

Six Workforce Trends to Watch in 2022

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formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC

As state and local governments, along with other public service organizations, emerge in 2022 from a challenging two years, they continue to gain valuable insights into how public employers can manage and support their current workforce while positioning themselves to attract new, key talent.

Recent research by **MissionSquare Research Institute** highlights strategies and steps governments can take to be employers of choice. Based on its research, the Institute offers six workforce trends to watch in 2022:



Showcasing the Importance of Public Sector Roles

Throughout the course of the pandemic, the public has learned much about the **crucial roles that public health, education, and other key state and local government workers** fulfill every day. The toll of the pandemic on essential workers, **especially teachers**, has been substantial. At the same time, there has been a **renewed sense of public service pride and increased acknowledgement** of the essential work these employees perform. Public sector employers in 2022 can leverage this pride and appreciation to attract new employees, including those who previously would not have considered a career in government.



Tracking Burnout

Employers will need to support staff with Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), wellness programs, flexibility in work arrangements, and other strategies to mitigate stress. Otherwise, top workers may consider leaving at a time when **31% of public workers** say they may change jobs and join the ranks of the Great Resignation.



Supporting Sustainable Retirement Benefits

Given the efforts of many governments to pay annual required contributions to their pension plans, along with healthy investment returns, **overall public pensions are stable and well positioned** heading into the new year. Also, **defined contribution plans** continue to play an important role in supporting retirement security in the public sector, both as primary and supplemental savings.



Thinking Beyond Traditional Benefits

While retirement and health benefits will continue to be a central part of public sector benefit offerings, innovative public employers in 2022 will also explore how to support their employees in building **emergency savings** and adopting other **nontraditional benefits** such as student loan repayment and holistic health and **financial wellness programs**.



Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Goals

Aside from helping public employers better reflect the communities they serve, maintaining a diverse workforce and engaging the individuals hired as valued contributors to the team can help with retention and morale as well as **fostering creativity, productivity, and improved organizational performance**. As with many aspects of management, collecting and analyzing DEI data will be key to recruitment, staff development, succession planning, and adjusting to ongoing waves of retirements and the emerging impacts of automation.



Focusing on the Drivers of the Great Resignation

Employees are reevaluating their professional goals and when, how, and where they want to work. While this is certainly concerning for the public sector (**which was already facing recruitment and retention issues**), it's also an opportunity to focus on what gives public sector employers a competitive advantage and how they can respond to issues that came to the forefront during the pandemic (e.g., flexibility, remote work, childcare, paid family leave, and mental health).

MissionSquare Research Institute (formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC) promotes excellence in state and local government and other public service organizations so they can attract and retain talented employees. The organization identifies leading practices and conducts research on retirement plans, health and wellness benefits, workforce demographics and skill set needs, labor force development, and topics facing the not-for-profit industry and the education sector. MissionSquare Research Institute brings leaders together with respected researchers. For more information and to access research and publications, visit slge.org and follow on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

As always, MissionSquare Research Institute extends its gratitude to the effective and knowledgeable professionals who comprise the public service workforce. Their dedication to the public throughout the pandemic and into the recovery is deeply valued and appreciated.