



Good People, Better Procurement: How to Hire & Retain Top Talent

Hosted by Partners for Public Good (PPG)

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Thursday, August 21, 2025

Meet our PPG Moderators



Charley Kargman
Assistant Director | PEN



Evan Karl
Associate | PEN



Maya Wilson
Associate | PEN



In the chat, please share
your name and government!

How can you engage in this session?



Please use the
“Raise Hand”
function on Zoom



Look out for
**discussions and
resources**
in the Zoom chat



Join in the
**conversation via
chat** and connect with
a peer!

Agenda

Join us for an optional post-event discussion to continue the conversation and network with peers!

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1

Welcome & Housekeeping

2

Unpacking Challenges to Public Sector Hiring

Presented by Work for America

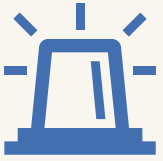
3

Strategies to Address Procurement Hiring Challenges

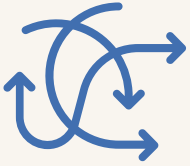
4

Wrap Up & Takeaways

Why this topic? Why now?



A growing workforce crisis: Nearly 1 in 3 public sector workers are eligible for retirement, leaving procurement teams to navigate staff departures, persistent vacancies, and heavier workloads.



Procurement work is more complex than ever: Today's professionals need not just technical know-how, but also strategic thinking and the ability to work across departments to deliver results.



A chance to reimagine recruitment and retention: To meet the moment, procurement leaders must rethink how they build teams and shape workplace cultures that attract strategic, mission-driven, and innovative talent.

Unpacking the State & Local Government Hiring Challenge

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Key Findings from Work for America's *"From the Frontlines"* Research



Shifra Goldenberg

Chief Program Officer
Work for America (WFA)

- **Leads national workforce research:** Shifra oversees WFA's *From the Frontlines* report, analyzing hiring, retention, and recruitment trends across government to strengthen public sector talent pipelines.
- **Translates data into action:** Her work connects survey insights with practical strategies for cities and states, helping leaders improve hiring outcomes and workplace culture.
- **Champions mission-driven recruitment:** Shifra promotes messaging that emphasizes public impact over jargon, inspiring more people to pursue public service careers.

3 strategies to mitigate public sector hiring challenges

JOB DESCRIPTIONS



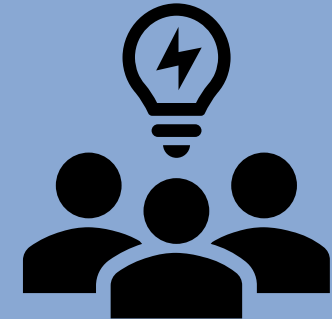
Am I communicating the full value and growth potential of the role in my job listing?

TARGETED RECRUITMENT



Am I tapping into networks, websites, and forums that connect me to promising talent?

POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE



Am I consistently offering teammates opportunities to learn and grow?

Addressing Procurement Hiring Challenges: *Job Descriptions*

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Clarify Your Staffing Needs: What Are You Looking For?

Before writing a job description, take a step back. Too often, agencies default to outdated templates or boilerplate language that fail to capture a procurement team's needs. Consider:

- **Connecting your team's mission to roles and responsibilities:** how is this position advancing our goals?
- **Surveying existing staff:** where can they use the most support?
- **Reflecting on top performers:** who thrives on your team and why?

“The problems procurement is trying to solve are adaptive and complex. Make sure your job descriptions capture that.”
—PEN member

The goal is to write job descriptions that prioritize impact over credentials and **reflect what you need—not what you've always asked for.**

Best Practices in Job Descriptions

Once you've clarified what you're looking for, the next step is to translate your priorities into clear, compelling language that helps the right candidates see themselves in the position.



Reflect updated duties: Write titles, bullets, and descriptions that not only reflect daily tasks, but also interdepartmental collaboration and vendor engagement. Emphasize how these tasks bring value to the jurisdiction.



Revisit minimum requirements: Review whether certain degree or certification requirements are necessary—or just inherited.



Offer details: In addition to clearly listing pay and benefits, be explicit about the interview process, reporting structures and growth opportunities.

Let's Hear From You: Post in the Chat!



What are examples of engaging phrases in procurement role descriptions that go beyond required tasks?



From Duplication to Definition: Syracuse, NY

Case Study: Syracuse, NY

Challenge: Syracuse's small Purchasing Division lacked role clarity, leading all staff to spend time on administrative tasks and sometimes duplicating efforts. Forecasting and vendor engagement fell through the cracks.

Innovation: Syracuse conducted a role-mapping exercise that clarified day-to-day responsibilities and informed targeted job description updates. The City also created a grant-funded Procurement Analyst position to expand capacity.

Key Outcomes: Syracuse's approach brought job descriptions in line with current workflows, streamlined task distribution, and elevated strategic priorities.

Best Practices

- **Use role mapping to update job descriptions:** Outdated templates often do not reflect current needs.
- **Separate technical tasks from strategic leadership:** Elevating senior roles made space for forecasting and vendor engagement.
- **Create new roles that reflect emerging needs:** The creation of a grant-funded Procurement Analyst role demonstrates how better role clarity can unlock new capacity.

Addressing Procurement Hiring Challenges: *Targeted Recruitment*

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Advertising Your Roles as a Mission-Driven Opportunity

Too often, public sector job ads lead with jargon, acronyms, or a laundry list of duties—and completely miss the *why*. Instead, follow these five steps:

1 Lead with purpose:
Don't just explain what procurement does — explain *why it matters to the big picture*.

2 Highlight procurement's cross-cutting role:
Procurement shapes how tax dollars deliver services and results.

3 Remove legalese:
Plain, accessible language helps candidates see themselves in the role and understand their value.

4 Make it personal and concrete:
Try describing one real impact the position supports.

5 Promote it like a campaign:
Job postings are just one tool – consider short videos and staff testimonials to expand reach.

Posting Platforms and Outreach Tactics That Work

Visibility can make or break your recruitment efforts. Even the best job descriptions won't matter if no one sees them or if they're trapped behind clunky websites.

- **Start by auditing your own house:** Is your jurisdiction's job board publicly accessible? Does it require users to create an account just to *view* postings?
- **Expand your reach:** Where are new websites or forums I can share my opportunities with?
- **Create bridge programs:** How can I proactively collaborate with community colleges and local workforce boards to connect talent with job opportunities?
- **Internal recruiting matters too:** Are there folks in my own organization looking for a new challenge or a change in teams?



Not sure where to post?
Consider platforms such as:

- **Civic Match**
- **Government Jobs/ NEOGOV**
- **Idealist.org**
- **Indeed**
- **LinkedIn**
- **NIGP, NASPO, MCMA**

Riding the Wave of Recruitment: Honolulu, HI

Case Study: Honolulu, HI

Challenge: As a remote city with a high cost of living, Honolulu faces intense competition for procurement roles. Federal agencies, defense contractors, and state government offer attractive roles, making it difficult to retain local talent.

Innovation: Reimagined its hiring strategy by modernizing job descriptions, establishing internship pipelines via university partnerships, promoting on military websites and job fairs.

Key Outcomes: These efforts expanded access to local talent pools, filling 10 procurement positions, including senior roles.

Best Practices

- **Lead with purpose and partnership:** Honolulu's job postings highlight mission-driven impact while leveraging deep university and interagency ties.
- **Target overlooked talent pools:** Military dependents, federal layoffs, and compliance professionals outside of government became new sources of strength.
- **Modernize position descriptions to expand eligibility:** Outdated qualifications were filtering out strong candidates.

Let's Hear From You: Come Off Mute to Share!



What were unconventional places you've shared job descriptions in the past? Any success?



Addressing Procurement Hiring Challenges: *Positive Workplace Culture*

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Why Workplace Culture Matters



Culture is your best recruitment & retention tool: When salary or perks can't compete, a strong workplace culture is your biggest draw.



Great policies need great people: Even the best procurement processes fall flat without the right team culture to carry them forward.



Culture change makes reforms stick: Process upgrades only last when people feel safe to try, learn, and adapt.



Retention is about belonging, not just benefits: People stay when they're heard, respected, growing, and connected to the mission.



Culture starts at the top: Leaders set the tone through connection, balance, and celebrating learning moments.

Building Rituals: Core Principles of a "Fun" Workplace



A Positive Culture is a Strategic Asset

Workplace culture fuels retention, learning, innovation—and yes, fun. Use humor, theme days, and friendly challenges to keep things supportive and human.



Establish Rich Working Relationships

Foster trust through team-building, mentorships, and informal check-ins focused on *how* your team works together, not just *what* they deliver.



Emphasize Mission

Connect daily work to real-world impact through project milestones and site visits.



Invest in Ongoing Training

Offer regular skill-building opportunities to help staff grow and adapt.



Design Matters

Thoughtfully designed spaces, documents, and meetings—both physical and digital—shape how people feel about their work.

From Turnover to Retention: Lessons from Sound Transit

Case Study: Sound Transit

Challenge: In Seattle, WA, the procurement team at Sound Transit faced high turnover, outdated job structures, and eroded trust. Internal data showed had climbed to nearly 50%, while employee surveys revealed low morale.

Innovation: A new Procurement Director diagnosed organizational culture, aligned job descriptions with needed skills, added surveys and feedback sessions, and promoted transparency. Leadership emphasized psychological safety, collaboration, and mission-focused recruitment.

Key Outcomes: Improved staff retention, faster hiring timelines, and a stronger pipeline of qualified candidates ready to meet agency needs.

Best Practices

- **Use internal data to drive change:** Job descriptions and pay audits gave leaders leverage to restructure roles, secure promotions, and set clear expectations.
- **Foster feedback and growth:** Regular, safe spaces for healthy debate built trust, psychological safety, and innovation.
- **Develop staff from within:** Clear promotion pipelines became a powerful retention tool.

Wrap-up & Takeaways

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5 Tips for Goal-Oriented Recruitment & Retention

Across your job descriptions, outreach strategy, and internal programming, aim to:



Lead with Mission. Tie every role, initiative, and training to the broader mission. People stay when they know their work matters.



Clarify Roles and Responsibilities. Ambiguity breeds frustration. Job descriptions and onboarding should demystify expectations, not add to the confusion.



Act Fast on Outreach. Don't wait for ideal candidates to find you. Refine your pitch, diversify your platforms, and make public service appealing.



Encourage Innovation, Growth, and Even Silliness. Cultures that value learning *and* laughter are where people want to stay—and where performance thrives.



Welcome Feedback. Create environments where people feel safe speaking up. That psychological safety isn't just the foundation of trust, growth, and equity, but for new, innovative ideas!

Your Feedback Matters: Event Experience Survey



**Please complete the Zoom poll on your screen.
Your feedback is anonymous!**

Thank you & Stay in Touch!

Stay on for a **30-minute Post-event Discussion!**

- ✓ Connect with fellow governments and share additional insights on this topic immediately after this session.

Build Your **Procurement Dream Team!**

- ✓ Checkout our guide to discover strategies, practical tips, and real-world examples to strengthen recruitment and retention. [Access it here!](#)

Schedule a **Coaching Call** with PEN!

- ✓ Want help exploring strategies for recruitment and retention in your agency? *Reach out to PEN today!*

Join us for our next PEN event!

Transformative Infrastructure: Navigating Project Uncertainty Through Public Procurement



Has your government received a federal grant for infrastructure modernization, and concerned about the risks and complexities of these projects?

Join PEN for a session exploring how procurement can help governments navigate these uncertainties and deliver successful infrastructure outcomes!


Sep 30, 2025 | 2:00-3:00pm ET

Register Today!



Good People, Better Procurement: How to Hire & Retain Top Talent

Post-Event Peer Exchange
Hosted by Partners for Public Good (PPG)



In the chat, please
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and **government!**

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In what aspect of hiring or talent development have you had the most trouble? What is a first step you're excited to take after this event?

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and **government!**