



# DRIVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: RESULTS FROM A 2016 NATIONAL SURVEY



BY CPS HR CONSULTING



# ABOUT CPS HR CONSULTING

## CPS HR CONSULTING

CPS HR Consulting is a self-supporting public agency providing a full range of integrated HR solutions to government and nonprofit clients across the country. Our strategic approach to increasing the effectiveness of human resources results in improved organizational performance for our clients. We have a deep expertise and unmatched perspective in guiding our clients in the areas of organizational strategy, recruitment and selection, classification and compensation and training and development.

### About the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement

CPS HR Consulting understands that many public sector organizations seek tools and resources to help them understand and improve engagement of their employees. That's why CPS HR created the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement to support the public sector, share promising practices and spotlight successful government organizations. The Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement offers an online engagement survey, benchmarks, action planning and integrated solutions.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Decades of research have shown that employee engagement is linked to organizational performance, including in government. Engaged employees find their work meaningful and rewarding. As a result, they are more likely to deliver results for their organization, its leaders, co-workers and other stakeholders. In government, a high level of employee engagement can enable public sector organizations to achieve strategic goals, deliver responsive service to citizens, stimulate innovation and retain valued employees. Improving government performance in these ways can also help increase public confidence in and satisfaction with government.

To expand our knowledge of employee engagement in the U.S. workforce, the CPS HR Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement commissioned a national poll to assess the level of engagement in the public and private sectors. The 2016 poll was the first administration of this study, which we plan to repeat regularly. We designed the survey to collect statistically reliable and valid results on engagement levels in the public and private sectors.

We found that employee engagement is significantly higher among private sector firms than in government – 44 percent of private sector employees are fully engaged, compared to 38 percent of public sector employees. In government, we found wide variation by level. In local government, 44 percent of employees are fully engaged, which equals the private sector percentage and is significantly higher than the fully engaged levels of federal (34 percent) and state (29 percent) governments.

We also found a positive relationship between engagement and employee perceptions of organizational performance. Fully engaged public and private sector employees are significantly more likely (up to three times more likely, depending on sector) to believe their organizations are successful.

Moreover, our research also revealed a positive relationship between engagement and employee perceptions of their own well-being. Fully engaged employees across all sectors have significantly higher scores on overall life satisfaction and happiness. This matters because professional and personal lives often intertwine, and employees can perform better and are more likely to stay with the organization if they feel good about their lives.

Beyond understanding overall engagement levels, our goal was to reveal which workplace and organizational culture factors influence employee engagement. In other words, what are the “key drivers” of engagement?

We found that the top three workplace factors, in both the public and private sectors, are “leadership and managing change,” “training and development” and “my work.” By level of government, the only difference is in local government, where “my supervisor” is among the top three (replacing “my work”).

The top three organizational cultural factors, again across the public and private sectors, are “appreciation/recognition,” “innovation” and “fairness and inclusion.”

Our analysis of the employee scores for these key drivers revealed that the government scores are lower in the areas of leadership, training and development, supervision, feeling valued and innovation. These factors, therefore, are the areas with the highest potential to improve employee engagement in government.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

We believe it is important that individual government organizations survey their own employees to understand their workforces and the unique factors that can influence their employees' engagement levels. However, in the absence of their own data, our research suggests that government agencies consider the following recommendations.

## **Leaders should understand the business case and lead with engagement in mind.**

Our study provides additional evidence that government can improve performance and service delivery by improving employee engagement. Engaged employees are significantly more likely to believe that their agencies are successfully achieving their missions. Government leaders should therefore focus on improving engagement as a critical pillar of leadership.

## **Recognize that there is room for improvement, measure engagement – and then take action.**

Our national survey revealed that the level of fully engaged employees is relatively low in the public sector (38 percent). Engagement is particularly low in state government (only 29 percent). Therefore, there is considerable room for improvement in all levels of government. To leverage this opportunity, government organizations should regularly conduct engagement surveys and then act on the results.

## **Understand that employee well-being is important and that engagement is linked to well-being.**

In our poll, fully engaged employees reported a better feeling of their own well-being. Likewise, those who are not engaged feel less satisfied with life in general. Because work is an important part of many people's lives, government organizations should focus on engagement as a way to improve employee well-being.

## **Pay attention to the key drivers of engagement.**

Each government organization should survey its own employees and analyze the results to identify its own engagement drivers. However, it is also useful to understand the drivers overall. Government jurisdiction and agencies should pay attention to the following areas, each of which is not only a driver but also scored low in our study:

- Focus on leadership, including leadership development
- Manage change more effectively
- Invest in employee training and development
- Focus on the quality of supervision, particularly in local government
- Make sure employees feel valued
- Encourage risk-taking, sharing ideas and innovation

## **Continue to emphasize connection to mission.**

Achieving a high level of employee engagement does not only mean improving low-scoring factors. It also means focusing on the high-scoring areas. In our study, government employees scored significantly higher than private sector employees on the statement, "My organization's mission is important to me." Government must continue to emphasize this strong connection to mission.



# INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When public sector employees are engaged, they are more likely to perform well, thus enabling government to perform well.

These are difficult times for the public sector. Leaders in all levels of government are under pressure to perform well while also doing more with less. At the same time, confidence in government has declined, an alarming trend that can further erode morale among public servants.

One response to this challenge is to improve the engagement of government employees. When public sector employees are engaged, they are more likely to perform well, thus enabling government to perform well. As a result, the public will likely have greater confidence in and support for government.

But what, exactly, is employee engagement? The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board defines employee engagement as, “a heightened employee connection to work, the organization, the mission or co-workers. Engaged employees find personal meaning – and pride – in their work. They believe that their organizations value them and, in return, engaged employees are more likely to go above the minimum and expend ‘discretionary effort’ to deliver performance.”<sup>1</sup> We believe this definition is particularly helpful because it focuses on connections, including the emotional and behavioral connections that arise from being part of an organization that engages its employees.

Research and practice have shown that focusing on public sector employee engagement, using a data-driven and action-focused approach, can result in:

- Higher rates of success achieving strategic goals
- Better customer service
- More innovation
- Higher employee retention
- Better employee attendance
- Fewer equal opportunity complaints

<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Lavigna, *Engaging Government Employees* (New York: AMACOM, 2013), p. 3.



## THE CPS HR INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT NATIONAL POLL

The CPS HR Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement commissioned a national poll to assess the level of employee engagement in the public and private sectors of the American workforce. The 2016 poll was the first administration of this study, which we plan to conduct regularly. We designed our poll to collect statistically reliable results on engagement levels in the public and private sector workforces. Our goal is to offer insights on the levels and drivers of employee engagement across sectors.

The survey was conducted online from June 27 to July 19, 2016 and used quota sampling to match the U.S. population on key demographics. Overall, 1,946 respondents from across the United States in a wide variety of industries participated. We asked respondents to select, from a standard list, the best description of their organization's industry or occupational group (see Appendix A for these lists).

Our study is distinctive because we compared engagement levels between the public and private sectors as well as across levels of government (federal, state and local). Our sample excluded nonprofit employees, teachers and uniformed members of the military services. We believe these groups have different workplace experiences compared to other public servants employed in government agencies.

The total margin of error in our survey is generally no greater than  $\pm 2.6$  percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Our estimates for subgroups have margins of error no greater than  $\pm 5.9$  percentage points. See Appendix B for detailed descriptions of our survey methodology.

The engagement survey we administered to the national sample was constructed based on questions from five major public sector employee engagement surveys (See Appendix C for details).

Our study is distinctive because we compared engagement levels between public and private sectors as well as across levels of government.



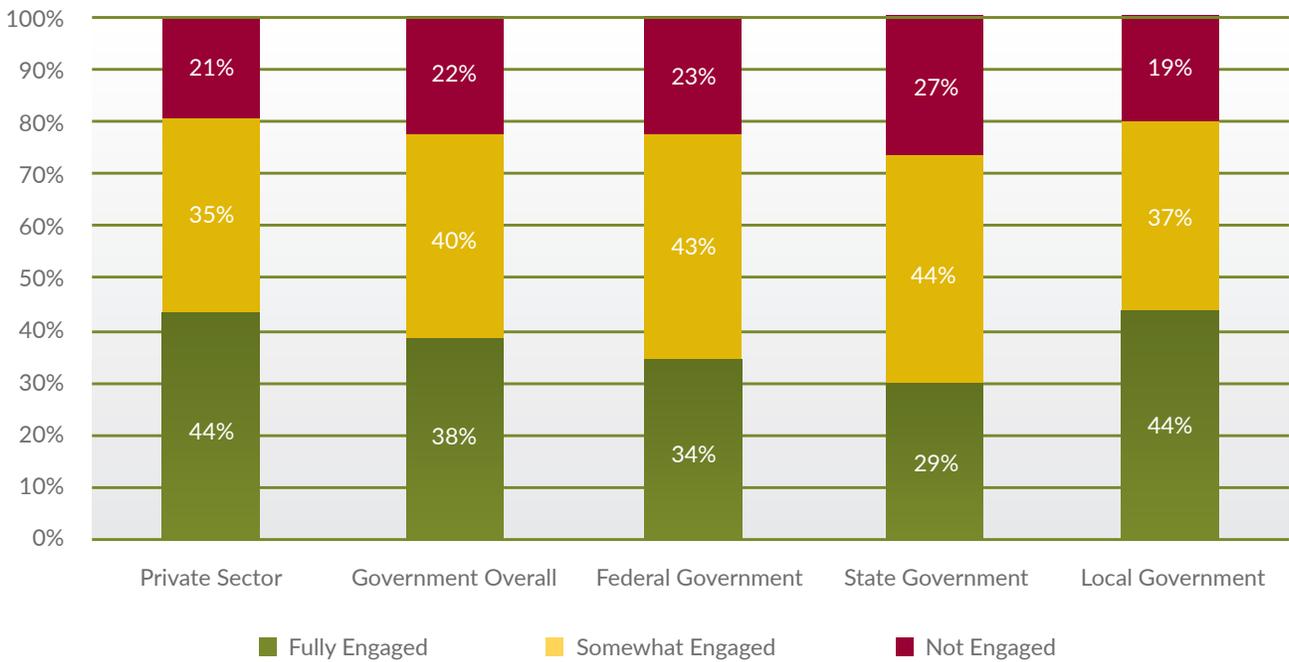
# POLL RESULTS

# LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Our survey revealed that employee engagement is significantly higher in the private sector than in government. As Figure 1 shows, 44 percent of private sector employees are fully engaged, compared to 38 percent of government employees overall.

In government, however, we found wide variation by level. In local government, 44 percent of employees are fully engaged, which equals the percentage of fully engaged private sector employees, and is significantly higher than engagement among employees in federal (34 percent) and state (29 percent) government. See Appendix D for how we calculated the engagement scores.

Figure 1.  
Levels of Engagement



# ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

A key difference between the government and the private sector is the challenge of measuring performance in government. While private sector firms typically measure their performance based on financial outcomes, most government organizations must rely on non-financial indicators. In this study, we asked survey respondents to report their level of agreement with the statement, “My organization is successful at accomplishing its mission.” We found no significant difference in the responses between private sector and government employees overall. Among private sector respondents, 81 percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 77 percent of government respondents.

Across levels of government, however, state government employees scored lower on this question: only 71 percent answered positively, compared to 79 percent of federal employees and 80 percent of local government employees who said their organizations are accomplishing the missions.

We also found a positive relationship between engagement and perceptions of organizational performance. As Figure 2 shows, fully engaged government and private sector employees are significantly more likely to believe that their organizations are successful, compared to their somewhat or not engaged colleagues. In other words, fully engaged employees are more likely (up to three times more likely, depending on sector) to believe their organizations are performing well.

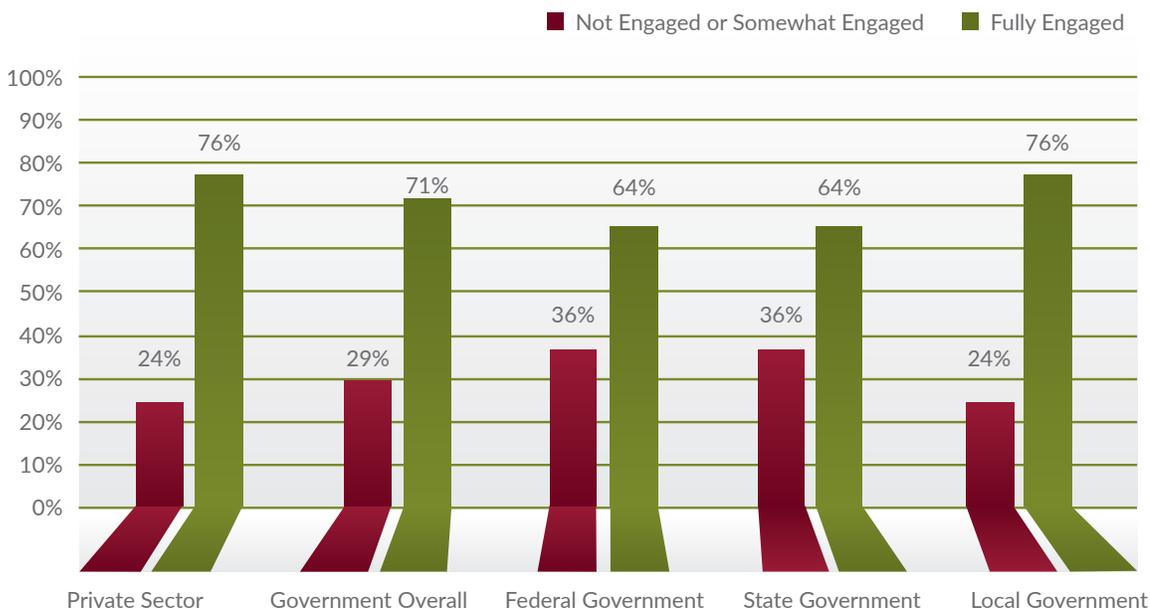


Figure 2.  
Engagement and  
Organizational  
Performance

My organization  
is successful at  
accomplishing  
its mission (%  
respondents who  
agree or strongly  
agree)

# ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING

We also found a positive relationship between engagement and employee perceptions of their well-being. As Figures 3 and 4 show, fully engaged respondents across all sectors have significantly higher scores on overall life satisfaction and happiness.

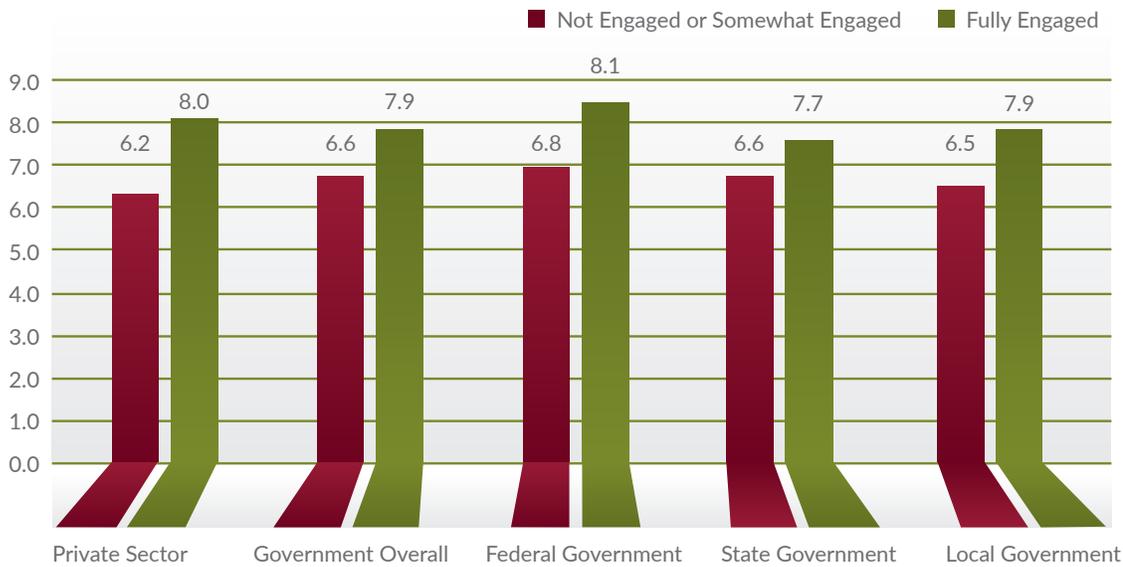
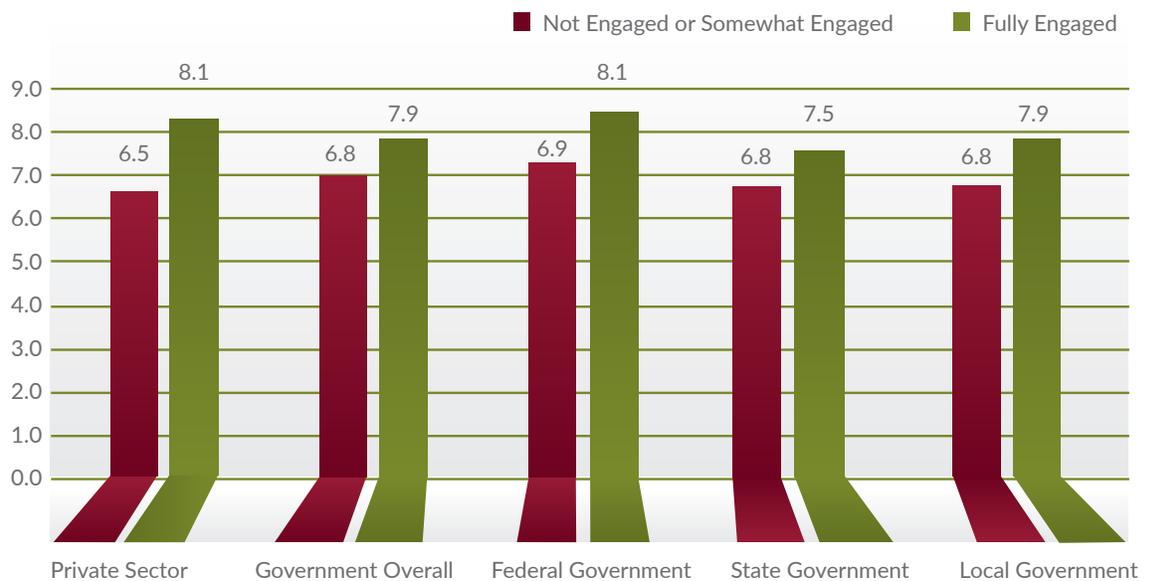


Figure 3. Engagement and Life Satisfaction (Mean Scores)

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (0 = "not at all satisfied" and 10 = "completely satisfied")

Figure 4. Engagement and Happiness (Mean Scores)

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? (0 = "not at all happy," 10 = "completely happy")





# DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

# WORKPLACE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FACTORS

In addition to understanding overall engagement levels, our goal was to understand which workplace factors influence engagement. In other words, what are the key drivers of engagement? We examined the eight different workplace factors, shown below, that previous research has found influence engagement levels. This model illustrates how organizations can influence these factors to optimize engagement.<sup>2</sup>



We also analyzed 12 cultural drivers of engagements. These are the larger forces in the organization that contribute to an overall sense of “what kind of organization this is.”

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the United Kingdom Civil Service People Survey

# WORKPLACE FACTOR SCORES

# 86%

The highest-scoring factor for government employees was the organization's mission.

Figure 5 shows the private versus public sector results for each workplace factor. As the figure shows, the highest-scoring factor for government employees was the organization's mission (86 percent). In contrast, the highest-scoring factors for private sector employees were team and resources/workload (both 82 percent).

Leadership and managing change scored lowest for government employees (55 percent), while pay and benefits scored lowest among private sector employees (64 percent). Other low-scoring factors, for both sectors, were training/development and supervision.

Mission and leadership/managing change were the only two factors with significant differences between the public and private sectors. Government employees showed significantly higher agreement (by five percentage points) with the mission statements, while private sector employees showed significantly higher agreement (by 10 percentage points) with the leadership and managing change statements. Although the high score for mission is relatively good news for government, the low score for leadership and managing change is not good news.

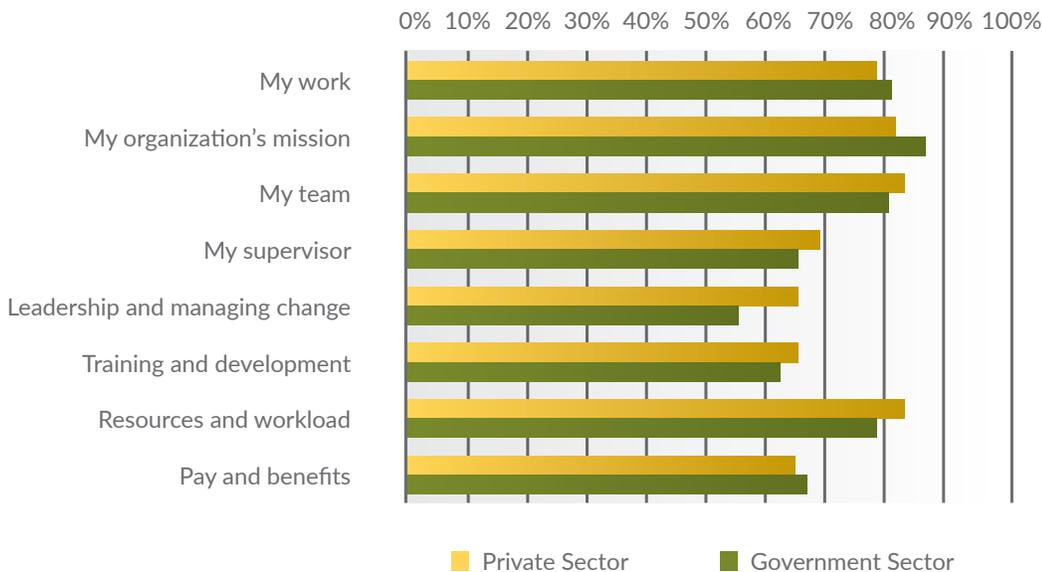


Figure 5.

Workplace Factors:  
Overall Scores

This concern applies particularly to federal and state government. Table 1 on the next page shows the results of the specific statements in the leadership and managing change category. As the table shows, government as a whole, as well as all three levels individually, scored lower than the private sector on all leadership and managing change statements. Specifically, only 36 percent of federal government respondents agreed with the statement, "When changes are made in my organization, they are usually for the better." In state government, only 39 percent agreed.

While local government employees are significantly more likely than federal or state employees to agree that changes are for the better (52 percent), this is still significantly below the private sector results (61 percent). Likewise, on the statement, "I feel that change is managed well in my organization," the results for government employees are low and significantly lower than private sector employees.

# WORKPLACE FACTOR SCORES (CONT.)

Table 1.  
Leadership and Managing Change Questions  
Percentage of Positive Responses

	Private Sector	Government Overall	Federal Government	State Government	Local Government
When changes are made in my organization, they are usually for the better.	61%	45%	36%	39%	52%
I feel that change is managed well in my organization.	62%	47%	41%	42%	53%
I feel that my organization as a whole is managed well.	67%	57%	48%	54%	61%
My organization keeps me informed about matters that affect me.	65%	58%	53%	53%	63%
I believe the actions of senior leaders are consistent with my organization's values.	68%	61%	59%	58%	64%
Senior leaders in my organization are sufficiently visible (e.g., can be seen in action).	66%	59%	52%	57%	63%

On the other hand, as Table 2 shows, government employees at all levels agreed strongly with the statements pertaining to mission. Moreover, government employees were significantly more likely to agree that “my organization’s mission is important to me” than private sector employees.

Table 2.  
Mission Questions  
Percentage of Positive Responses

	Private Sector	Government Overall	Federal Government	State Government	Local Government
I have a clear understanding of my organization's mission.	87%	88%	89%	87%	89%
I know how my work supports my organization's mission.	83%	87%	89%	85%	88%
My organization's mission is important to me.	72%	81%	83%	80%	82%

# WORKPLACE DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

Our analysis also identified the factors most important in determining an employee’s level of engagement. Table 3 summarizes the relative importance (weights shown as numbers and strength bars) and scores for each factor by sector. The factors with highest relative importance and lowest scores (shaded in red) have the greatest potential to improve engagement.

**Table 3.**  
Workplace Factors  
Relative Importance and Score

	Private Sector	Government Overall	Federal Government	State Government	Local Government
My work	12.9 78%	13.8 80%	15.5 78%	14.7 77%	12.6 83%
My organization’s mission	10.8 81%	9.8 86%	9.9 87%	10.2 84%	9.5 86%
My team	10.4 82%	11.6 80%	10.5 76%	10.9 78%	12.5 83%
My supervisor	12.6 69%	12.3 65%	9.2 63%	10.6 63%	14.4 68%
Leadership and managing change	18.0 65%	17.8 55%	16.5 48%	19.7 50%	17.2 59%
Training and development	13.7 65%	14.7 62%	15.1 58%	15.2 58%	14.1 66%
Resources and workload	10.9 82%	10.2 78%	11.6 74%	11.0 76%	9.4 82%
Pay and benefits	10.7 64%	9.8 66%	11.7 76%	7.6 60%	10.4 66%

Importance

Scores

Note: “Importance” scores are on a scale of 0–100; totals equal 100 (except for rounding) in each category

As Table 3 shows, leadership and managing change is the top driver of engagement in both the public and private sectors, as well as across all three levels of government. However, in government overall and in all three levels of government, the leadership and managing change scores are the lowest among all workplace factors and are significantly lower than the private sector score. Therefore, this category offers the greatest potential to improve engagement in government.

Our driver analysis also shows that training and development is a key driver in both the public and private sectors. In government, this is the next-lowest-scoring category (after leadership). Paying attention to this factor also offers great potential to improve engagement.

Finally, in local government, supervision is the second-most important driver of engagement (next to leadership) but is one of the lowest-scoring factors. Local governments, therefore, can improve engagement by focusing on the quality of supervision.

# ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the workplace factors, we examined the impact of organizational culture on engagement. Using a set of 12 questions, we sought to determine which aspects of culture, such as trust, fairness and inclusion and appreciation, have the greatest influence on employee engagement.

As Table 4 shows, the top culture driver for both private and public sector employees is reflected in the statement, “I feel valued for the work I do.” However, as Table 4 shows, the overall government score for this statement is significantly lower than the private sector score: 67 percent of government respondents overall agreed, compared to 72 percent of private sector respondents. By level of government, federal employees had the lowest level of agreement (63 percent), followed by state (66 percent) and local government (69 percent) employees.

The second-most important culture driver of engagement in both the private and public sectors (see Table 4) is reflected in the statement, “I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.” Again, despite the relative importance of this factor across sectors, we found significant differences in scores. Only 64 percent of government respondents overall agree with this statement, compared with 70 percent of private sector respondents. Federal government respondents have the lowest level of agreement (58 percent), followed by state (60 percent) and local (68 percent) government respondents.

**Table 4.**  
Organizational Culture Factors  
Relative Importance and Score

	Private Sector	Government Overall	Federal Government	State Government	Local Government
I am trusted to carry out my job effectively.	5.1 93%	8.2 92%	7.8 90%	7.8 91%	6.9 93%
My opinions count at work.	7.9 72%	7.1 69%	7.5 62%	7.7 67%	7.1 73%
I think it is safe to challenge the way things are done in my organization.	6.9 66%	6.9 59%	7.2 54%	7.0 56%	5.9 63%
I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear.	5.0 71%	7.0 69%	11.0 64%	6.5 69%	7.1 71%
I am treated fairly at work.	9.8 80%	9.3 76%	5.8 74%	11.3 71%	9.4 79%
I think that my organization respects individual differences.	7.5 80%	8.3 78%	8.2 78%	8.1 75%	7.8 79%
My organization has policies, programs and practices that support a diverse workplace.	7.1 76%	5.9 80%	5.0 83%	8.5 80%	6.1 79%
I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.	10.6 70%	10.7 64%	9.1 58%	9.0 60%	10.2 68%
I believe I would be supported if I try a new idea, even if it may not work.	8.5 68%	7.4 64%	7.0 57%	6.8 61%	8.2 68%
I feel valued for the work I do.	13.9 72%	11.9 67%	10.9 63%	13.4 66%	11.5 69%
I have some really good friendships at work.	7.5 75%	8.4 74%	11.1 67%	5.4 74%	9.7 76%
My workplace culture supports people to achieve a good work life balance.	10.2 74%	8.9 71%	9.3 69%	8.4 70%	10.1 72%

 Importance

 Scores

Note: “Importance” scores are on a scale of 0–100; totals equal 100 (except for rounding) in each category



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Leaders should understand the business case and lead with engagement in mind.

Research has shown that improving employee engagement can improve organizational performance. While much of this research has focused on financial performance in the private sector, engagement also drives outcomes that matter in government, including achieving strategic goals, delivering responsive customer service, improving productivity, fostering innovation and retaining valued employees.

Our results show that fully engaged employees are significantly more likely to believe that their agencies or jurisdictions are successfully achieving their missions.

This finding builds on previous research by providing additional support for the link in government between improving engagement and improving government performance and service delivery. Improved performance can also help boost citizen confidence in and satisfaction with government.

Given this additional evidence, public sector leaders in all levels of government should focus, through both policy and practice, on measuring and improving employee engagement.

## Recognize that there is room for improvement, measure engagement and take action.

Our national survey revealed that the level of engagement is relatively low in both the public and private sectors (38 and 44 percent, respectively). The gap between what engagement is and what it could be shows that there is considerable room for improvement in both sectors and at all levels of government.

While it is useful to understand our national engagement benchmarks, including by level of government, individual jurisdictions and agencies must take the temperatures of their own workforces.

This is particularly true for state government, where engagement is significantly lower than in federal and local government. Yet our other research shows that only eight states have conducted statewide employee engagement surveys in the past five years. Clearly, state governments, which employ millions of employees and are responsible for delivering critical public services, need to make the commitment to focus on improving engagement.

At all levels of government, a first step is understanding what the current level of engagement is, ideally by surveying all employees. With this baseline information, public sector organizations can then determine what actions to take to improve engagement. They should also regularly measure engagement to determine if the needle of engagement is moving in the right direction and whether improved engagement is driving improved organizational outcomes and results.

Federal government agencies have a head start because they receive agency-specific results from the annual government-wide Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. State and local governments do not have this tool and must therefore conduct their own surveys.

## Understand that employee well-being is important and that engagement is linked to well-being.

Our research shows that fully engaged employees also report a higher sense of their own well-being. This matters because employees can perform better and are more likely to stay with the organization if they feel good about their lives. While no organization can ensure well-being in all aspects of an employee's life, employers can improve engagement as a way to boost employee well-being.

# RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

## Pay attention to the key drivers of engagement.

We believe that each government agency or jurisdiction should survey its employees and analyze the results to identify its own engagement drivers. However, it is also useful to understand what our research reveals about drivers of engagement and how government organizations can use this information.

**Focus on leadership, including leadership development.** Among the eight workplace factors we analyzed, leadership and managing change was the lowest-scoring category in government, yet was also the most important driver of engagement. Moreover, the public sector score in this category was significantly lower than the private sector score. However, there is potentially good news for government here – the enormous potential to improve engagement and therefore performance by focusing on leadership. To do this successfully, government should adopt approaches such as developing leadership competencies, including the ability to build and sustain high-engagement organizations, and then holding leaders accountable for mastering these competencies. Government agencies can also select and onboard leaders better, adopt succession-planning strategies, offer executive coaching, communicate more effectively about important organizational changes, give employees more opportunities to voice their opinions and make long-term investments in leadership training and development.

**Manage change more effectively.** Government agencies also need to focus on the other half of this low-scoring leadership and managing change category by understanding and managing change more effectively. This includes communicating the reasons for change and the process to implement it. If employees understand the reasons for major changes (even if they do not always agree with them), they will be more likely to have confidence in their leaders' decisions to implement those changes and be more willing to adopt the changes.

**Invest in training and development.** This was also a high-impact but low-scoring workplace factor in government. Public sector employees want to perform well but need the knowledge and tools to excel. Investing in the government workforce by providing training and development opportunities can help public servants deliver consistently high-quality and responsive service.

**Focus on the quality of supervision, particularly in local government.** This is a high-impact but low-scoring category in local government. Other research has shown that when supervisors are engaged, front-line employees are also much more likely to be engaged. Government agencies should base their selection of supervisors not on the candidates' performance as individual contributors or their tenures but on their potential to be effective leaders. Then, agencies need to support the development of supervisors and hold them accountable for being effective leaders, including their success at creating and maintaining high-engagement work units.

**Make employees feel valued.** The top culture driver in both the public and private sectors is reflected in the question, "I feel valued for the work I do." This was also one of the lowest-scoring culture questions across all government levels. Unlike in the private sector, where companies can communicate employee value through financial rewards, the public sector has limited ability to reward performance financially. Therefore, government agencies and jurisdictions must find other ways to recognize employee contributions. Sometimes this simply means telling employees in authentic and specific ways that their contributions are important and valued.

**Encourage smart risk-taking and innovation.** The second most important cultural driver is reflected in the statement, "I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things." The government score for this driver was significantly lower than the private sector score. This suggests that leaders in government need to create environments that encourage and enable public servants to innovate and take risks. Although this can be difficult, given the extreme visibility of government decisions and actions, leaders must encourage and create a safe space for employees to suggest better ways to do business.

## Continue to emphasize connection to mission.

Achieving a high level of employee engagement does not only mean improving low-scoring factors. It also means focusing on the high-scoring areas, such as connection to the organization's mission. In our study, government employees scored significantly higher than private sector employees on the statement, "My organization's mission is important to me." Government agencies and jurisdictions must continue to emphasize this connection. This means enabling employees to see, as clearly as possible, the link between the work they do and their organizations' missions. Consider this anecdote from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in which a journalist asked a NASA custodian what his job was, and the custodian reportedly replied, "I help send men to the moon." Imagine if all public sector employees felt this kind of connection to their organizations' missions.



# APPENDICES AND TERMS OF USE



# APPENDIX A

## INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Sector	Top Industries
Private/For-Profit Sector	Retail/customer service, healthcare/medical, manufacturing, financial services, information technology, hospitality/food, construction, engineering, transportation, legal services, facilities management/real estate, arts/entertainment
<b>Government</b>	
Federal Government	Healthcare/medical/public health, U.S. Postal Service, engineering, finance/procurement, public administration/human resources, transportation, national security/international affairs, information technology, agriculture/forestry, community/social services, courts/judiciary
State Government	Public administration/human resources, healthcare/medical/public health, community/social services, courts/judiciary, transportation, corrections, police, regulations/licensing/inspection, information technology, finance/procurement, conservation, public works
Local Government	Police, community/social services, public administration/human resources, libraries, public works, courts/judiciary, healthcare/medical/public health, corrections, fire protection, transportation, utilities

# APPENDIX B

## METHODOLOGY

### Sampling

To qualify for this survey, we required respondents to be currently employed by an organization and residing in the United States. We used quota sampling to select respondents to match the population on key demographics: sector (public or private), level of government (federal, state or local), gender (female or male), age (under 45 or 45 and over) and level of education (college degree or no college degree).

Public sector workers included those employed by the U.S. federal government, any state government or any local government (e.g., city, county or special district). We excluded from the sample educators (K-12, college/university), nonprofit employees and uniformed members of the military services. Private sector employees were employed by companies in a wide variety of industries. Our panel provider sampled respondents and managed the pool so that the preselected demographics of the population matched our sample.

### Weighting

We weighted our sample so that it matched the gender, age and educational level characteristics of the entire U.S. public and private sector workforces, including by levels of government. No respondent's answers were changed by the weighting process. Instead, a weight was calculated for each individual respondent on the basis of their demographic characteristics and was then applied during analysis so that the results reflect the population. We used model-based post-stratification to weight our estimates and adjust for the typical imbalances in non-representative data. We calculated weights for each respondent so that the total weighted distribution matched the target population. We matched weights on the key demographics identified above.

We used a study by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) – “Selected Characteristics of Private and Public Sector Workers” – for the estimates. Our post-stratification weighting helped to ensure that results of the CPS HR study generally represent the population per the CRS estimates. Weighted data are used in this report unless otherwise noted.

### Margin of Error

Group	Margin of Error
Private Sector	±4.2
Government Sector Overall	±3.4
Federal Government	±5.7
State Government	±5.9
Local Government	±5.3

All survey research contains errors of various types. The margin of error, the statistic conveying the amount of error in a survey, can be calculated in a variety of ways. The margin of error reported for this survey was computed using the classical simple random sample formula with an adjustment for the estimated design effect. The overall design effect for a survey was approximated as 1 plus the squared coefficient of variation of the weights. For this survey, the margin of error (half-width of the 95 percent confidence interval), incorporating the design effect for full-sample estimates at 50 percent, was  $\pm 2.6$  percentage points. Estimates based on groups have larger margins of error.

The margin of error assumes that the weighted estimates are approximately unbiased. This assumption is based on our assertion that any differences between the survey sample and the target population on key survey outcomes are corrected by weighting on the demographics listed in the sampling description. That assertion is based on a benchmarking analysis with the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and in Appendix C.

### Significance Testing

We used z-tests and t-tests at the 95 percent confidence level to determine whether a difference between two scores or response percentages was statistically significant. We adjusted for the design effect due to weighting. Asterisks denote any statistically significant differences.

# APPENDIX B

## METHODOLOGY (CONT.)

### Key Driver Analysis

We used multiple regression (the relative importance analysis method<sup>3</sup>) to determine the relationship between engagement and workplace factor scores and statements. The rescaled relative weights we reported reveal the strength between engagement and the factor. All weights were statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

### Accuracy of the Estimates

The accuracy of this study's estimate of the U.S. public and private sector workforce rests on the assumption that respondents to the survey reflected the entire population and provided honest answers. We compared the raw, unadjusted estimates of federal employees from our online survey to estimates obtained from the FEVS, a representative sample of the federal workforce conducted from May to June 2016, approximately at the same time as our survey (June-July 2016). The median absolute difference between the percentages of positive responses for 23 comparable statements is 4.5 percentage points. With our weighting applied, this difference drops to only 3.3 percentage points. This comparison is evidence that our results are reasonably accurate and that our statistical adjustments improved the accuracy of the estimates slightly.

<sup>3</sup> Tonidandel, S. & LeBreton, J. M. (2014). RWA-Web -- A free, comprehensive, web-based, and user-friendly tool for relative weight analysis. *Journal of Business and Psychology*. <http://relativeimportance.davidson.edu/>

# APPENDIX C

## 2016 SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CATEGORIES

Our survey questions are based on questions in five major public sector employee surveys: the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's FEVS, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Merit Principles Survey, the U.K. Civil Service People Survey, the Canada Public Service Employee Survey (CPES) and the Australia State of the Service Survey.

For more than a decade, several countries have used employee surveys to understand and improve government workforces. There is abundant evidence that these surveys include questions that are helpful in diagnosing issues to improve government agencies. At CPS HR, our goal was to create a new survey based on these five major surveys in order to build on the best the public sector had to offer. Our purpose was to provide a comprehensive employee engagement survey broadly applicable to any government agency. We also aimed to provide a wide variety of benchmarks based on the publicly available datasets and other sources.

We combined questions from all five surveys into a database for a total of 758 questions. We then eliminated questions if they were too specific to the government's own survey (e.g., those about the civil service code in the U.K.'s survey) or were otherwise not applicable to a broad population of government workers. We also eliminated questions if they were "double-barreled" (i.e., dealing with more than one issue) or lacked clear meaning. In addition, we eliminated several questions with results that skewed very positively with little variation among organizations. Extreme positive results suggest a social desirability bias (i.e., a tendency to respond positively because others will view it favorably).

We categorized and coded by major themes and subthemes. Next, we identified similar questions across the five surveys. Wording for matching questions was close if not exact in many cases. We also matched questions by theme and, in some cases, we deemed them comparable even when slightly different words were used (e.g., in Canada: "I get the training I need to do my job"; in the U.K.: "I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to").

Then, we examined the groups of overlapping and selected the best ones, judging them for clarity, ability to provide actionable information and broad applicability. We eliminated satisfaction questions at this stage; however, they were maintained for benchmarking (e.g., the selected question, "I feel valued for the work I do" is considered comparable to the FEVS question, "How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?").

In some cases, we made slight wording changes to improve clarity or broad applicability. When possible, we based these wording changes on phrases from other matched questions [e.g., "My (organization) has policies, programs and practices that support a diverse workplace" was derived from the FEVS statement, "Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (for example, recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diversity issues, mentoring)" and the CPES statement, "My (organization) implements activities and practices that support a diverse workplace"].

In the end, we selected 71 questions to represent engagement drivers (workplace or organizational culture factors) and 11 to measure engagement and other outcomes. Of the 83 total questions (see on the next page), 52 (62 percent) appear in more than one survey.

# APPENDIX C

## 2016 SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CATEGORIES (CONT.)

#	Category	Question
1	My Work	I like the kind of work I do.
2	My Work	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.
3	My Work	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work.
4	My Work	I have opportunities to provide input on decisions that affect my work.
5	My Work	I am sufficiently challenged by my work.
6	My Work	I know what is expected of me on the job.
7	My Work	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
8	My Work	The work I do is important.
9	My Work	The work I do is meaningful to me.
10	My Organization's Mission	I have a clear understanding of my organization's mission.
11	My Organization's Mission	My organization's mission is important to me.
12	My Organization's Mission	I know how my work supports my organization's mission.
13	My Organization's Mission	My organization is successful at accomplishing its mission.*
14	My Team	I am treated with respect by the people I work with.
15	My Team	The people I work with cooperate to get the job done.
16	My Team	The people in my team share information with each other.
17	My Team	The people in my team work together to find ways to improve.
18	My Team	The people in my team can be relied upon to help when things get difficult in my job.
19	My Team	The people in my team are accepting of people of different backgrounds.
20	My Team	The people in my team have the skills necessary to accomplish our goals.
21	My Team	In my team, I believe we hire people who can do the job.
22	My Team	Overall, my team's work is high quality.*
23	My Supervisor	My supervisor keeps me informed about the issues affecting my work.
24	My Supervisor	My supervisor helps me to understand how I contribute to my organization's mission.
25	My Supervisor	My supervisor motivates me to be more effective in my job.
26	My Supervisor	My supervisor provides constructive feedback on my job performance.
27	My Supervisor	I receive regular feedback on my performance.
28	My Supervisor	The feedback I receive helps me to improve my performance.
29	My Supervisor	I think that my performance is evaluated fairly.
30	My Supervisor	My supervisor recognizes when I have done my job well.
31	My Supervisor	My supervisor works effectively with people of different backgrounds.
32	My Supervisor	My supervisor treats people with respect.
33	My Supervisor	My supervisor responds constructively to workplace conflicts.
34	My Supervisor	My supervisor addresses poor performance effectively.
35	My Supervisor	In my team, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.
36	My Supervisor	My supervisor has good technical skills.
37	My Supervisor	My supervisor has good management skills.
38	My Supervisor	My supervisor listens to what I have to say.
39	My Supervisor	My supervisor is open to my ideas.
40	My Supervisor	My supervisor is considerate of my life outside work.
41	My Supervisor	Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by my supervisor.*
42	Leadership and Managing Change	Senior leaders in my organization are sufficiently visible (e.g., can be seen in action).
43	Leadership and Managing Change	I believe the actions of senior leaders are consistent with my organization's values.
44	Leadership and Managing Change	I feel that my organization as a whole is managed well.

\* Outcome or other type of question - not included in the category score

# APPENDIX C

## 2016 SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CATEGORIES (CONT.)

#	Category	Question
45	Leadership and Managing Change	My organization keeps me informed about matters that affect me.
46	Leadership and Managing Change	When changes are made in my organization they are usually for the better.
47	Leadership and Managing Change	I feel that change is managed well in my organization.
48	Leadership and Managing Change	Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by my organization's senior leaders.*
49	Leadership and Managing Change	I believe that senior leaders in my organization will take action on the results from this survey.*
50	Training and Development	I get the training I need to do my job well.
51	Training and Development	I get the information I need to do my job well.
52	Training and Development	I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.
53	Training and Development	Training and development activities I have completed in the past 12 months have helped to improve my performance.
54	Training and Development	Training and development activities I have completed while working for my organization are helping me to develop in my career.
55	Training and Development	There are opportunities for me to develop my career in my organization.
56	Resources and Workload	I have clear work objectives.
57	Resources and Workload	I have the resources I need to do my job well.
58	Resources and Workload	I have the tools I need to do my job well.
59	Resources and Workload	My workload is reasonable.
60	Resources and Workload	I achieve a good balance between my work life and my private life.
61	Pay and Benefits	I am paid fairly for the work that I do.
62	Pay and Benefits	Compared to people doing a similar job in other organizations, I feel my pay is reasonable.
63	Pay and Benefits	I feel that my pay adequately reflects my performance.
64	Pay and Benefits	I am satisfied with my total benefits package (e.g., retirement, health insurance).
65	Pay and Benefits	I am satisfied with my employment conditions (e.g. vacation/leave options, flexible work arrangements).
66	Organizational Culture	I am trusted to carry out my job effectively.
67	Organizational Culture	My opinions count at work.
68	Organizational Culture	I think it is safe to challenge the way things are done in my organization.
69	Organizational Culture	I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear.
70	Organizational Culture	I am treated fairly at work.
71	Organizational Culture	I think that my organization respects individual differences (e.g., cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas).
72	Organizational Culture	My organization has policies, programs and practices that support a diverse workplace.
73	Organizational Culture	I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.
74	Organizational Culture	I believe I would be supported if I try a new idea, even if it may not work.
75	Organizational Culture	I feel valued for the work I do.
76	Organizational Culture	I have some really good friendships at work.
77	Organizational Culture	My workplace culture supports people to achieve a good work/life balance.
78	Engagement	I recommend my organization as a good place to work.
79	Engagement	I am proud when I tell others I am part of my organization.
80	Engagement	I feel a strong personal attachment to my organization.
81	Engagement	I feel comfortable being myself at work.
82	Engagement	My organization inspires me to do the best in my job.
83	Engagement	My organization motivates me to help achieve its mission.

\* Outcome or other type of question – not included in the category score

# APPENDIX D

## HOW WE CALCULATED SCORES

### How we calculated engagement scores

We asked survey respondents to rate their level of agreement with each survey question using this scale:  
1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly agree.

Example:

Q1 = "I recommend my organization as a good place to work" - Strongly agree (5)

Q2 = "I am proud when I tell others I am part of my organization" - Agree (4)

Q3 = "I feel a strong personal attachment to my organization" - Agree (4)

Q4 = "My organization inspires me to do the best in my job" - Agree (4)

Q5 = "I feel comfortable being myself at work" - Neither agree or disagree (3)

Q6 = "My organization motivates me to help achieve its mission" - Strongly agree (5)

$(5 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 5) / 6 = \text{average score} = 4.2 = \text{"Fully Engaged"}$

The percentages of fully engaged, somewhat engaged and not engaged were based on each individual respondent's average score.

If the respondent's mean score was 4 or above, we defined that as "fully engaged."

If the respondent's mean score was between 3 and 4, we defined that as "somewhat engaged."

If the respondent's mean score was 3 or below, we categorized that as "not engaged."

The percentage "fully engaged" is therefore the percentage of respondents with an average score of 4 or above.

### How we calculated workplace category scores

We asked each respondent to rate their level of agreement with each survey question on this scale:

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly agree.

We averaged the percentage of positive responses ("agree" or "strongly agree") to calculate the category score.

Example (Pay and Benefits category):

Q1 = "I am paid fairly for the work that I do" - 66 percent positive

Q2 = "Compared to people doing a similar job in other organizations, I feel my pay is reasonable" - 63 percent

Q3 = "I feel that my pay adequately reflects my performance" - 58 percent

Q4 = "I am satisfied with my total benefits package (e.g., retirement, health insurance)" - 61 percent

Q5 = "I am satisfied with my employment conditions (e.g., vacation/leave options, flexible work arrangements)" - 72 percent

$(66 + 63 + 58 + 61 + 72) / 5 = \text{Overall Pay and Benefits Score} = 64$

### How we calculated organizational culture scores

Respondents rated their level of agreement with each survey question on this scale:

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly agree.

We calculated the score based on the percentage of respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree."

# EXPERTS BEHIND THE INSTITUTE



## Robert J. Lavigna

Bob Lavigna is an award-winning public sector leader and innovator. He is currently the Director of the CPS HR Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement™. The Institute is dedicated to helping public sector and nonprofit organizations measure and improve employee engagement. His first book, *Engaging Government Employees: Motivate and Inspire Your People to Achieve Superior Performance*, was published by the American Management Association and is now in its second printing.

Before joining CPS HR, Bob was Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of HR for the University of Wisconsin, a university ranked among the world's top 25 research institutions.

Bob's previous positions include Vice President-Research for the Partnership for Public Service, Senior Manager of Consulting for CPS HR Services, and Director of the Wisconsin civil service system. He began his career with the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Bob is an elected Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, was selected as a "Public Official of the Year" by *Governing* magazine, and received the highest individual achievement awards from the International Public Management Association for HR (IPMA-HR) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE). He was also the first HR executive to be awarded a fellowship from the Council of State Governments. In addition, the organizations Bob has led have received innovation awards from the Ford Foundation, IPMA-HR, NASPE, Society for Human Resource Management and others.

Bob is a past national president of IPMA-HR and past national chair of the American Society for Public Administration Section on Personnel and Labor Relations.

He has a B.A. in Public Affairs from George Washington University and an M.S. in HR from Cornell University.



## Janelle Callahan

Janelle Callahan is a Principal Consultant with the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement. She has more than 12 years of experience in providing research insights for public sector leaders. Her areas of expertise include survey methodology, quantitative and qualitative analysis and employee engagement. Before joining CPS HR, Janelle was with the Partnership for Public Service, where she managed research for the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government. She has also held research positions with the newspaper *Education Week* and the nonprofit Institute for Learning Innovation.

Janelle earned her M.A. in Human Services Psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and her undergraduate degree in psychology from Denison University.



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