with equal pay for equal work, and also share concerns that any new pay system could disadvantage current workers.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How can the pay system reward high impact employees and not be vulnerable to merit system criticisms? What would market-based pay look like for fast-changing occupations? Is pay an area that OPM could hold a demonstration project, perhaps looking at what some states have instituted?

04 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT / RETENTION

Younger workers, including Millennials and Gen Z, are leaving government at higher rates than their older counterparts. While this is surely due to many factors, including leaving to pursue further education, the resulting need to continually backfill on a large scale is costly and inefficient. Broader employee engagement indicators such as the Employee Viewpoint Survey also point to fixable challenges in leadership and culture.

- Higher employee engagement is linked to high scores on supervisors.
- Linking of mission and impact to individual work is important for engaging employees.
- Retention and advancement of certain under-represented populations at the lower- and middle-levels is critical to enhancing inclusion “at the decision-making table” and achieving a more diverse and representative senior echelon.
- Emphasis on mission impact, inclusion, and a positive work culture are especially important for retention when the private sector can offer higher compensation.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do we know about retention in certain occupations compared to counterparts in other sectors? How can agencies use data from the federal employee viewpoint survey to understand which/why employees may choose to leave? What supports to supervisors need to improve their employee engagement, including in a remote or hybrid work environment?

05 TRAINING AND ADVANCEMENT

Training is often the first line to be cut in a time of budget austerity. This approach creates deficits in the supervisory and managerial strength of the federal workforce as well as in the technical currency as compared to other employers in fields that are changing rapidly (cyber security, for example).

- ·Supervisory roles are seen as a reward for technical performance because there are few ways to increase compensation or title without adding supervisory duties. However, there isn't always the interest or aptitude and training in place.
- ·A rebranding of learning and development as the new R&D for investment in federal workers could go far since there is a 30% average skills turnover in most jobs.
- ·The concept of upskilling or retraining clerical or administrative support staff as a means of retention and investment as needs change is a possible way to address concerns about employees being replaced with new hires.
- There is a tendency for agencies to want to hire at senior levels (e.g., GS-12 and above) because they assume they will not need to invest in training those hires, and because they are looking for specialized federal experience (for instance, in procurement).
- Unions may have an interest in training as part of building pathways if the agencies pay for the training without looking to employees or unions to chip in.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the most innovative agencies doing in this area? How can training be more explicitly linked to performance management and impact? Can there be a whole-of-government incentive for agencies to collaborate in training mission-critical skills?

06

MOBILITY

The 40-year career model of federal government – and how the system continues to incentivize hiring from within, and sets up compensation, retirement, and health benefits – no longer matches the prevailing jobseeker expectations. This misalignment applies to students and younger workers as well as mid-career professionals.

- Millennials and Gen Z individuals value experience over stability, and the opportunity to contribute to mission impact and not necessarily a specific boss, employer, or even sector.
- There is a need to create better on- and off-ramps to keep current with the private sector in technical and scientific arenas, among others, such as allowing for closer collaboration and back and forth within long-term contracts.
- Even career path models within the government sector must reflect labor market interest in building varied experiences in different roles.
- The Senior Executive Service (SES) is not fulfilling its intended purpose of creating a cadre of mobile executives who move from agency to agency and generate a culture of leadership, growth, and information sharing.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can greater permeability between sectors be created to allow for the most up-to-date talent without creating “revolving door,” ethics, or security challenges? Can pathways across agencies create greater collaboration and information sharing within government, opportunities for retention, and stronger impact overall?

07

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

There is a narrative of so-called “poor performers” dragging down the quality of government output and morale; while the lack of differentiation in compensation based on performance may create frustration for high achieving employees, the incidence of poor performers is not demonstrably higher in federal government than in other sectors.

- Managers should use the probationary period, typically 1-2 years, to determine if the fit is right or to make adjustments; it is far simpler to remove a poor fit during this time.
- Unions have historically been the strongest opponent of pay for performance experiments or changes in the performance management system.
- Tennessee offers one state-level example of a sequenced and strategic shift to performance-based pay, starting first with a retool of the performance management system absent linkage to pay, and then layering explicit connection after the new system has been socialized. (Though there are no TN state-level employee unions, there are employee groups).
- “Poor performers” may gain greater negative attention in government versus in other settings because of the taxpayer customer.
- Fear of legal action is real among supervisors, but “firing” is possible if supervisors have the backing and training they need.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How can this historically high-tension area be re-framed to address impact and mission? How can the labor unions help understand the broader interests and options for different employee populations?

08

PUBLIC TRUST / CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND MISSION ACCOUNTABILITY

Negative public perceptions of government – stemming from multiple root causes including political polarization, comments by political leaders, personal experiences, or stereotypes about the workers and the jobs they do – create an uphill battle in building a constituency behind civil service modernization.

- Clarity in linking employee impact to mission addresses the customer experience and accountability (President's Management Agenda) and potentially can enhance employee and leadership engagement.
- Distinguishing between the roles of elected officials, political appointees, and civil servants may offer a way to build public understanding and trust in the work and mission of the civil service, including among prospective talent pipelines.
- A human capital lead with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services indicated that those who have had a family member or close contact go through the citizenship process are a natural recruitment pool for their workforce.
- Current administrative (PMA) and legislative (bipartisan Trust in Public Service Act) emphases on customer experience and customer service suggest an opportunity to strengthen public awareness and trust.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can enhanced public communications about mission impact and service delivery increase public trust and support for investments in the civil service? As the public looks to government to solve big problems facing society, can agencies or Congress offer new or different sources of information, or narratives, to demonstrate mission accountability?

09

ONE SIZE FITS ALL VS. AGENCY-BY-AGENCY APPROACH

In theory, the size of the workforce should facilitate efficiencies and leadership with respect to labor market practices and systems, but in practice, the size and varied missions and different agency cultures create complexity, inertia, and disagreement.

- There are over 100 hiring authorities available to federal agencies, though many are not well known. Different missions and functions, and the complex web of workarounds, makes discussion and action on changes to the civil service in aggregate unwieldy.
- There is a perception that OPM wants to make things one size fits all, while agencies feel they are unique and want special flexibilities. There are also differences in Title 5 vs. Non-Title 5 agencies.

- Even with different functions, there are many commonalities across agencies and that may be the place to start (especially support functions like procurement, HR, etc.)
- Congressional actions could create standards and funding for system-wide modernization.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can consensus be achieved around a federated model (as proposed by NAPA) that establishes certain requirements along with earned flexibility?

10 ROLE AND CENTRALITY OF OPM

The OPM director holds more authority than some realize for setting policies and running demonstrations, but over time the perception of OPM's leadership role has diminished for a variety of reasons, and several stakeholders said it should either be revitalized or reimagined OR removed altogether, with responsibilities shifted to OMB and other agencies.

- The fee for service shift has damaged capacity at OPM and changed focus from being a strategic thought and policy leader to trying to get funded through shrinking demand for services; we could consider a shift back to direct appropriations to serve as the recognized leader for the human capital community across government, including non-Title 5 agencies.
- In the past, OPM has been viewed as trying to make things one size fits all (USAJobs and USAStaffing) and not strong at fostering collaboration or innovation.
- Ongoing tension between OPM and OMB from past efforts to consolidate.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the greatest areas of capacity need within OPM that limit its ability? Can the cross-agency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council provide more capacity for collaborative and innovative undertakings across the human capital enterprise?

11

HR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

There is broad agreement that this is an area of opportunity. The HR function is treated as a mission support function, with little strategic investment in the IT systems and training required to equip HR professionals to be true partners in planning for and identifying the skills and talent needed to execute on mission.

- Specialists need updating and training; many are not aware of the hiring authorities available and if they are, specialists do not work with hiring managers to use them.
- Under-resourced; shift from strategic servicing of internal clients (hiring managers) to high-volume work processing and screening large numbers of applicants.
- Risk- and change-averse culture throughout HR pervades into how federal employees are managed.
- Workforce planning is a key tool that is not meaningfully valued or supported by political leadership who are focused on one-to two-year timelines.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Would OPM be a lead on identifying best practices and tools for the HR workforce? Would tying resources (appropriations) to accomplishing Cross-Agency Performance (CAP) Goals or similar help?

12

LABOR UNIONS

There are larger labor unions in the federal space – NTEU and AFGE, as well as many smaller unions, including NFFE, IFPTE, etc. The term “unions” is used monolithically in conversations about civil service reform, typically to indicate resistance to change, but the underlying interests of the unions are different, varied, and not inherently in conflict with modernization.

- Union representatives acknowledge that the status quo isn't perfect but fear any change will be worse for their members in a broader environment that trends increasingly hostile towards organized labor.

- There is a particular mistrust of changes achieved through the legislative process, particularly as they relate to the right to organize and broader employee protections.
- The more unions see their interests reflected in relation to the conversation, the more likely they are to participate and stay involved.
- Unions have demonstrated contemporary relevance as crucial allies in situations like covid safety and remote work, etc.
- Unions see DEI as important but have been busy with other priorities, such as collective bargaining.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the highest areas of interest for the different unions? Is there a shared set of interests across labor groups? Would codification of protections allow for greater engagement on the range of civil service modernization topics?

13 VETERANS

Not a single stakeholder argued against the importance of giving veterans enhanced access to federal civil service opportunities. However, there remains a negative connotation amongst many HR professionals who say that veterans “block” all other applicants, including younger applicants, women, and people of color.

- Senator McCain was a high-profile supporter of modifying veterans’ preference to be a one-time benefit.
- SME-QA application of veterans’ preference after a rigorous technical assessment of all applicants rather than a check-the-box self-assessment yields “qualified” veterans.
- One idea is to have direct hiring authority for veterans tied to a hiring goal to encourage hiring highly qualified veterans.
- Veterans’ preference has skewed hiring more older males (few with VP under 20).

→ A feeling that the “big six” Veterans Serving Organizations (e.g., VFW, American Legion, Disabled American Vets, Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, and Vietnam Veterans of America) are unlikely to engage intensively because their core constituency is older/retiring and they have little to gain from a re-examination of laws.

→ Groups representing more recent veterans (Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Student Veterans of America, Wounded Warrior Project) may be more likely to engage as they retain an interest in having their members find good employment matches and also have an interest in countering negative perceptions of their members.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is the breakdown of veterans in the federal workforce now vs. in the upcoming generations of workers? What groups were most engaged in the Commission on Military, National, and Community Service? How does veterans’ preference rank on the policy priorities list of different Veteran Service Organizations?

14

HR RELATED DATA GATHERING AND USE, INFORMATION SHARING

The lack of consistent data and use of available data was highlighted by many stakeholders as an opportunity for collaboration across government agencies. OPM maintains Fedscope, which rolls up employment data across government, but agencies have flexibility in defining what they track, and how.

→ Performance.gov has begun gathering application data.

→ There is a lack of data on educational backgrounds/credentials.

→ Poor data tracking of applicants in general is a real opportunity for enterprise-wide attention to capture data on who is interested in but doesn’t make it through the application process, and at what stage they drop out of the funnel.

→ There is no data standard currently to understand what or how agencies are reaching different populations for recruitment purposes, though the Administration’s DEI Executive Order may heighten attention on this.

→ Data would be central to a more robust HR infrastructure; this would be something likely to require additional appropriations.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can related efforts and expertise on evidence-based policymaking and the data community be leveraged in the HR data arena? Can recruitment and hiring data be standardized?

15

JOB CLASSIFICATION

The federal government relies on a dated job classification approach. The Multipurpose Occupational Systems Analysis Inventory (MOSAIC) methodology is a survey-based occupational analysis approach led by OPM, but with over 200 job classifications, it is not sufficiently responsive for a changing labor market.

- On the OPM web site, the [competency model link for cybersecurity](#) is over 10 years old; a resource for the [Human Resources Management competency area](#) dates back to 2006.
- There is a concern about slowness, but also rigidity in how positions are described and hired for that may not yield the strongest or best fit candidates for the actual work.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are private sector companies or other employers using to base their hiring criteria for new and evolving fields? What are labor market data analytics firms like EMSI-Burning Glass doing that may be relevant for the federal government, both in terms of scanning for skills as opposed to duties, as well as forecasting future skill needs?

16

MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES

There are structural misalignments between the way the executive branch plans for human capital and how Congress authorizes and appropriates agencies to carry out their mission. One stakeholder pointed out that the Roundtable group must include individuals who understand how to re-program funds from projects to people and HR infrastructure. Several stakeholders mentioned that continuing resolutions in particular have a negative impact on agencies' abilities to plan for staffing and to hire.

- Disconnect in incentives and structures (some agencies must work with many committees, including authorizing and appropriating – the Department of Homeland Security is prime example).
- Contrary to beliefs, many requests or wish list items don't require legislation. Agencies have authorities they aren't using, so before agencies ask for additional flexibility, they should be able to demonstrate that they have exhausted all existing authorities.
- Communication and shared knowledge between Congress and the broader community interested in modernization is important.
- Legislation by itself cannot be written well enough to establish shared goals; potentially create pooled funds for cross-agency collaboration or as incentives for achieving Cross-Agency Performance (CAP) Goals.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How can civil service, often viewed as a sleepy issue in Congress, be tied to members' short and long-term interests to build more allies?

Conclusion and Next Steps

The **Convergence Roundtable on Modernizing Civil Service Discovery Report** identified strong interest across differing stakeholders to find both quick wins and longer-term solutions to create and sustain a federal workforce designed for the future needs of the country. Additionally, through dozens of interviews and listening sessions, Convergence identified several thematic areas for this important work, ranging from recruiting and engaging individuals across evolving skill sets and missions to re-examining the legislation and entities that govern the federal workforce.

Convergence launched a Roundtable on Civil Service Modernization in May of 2022 to create and facilitate a community that will further excavate and incubate around these core themes. Convergence expects that Roundtable participants will collaborate to drive towards solutions that address many of the themes identified during the Discovery period, and in turn, will strengthen and coordinate with broader national conversations around the future of our civil service. Convening regularly in plenary and in focused working groups through 2023, the Roundtable will produce a blueprint of recommendations for policymakers and officials in early 2024, with implementable federal workforce modernization strategies for the benefit of all Americans.

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