

# Attracting and Retaining Talent In Alabama's Public Sector

"Working for a Better Alabama"



**Certified Public Manager Program**

**CPM Solutions Alabama 2018**



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# Attracting and Retaining Talent in Alabama's Public Sector

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## Acknowledgements

The Attracting and Retaining Talent in Alabama's Public Sector project team members would like to thank the following people and organizations for providing their assistance and support throughout this project.

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## Introduction

The CPM Solutions Attracting and Retaining Talent in Alabama's Public Sector Team was tasked with the following:

- Research and investigate how demographic changes are reshaping Alabama's public sector organizations ability to effectively recruit and retain talent.
- Explore the perception of public sector careers among today's labor pool of graduating college students, young professionals, and the current multi-generational workforce.
- Identify the recruitment and retention strategies that are working well in Alabama's public sector.
- Recommend strategies to recruit and retain the best talent for Alabama's government agencies.

We will recommend strategies for Alabama's public sector to attract and retain the workforce required to deliver public services for the future by examining Alabama's talent management practices and researching the best practices from surrounding states.

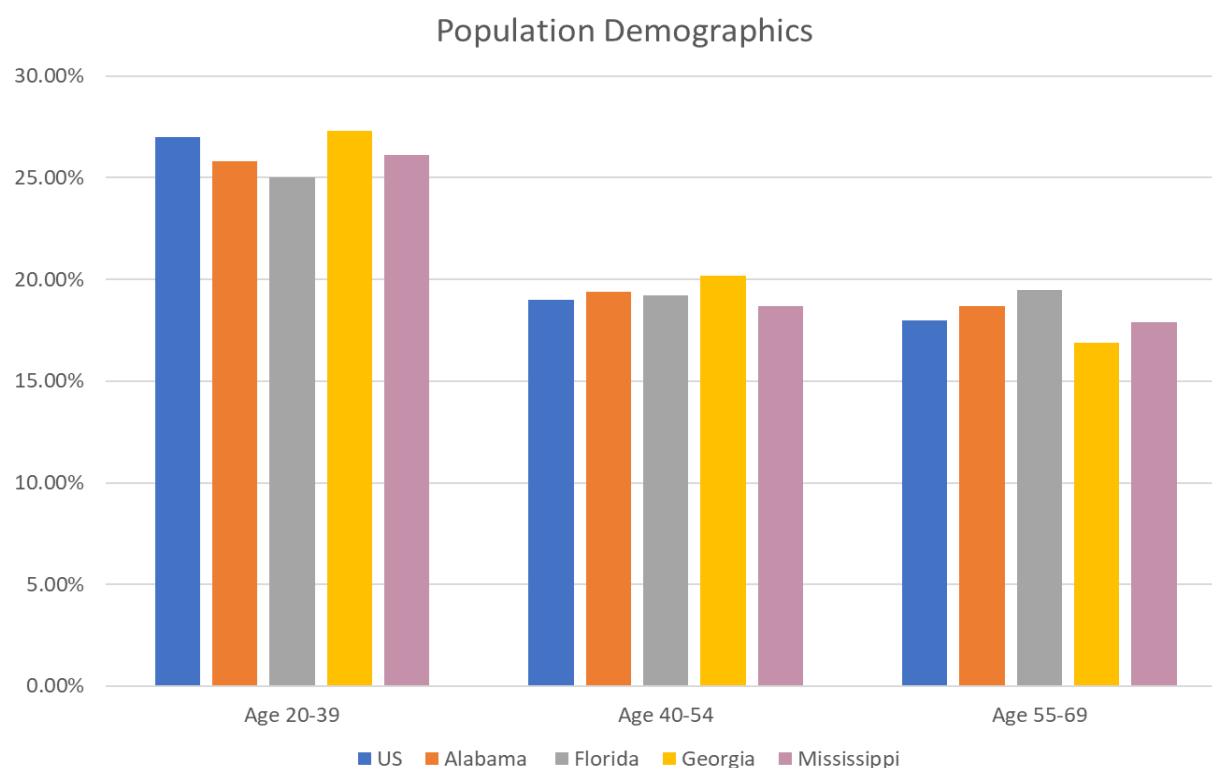
According to the US Bureau of Statistics, Alabama will lose up to 10% of its workforce within six years. Will the Alabama workforce be prepared for the loss of so many of its workers? One of the most profound changes is the aging workforce. According to the Census, more than 20% of the workforce will be over the age of 65 by 2030. Many authors are warning of the coming "Silver Tsunami" or the "Gray Tsunami". These metaphors express employer concerns as the baby boomer generation is retiring in large numbers. Consider the following recruitment and retention factors:

1. While in a recession, filling jobs in the public sector was not difficult. The unstable economy also meant that a large group of older workers ready for retirement did not step down.<sup>1</sup>
2. The unemployment rate dropped to a record low of 3.5 % in November 2017. <sup>2</sup> With a low rate of unemployment, the applicant pool of qualified candidates is more competitive. The Alabama Public Sector has to compete with Federal and Local Governments as well as the private sector from the same personnel pool.
3. Many of the people retiring are in management and supervisory positions with a wealth of experience. When looking at recruitment and retention, it is important that we attract the most competent people who can advance and fill vacant positions.

## Demographics-U.S., AL, FL, GA, MS

### Population Demographics

The 2014 United States Census projects the U.S. population will increase from 319 million to 417 million by the year 2060. The Census Bureau also projects that 20% of the U.S. population will be foreign born according to the 2014 National Projections.<sup>3</sup> The Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey estimates the U.S. population at 323,127,515. The demographics by age group will allow a better understanding of the workforce age. The age composition of the population will be grouped according to the closest generational ages that the data allows. The age ranges will be as follows: 20 to 39, 40 to 54 and 55 to 69 years of age.



Pew Research Center defined Millennials as individuals from the ages 20 to 35, Generation X ages 36 to 51, Baby Boomers ages 52 to 70. Using the Census Bureau Data, the age groups for this paper are broken down into the searchable age groups of 20 to 39, 40 to 54 and 55 to 69. With the varying age differences, the latter Census Bureau age groups were used for comparison.

We analyzed the age demographics with bordering states to determine if the U.S. trend is similar in the southeast. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau was used to compare Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi demographics for the same age groups.

### Alabama

- The Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey estimates Alabama's population at 4,863,300.
- The age group percentages for Alabama are like the U.S. population.

### Florida

- The Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey estimates Florida's population at 20,612,439.
- Population demographics are like the U.S. population and Alabama's demographics.

### Georgia

- The Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey estimates Georgia's population at 10,310,371.
- Georgia's population percentages are like the U.S. population percentages.
- Georgia's younger generation is slightly higher than the national average.

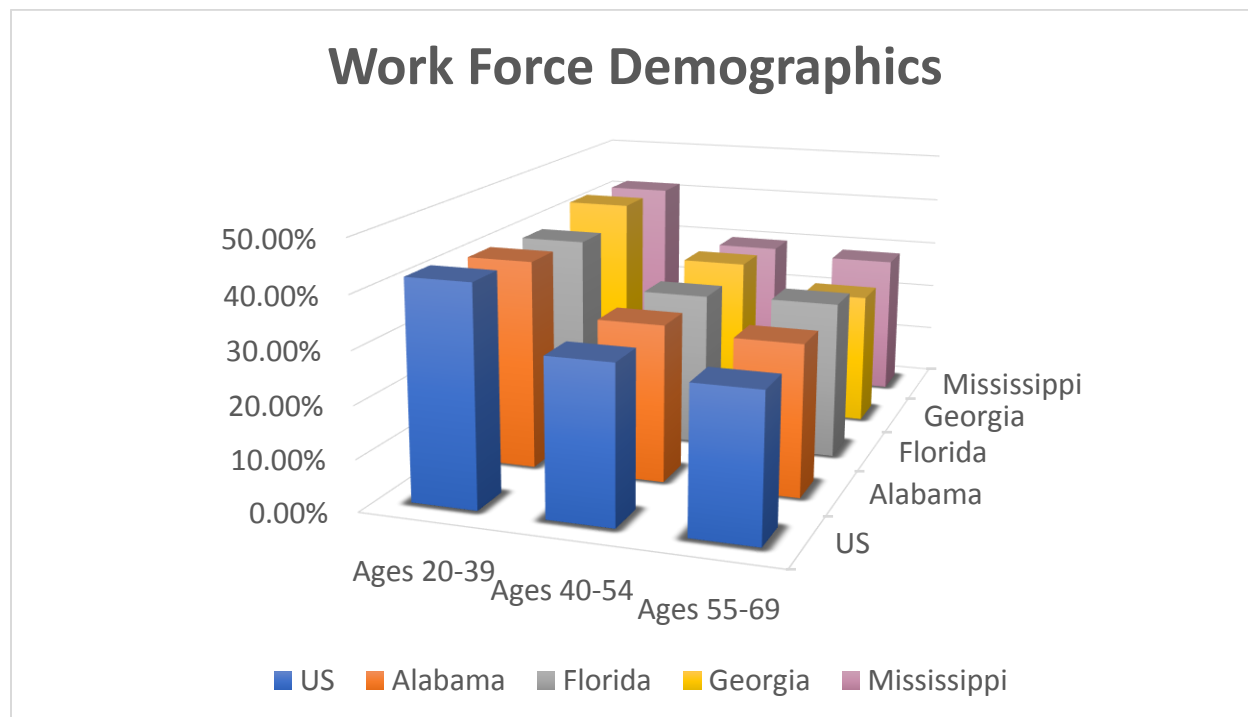
### Mississippi

- The Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey estimates Mississippi's population at 2,988,726.
- Mississippi's population percentages are like the U.S. population percentages.
- Mississippi's younger generation is slightly higher than the national average and is very similar to Georgia.



## Workforce Demographics

The assumption was made that the workforce population includes ages 20 to 69. We can break down the percentage of the workforce at 64.5% (208,417,247) of the total population using Census Bureau data. Entered here is the percent of the workforce out of this total:



### Alabama

Alabama's Baby Boomer population is slightly higher than the national average with the Millennials making up the largest portion of Alabama's workforce. The data shows the changing of the workforce in 2016 with 40.4% percent in the Millennial Generation with potentially 29.2% of the population eligible for retirement in the Baby Boomer Generation.<sup>5</sup>

### Florida

Florida's Millennial Generation percentage is slightly lower than the national average, but the Baby Boomer generation is slightly higher with a potential of 30.6% of Florida's workforce eligible for retirement.

## Georgia

The Georgia State Government FY2017 Workforce Report classifies Millennials being born from 1981 to 1997, Generation X from 1965 to 1980, Baby Boomers 1946 to 1964 and Generation Z (Silent Generation) from 1998 to 2016.

In 2016, 42% percent of the workforce were in the Millennial Generation and 27.9% were eligible for retirement in the Baby Boomer Generation.<sup>4</sup>

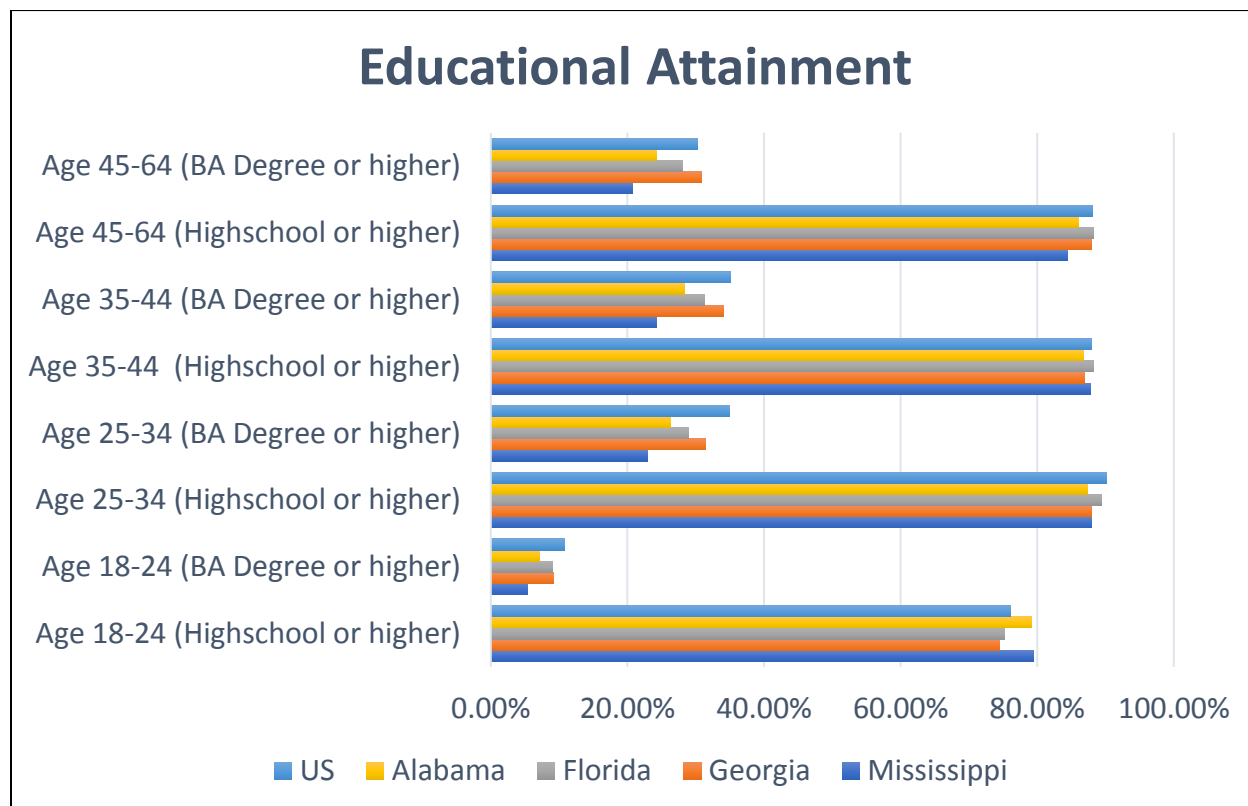
Georgia's Millennial Generation is like the U.S. data with potentially 26.2% of the Baby Boomer workforce eligible for retirement.

## Mississippi

Mississippi's Millennial Generation is like the U.S. data with potentially 28.6% of the Baby Boomer workforce eligible for retirement.

## Educational Attainment Demographics

The below charts shows the qualified professional attainment of education for select applicants from the Census Bureau, including the U.S. population and the southeastern states we analyzed.



(American Fact Finder, S1501, U.S. Census Bureau) |

Alabama's college graduate talent pool is lower than the U.S. average and all of the surrounding states except Mississippi. The talent pool in Alabama is smaller than the U.S. average and potential professional recruitment in the state is shrinking.

Realizing the shrinking talent pool, a comparison of Alabama and the surrounding southeast states will be compared with available public sector data from each southeast state used above.

Key Information	Alabama (2016)	Florida (2016)	Georgia (2017)	Mississippi (2017)
Total State Employees	29,924	88,991	67,771	27,495
Employee Class	Classified 92.3% Exempt 2.7%	Career Service 81.8% Exempt 17.6%	Benefit Eligible 95.87% Classified 4.13%	Not Available
Turnover Rate	13.10%	21.40%	19.54%	18%
Turnover Reason	1259 Retired, 194 Terminated, 44 Deaths, 96 Dismissals, 46 Layoffs, 1826 Resignations	2569 Retired, 555 Terminated, 113 Deaths, 1215 Layoffs, 1548 Resignations	1764 Retired, 1545 Involuntary, 7814 Voluntary, 101 Other	3982 Resignations (60% of all Separations)
Average Salary	\$44,214	\$35,545 (Career Service)	\$40,084	\$36,837

Sources: State of Alabama Personnel Department-Annual Report 2016, Florida Department of Management Services-State Personnel System Annual Work Force Report 2015-2016, Department of Administrative Services-Georgia State Government FY2017, [Mississippi State Personnel Board FY2017 Annual Report](#)

All states and the U.S. Population will face the same issues in the future with similar composition of age and workforce population. The Millennial Generation currently occupies on average 41% of eligible workers from the age of 20 to 69. The Baby Boomer Generation is approximately 28.5% of the current population.

Pew Research Center projects the Millennial Generation to overtake the Baby Boomer Generation by 2028.<sup>6</sup> The population age shift is occurring using the Census Bureau data listed above. The workforce is changing.

This data shows an aging workforce. Should approximately 30% of the workforce decide to retire, this will present a challenge for the public sector. The data shows a pattern of the younger generation entering the workforce and their changing needs and wants. When comparing the state government data of these states, a trend can be seen with high turnover rates. The State of Alabama has the lowest turnover rate, but it also has the highest salary average and is centrally located in the southeast region. With the changing demographics, Alabama must actively find ways to attract and retain talent or risk losing its workforce to other states or the private sector.

# Perceptions of Public Sector Employment

## **New Graduate Perception**

Many state and local governments find that attracting and retaining talented individuals is a real challenge. In fact, the challenge is so great that these same state and local entities and their leadership are being forced to reevaluate and change outdated and unproductive approaches.

What do millennials value? Most millennials have been taught the value of “doing well for others” or “giving back to the community” but they often fail to see government as a force for good<sup>7</sup>. Combining this with the idea that there are many places an individual can work to satisfy that sense of altruism means that public sector employment receives little serious consideration from job seekers. Government employers have attracted previous generations with benefits and job security. While still valuable to some, the millennials are looking more to self-worth than net-worth.

Millennials are more likely than both Gen Xers and Baby Boomers to say that a job that accelerates their professional or career development is “very important” to them.<sup>8</sup> Government jobs are often viewed as routine, boring and offer little in the way of training and development, which is something close to the heart of this generation. This group values personal investment in its members and frowns upon a lack of commitment by the employer to the individual. Managers are sometimes more focused on their own development and career, not taking time to invest in the employee talent. Millennials will find employment they feel will meet these demands, even if that means multiple changes in employers.

Work-life balance is a factor for this group. Most government jobs do not offer flex-time or remote work access. Many of these jobs are housed in large buildings with large groups of people in a cubicle setting presenting a rigid environment. Most in this age group (22-38) appreciate the concept of belonging to something bigger than themselves, but don’t want to feel under constant supervision. They want a certain amount of freedom to come and go as long as they get the job done. State and local employment rarely involves more than 40 hours of work per week, but a desire to flex work against personal needs is a must and flexibility is not a hallmark of public sector employers.

Millennials consistently demonstrate a willingness to job-hop for a variety of benefits and perks.

### Millennials want benefits and perks that support families, development, and flexibility:

Benefit/Perk	Generation X, Baby Boomers	Millennials	% Difference
<u>Paid Maternity Leave</u>	17.00%	44.00%	27.00%
<u>Student Loan Reimbursement</u>	19.00%	45.00%	26.00%
<u>Paid Paternity Leave</u>	15.00%	37.00%	22.00%
<u>Child Care Reimbursement</u>	8.00%	30.00%	22.00%
<u>Tuition Reimbursement</u>	24.00%	45.00%	21.00%
<u>Paid Work On Selected Project</u>	24.00%	42.00%	18.00%
<u>Flexible Work Location (occasional)</u>	33.00%	50.00%	17.00%
<u>Insurance (Non-Health)</u>	43.00%	60.00%	17.00%
<u>Flextime Work Location (fulltime)</u>	31.00%	47.00%	16.00%

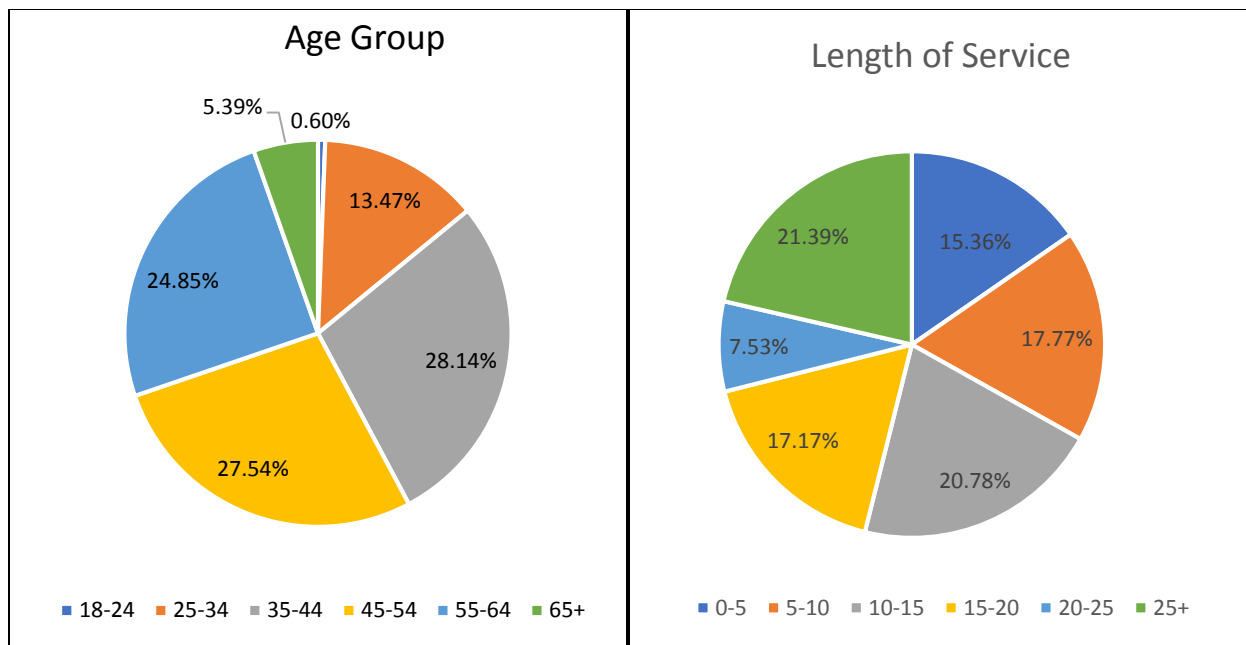
Source: Gallup, State of the American Workplace, 2017

State governments lack the ability to offer these benefits and perks for many reasons that include but are not limited to financial, authority, constitutional, and historical elements. The historical aspect is perhaps the single most important factor because it defines the actions and emphasis of the government workplace as carried out by the leaders of agencies that employ the individual. In other words, state governments and the agencies that compose them, are made up of people who have not previously been challenged by current trends and who have shown a tendency to follow a path of least resistance to continue to do things the same way they have always been done.

### Current Workforce Perception

The research for this section was obtained by a survey designed by the project team that focused on employee engagement, perception, and satisfaction of working for state government. The survey was sent to current and former Certified Public Manager students and alumni of the program. In addition, The Council of Personnel Administrators forwarded the survey to its members which included several state agency personnel offices so that it could be shared with their agencies. The information collected was anonymous and included forty-four questions relating to employee information, career development, work engagement, compensation, relationship management, benefits, work environment and feedback.

The responses reflect the various demographic groups from the Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers Generation as well as length of service as shown on the charts below.

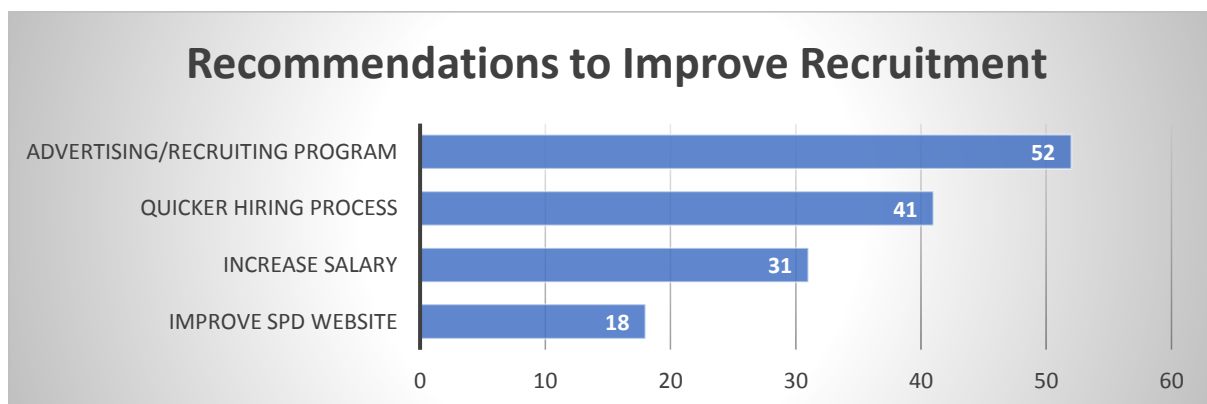


Here are some key findings in the employment information:

- 66% of the employees heard about the employment opportunities with state government by word of mouth over job fairs and recruitment
- 34% applied for their position by mailed application, 28% by hand delivery to State Personnel Department, and 27% applied online at State Personnel Department website
- 38% replied neither easy nor difficult on the use of the state personnel website, 36% said easy to use
- 42% replied neither easy nor difficult on rating the state hiring process, 32% said difficult

One question asked, “What suggestions or recommendations would you make to improve recruitment?”

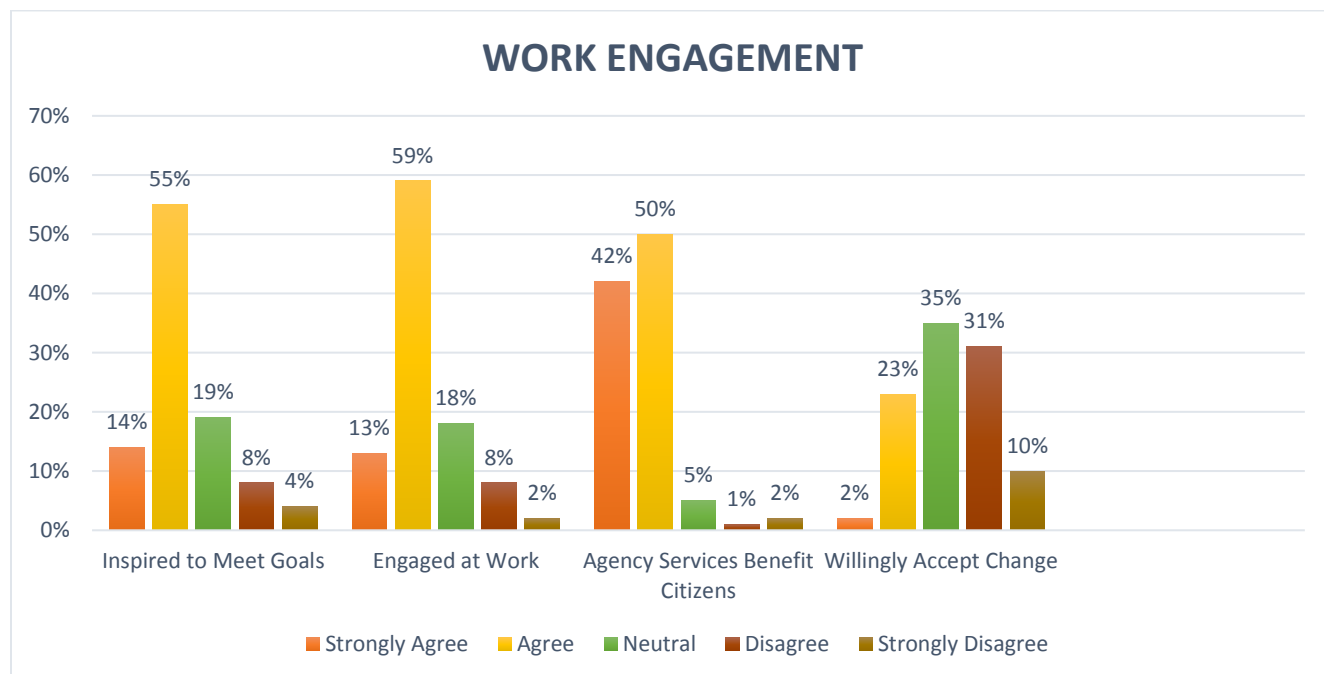
The chart below reflects the overall responses:



The general responses relating to six career development questions indicate that employees are satisfied with the career advancement opportunities available at the agency and job-related training.

### Work Engagement

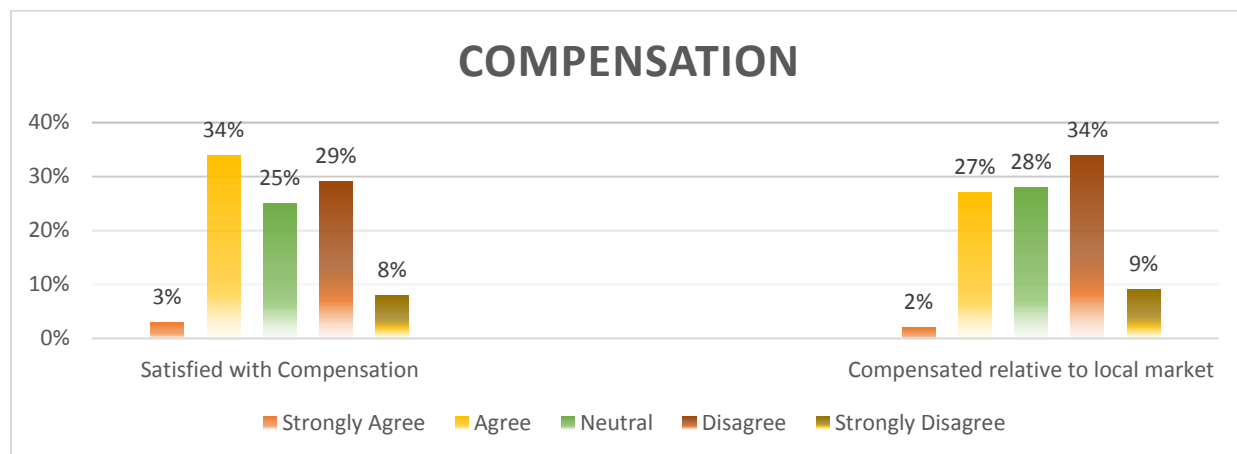
Respondents were asked if they were inspired to meet goals at work, felt completely engaged in their work, if they agreed that the services provided by their agency benefited Alabama citizens, and if employees in their agency willingly accept change.



The results show that most respondents are inspired to meet their goals, are engaged at work, and feel that their agencies provide beneficial services to the citizens of Alabama. However; most respondents remained neutral (with 31% of respondents disagreeing) when asked about employees willingly accepting change.

## Compensation

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with their overall compensation and if they are compensated relative to the local market.



The data shows that 34% of respondents are satisfied with their compensation. However; it also shows that 34% of respondents do not agree that they are compensated relative to their local market. The survey results clearly show that compensation is an area that needs to be researched further if state government wants to retain talented employees.

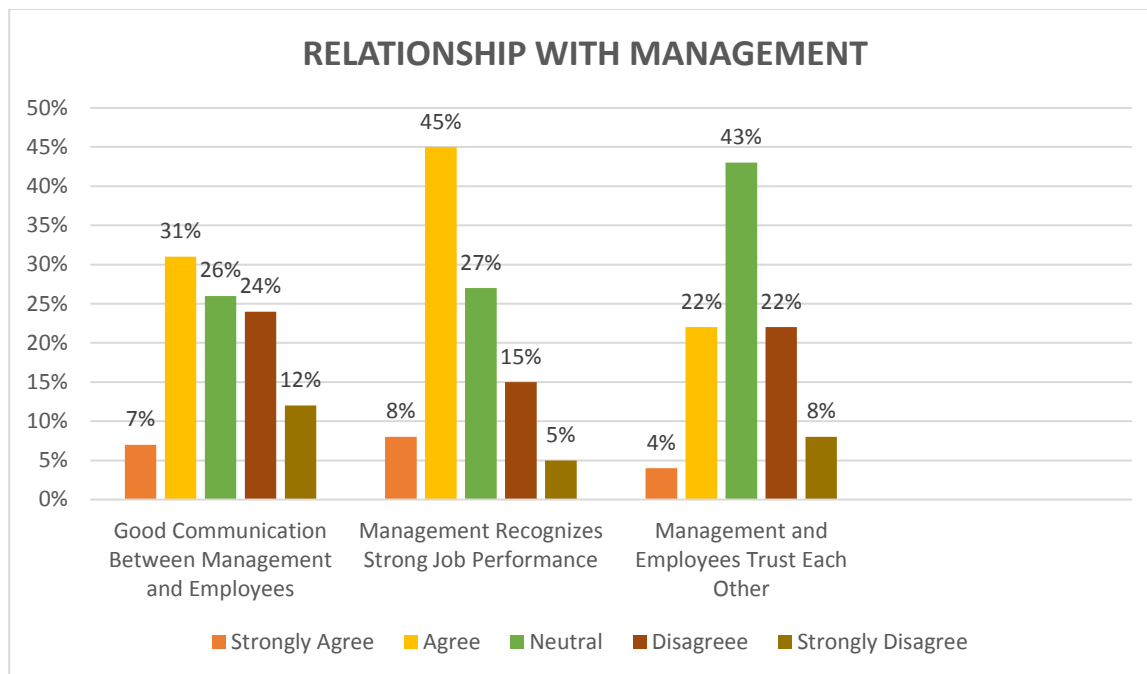
## Relationship with Management

Respondents were asked about their working relationships with management and co-workers in their organizations. The questions inquired if communication between management and employees was good, if employees made decisions that affected their work, if management recognized strong job performance, the relationship between employee and supervisor, the relationship between coworkers, if there is trust between management and employees, and if employees treat each other with respect.

Additionally, respondents gave very positive responses to the following topics: employees making decisions affecting their own work, relationships between employee and supervisor, relationships with coworkers, and mutual respect among employees.

However; there were some questions that had mixed results as shown on the chart below.





Good communication was an issue for up to 36% of respondents and trust was as issue for up to 30% of respondents in their relationships with management. Up to 53% agreed that they received recognition from management for good job performance; however, 27% remained neutral on this question.

### Employee Satisfaction

Based on the responses to these seven survey questions, employees are satisfied with their benefits to include healthcare, retirement, leave accruals and believe they have job security. State employees have a positive view of the flexibility of the workplace and believe they work in a safe environment.

1. Are you satisfied with your health benefits package?
  - 53.33% agree,
  - 7.3% strongly agree
2. Are you satisfied with the healthcare related benefits?
  - 58.73% agree
  - 15.56% strongly agree
3. Are you satisfied with the amount of paid leave offered by your organization?
  - 62.54% agree
  - 19.68 % strongly agree
4. Are you satisfied with the retirement plan offered by your organization?
  - 60.51% agree

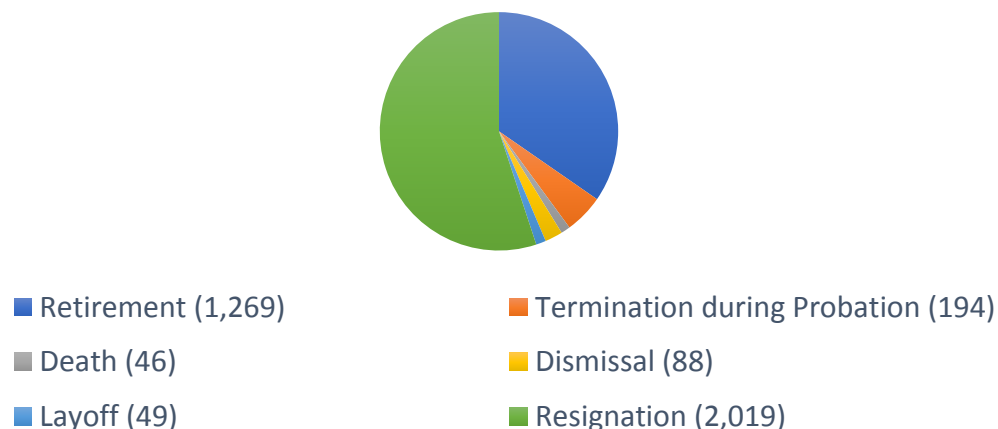
- 16.56% strongly agree
- 5. Are you satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by your organization?
  - 47.78% agree
  - 12.03% strongly agree
- 6. My organization has a safe work environment.
  - 62.30% agree
  - 16.61% strongly agree
- 7. I am satisfied with my overall job security.
  - 65.81% agree
  - 18.53% strongly agree

## Turnover and Retention - Alabama

“The ebbs and flows of the U.S. job market have vital implications for organizations. The more employees believe the job market is opening, the less likely they will stay in a role that doesn’t meet their needs and expectations. Many employees have incentives to explore options and plan to do so. Slightly more than half of employees (51%) say they are actively looking for a new job, and 35% of workers report changing jobs within the past 3 years”.<sup>8</sup>

Organizations looking at retention and turnover rates should understand why some employees leave and others stay. Traditionally we think of employees leaving jobs for more money or better opportunities. By examining the 2016 Gallup Poll we can see the changing employment landscape and research indicates that there are also other factors at work.

### Separations by Type



Main reasons why employees leave companies are:

1. Employees feel the job or workplace is not what they expected.
2. There is a mismatch between the job and the person.
3. There is too little coaching and feedback.
4. There are too few growth opportunities.
5. Employees feel devalued and unrecognized.
6. Employees feel stress from work and have a work/life imbalance.
7. There is a loss of trust and confidence.

The report also found that over 50% of employees leave within two years and approximately 50% of organizations experience regular problems with employee retention. Maintaining engaged employees is not impossible but requires work on the organizations' part whether it is public or private. Unemployment rates are now lower and emboldens employees to look elsewhere for a job that's a better fit.

#### Turnover Rate for Alabama Compared to Bordering States:

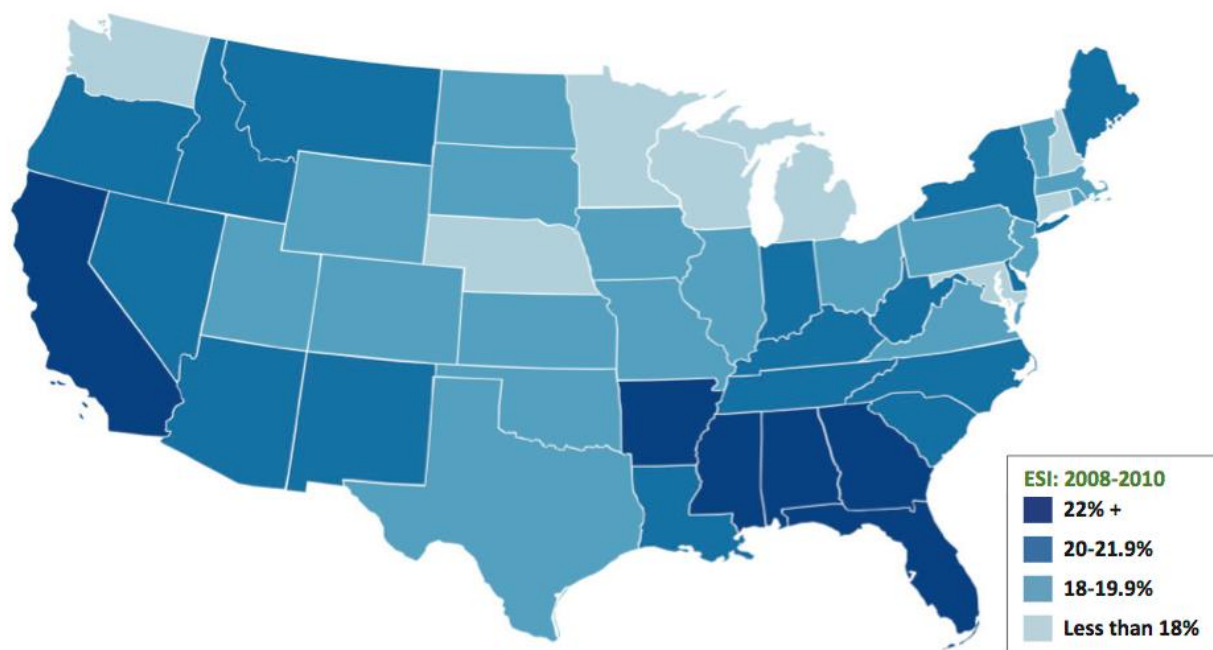
<u>State</u>	<u>Total Employees</u>	<u>Turnover Rate</u>
Alabama	29,924	13.10%
Mississippi	27,498	18.00%
Georgia	67,771	19.54%
Florida	88,991	21.40%

Gallup's 2016 poll on American management examined employee engagement as a factor in retention. In that study Alabama ranked highest in the country at 37%.<sup>45</sup> Other states in the southeast ranked high also, all were at the 34 to 35% range. The state with the lowest rating was West Virginia at 21%.

#### **Great Recession of 2008**

During what a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve called "the worse financial crisis in modern history", Alabama companies and the public sector made cut backs and took measures to manage the recession of 2008. Toyota Alabama approached the recession with "shared sacrifice" at every rank: non-productive periods, reduced work weeks, executive pay cuts and no bonuses. City governments struggled during the recession as well. The two municipalities that fared the best were college towns and state capitals.<sup>9</sup> A study conducted by Yale University political science professor Jacob Hacker and the Rockefeller Foundation found that, from 2008 to 2010, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida and Georgia had the highest rate of insecurity.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: Peak ESI by state, 2008-2010**



Source: Economic Insecurity Across the American States, June 2012

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### **Merit Raises Frozen**

Most states require that their budgets are balanced each year. Usually the easiest way to balance a state's budget is to scale back the payroll budget.

The State of Alabama under Governor Bob Riley took drastic measures to combat the recession. In response to the Great Recession of 2008, merit increases were frozen from 2008 until 2014. Many other states also used the same approach and froze merit increases.

### **Hiring Freeze**

Alabama also initiated a "hiring freeze". State government experienced a large turnover rate in 2008; State Personnel Department reports show that a total of 1722 employees left state government through voluntary resignations. As the recession continued people were choosing to stay in state government shown by a decline in the number of voluntary resignations in 2009 to 1191 people.

Based on a survey conducted by the Center for State & Local Government Excellence in 2009, 63.4% of employees eligible for retirement delayed their decision to retire. The sample pool was

from among 5,125 members of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE).

Based on a survey conducted by the Center for State & Local Government Excellence in 2010, a sample pool from 8,378 members of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) was used and determined the following:

- 68% of state & local governments reported hiring freezes
- 64% of state and local governments reported pay freezes
- 60.7% of state and local governments implemented furloughs
- 46% of retirement eligible employees postponed their retirements <sup>11</sup>

In 2012, 51% of employers reported pay freezes and 28% reported layoffs. This survey also indicated that 37.6% of the respondents were retirement eligible employees.

During 2013, a survey was conducted using a sample pool from among 5,850 members of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE). <sup>11</sup>

- 33% reported pay freezes
- 18% reported layoffs.

Per the State and Local Government Workforce: employment cuts and freezes have decreased from 2014 through 2017. This survey reflects the responses for 283 members of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE). <sup>12</sup>

In 2017, 74% of those respondents surveyed reported hiring new staff. In addition, the following were reported:

- Hiring freezes decreased from 13% (2014) to 10% (2017)
- Layoffs decreased from 10% (2014) to 7% (2017)
- Pay freezes decreased from 7% (2014) to 5% (2017)

### **Pay Compression**

Pay compression occurs when there is little or no difference in pay, combined with large differences in responsibilities, skill level or qualifications. The differences may occur between subordinates and supervisors or experienced, long term employees versus newly hired employees with little or no experience. If left unattended the disparities in pay can lead to disgruntled employees.

From 2008 until 2014 annual merit increases were frozen for State of Alabama employees and unless you were fortunate enough to receive a promotion during those six years, your salary remained the same despite the rising cost of everyday living. During those lean years, many state agencies implemented hiring freezes and some state workers retired and left work that had to be completed by those who remained. Pay compression existed more in lower levels than with top executives.

Now that the economy has recovered from the Recession of 2008, employers are once again hiring workers. Those workers are negotiating their salaries, and many are coming into the workforce with a 4% to 6% difference in pay than experienced employees. The practice of hiring new employees at a higher rate without an increase for current employees can put a company at risk for losing existing talent.<sup>49</sup>

An August 2017 survey conducted by Pearl Meyer titled, “Salary Compression Practices in the United States”, revealed that 84% of respondents said that salary compression has either a high or moderate impact on employee retention.

Three salary trends based on culture, economics and geography are driving the issue:

1. Pay Transparency- It is getting more difficult for employers to hide employee pay information. Millennials are changing the culture of the workplace and are prone to sharing information concerning their pay via social media.<sup>49</sup>
2. Minimal Annual Salary Budgets - 75% of companies have long term employees who started their careers at the lower end of their salary potential. Salaries have not kept pace with market demands or inflation. Annual salary budgets have only increased 3.1% according to the Pearl Meyers “Compensation Planning Survey.” Flat salary growth is a major contributor to salary compression.
3. Location - Salary compression is most common at the regional level.

## **Benefits**

According to State Personnel, Alabama had 29,924 employees in 2016, a slight decrease from 2015 at 30,402. Average employee compensation in 2016 was \$44,214 and in 2015 it was \$43,884. However; salary is only a part of the benefit package extended to state employees. State employees have a package that includes paid holidays, health care, retirement, vacation pay and paid sick leave. Alabama’s salary and benefits package is competitive in today’s market.

Another benefit to state employment is being able to earn up to 29.5 annual leave days per year based upon years of service. State employees also earn four hours of sick leave per pay period and can accrue up to 1,200 hours. All hours earned above this amount are put into an excess leave account and can be used if a catastrophic illness occurs. Upon retirement an employee will

be paid for up to 480 hours of accrued annual leave and one-half of up to 1,200 hours of accrued sick leave. These benefits total 135 days of pay or 27 weeks and are paid in a lump sum.

Alabama also grants its employees 13 official paid holidays. Employees are also afforded time under federal FMLA guidelines for illness and family members that become sick.

State employees are provided with Blue Cross/Blue Shield health care through the State Employees Insurance Board (SEIB) created in 1965. The insurance plan is offered to all employees and offers spousal and dependent coverage.

Other perks of the insurance program are as follows:

1. TELADOC, a 24/7 access to certified doctors by phone to get non-emergency care and fill prescriptions.
2. Worksite Wellness checkups which include: blood pressure check, glucose and cholesterol evaluations, flu, pneumonia and tetanus vaccinations.
3. Nation employee health and fitness day.
4. Flexible employee benefits which include pretax medical and childcare reimbursement plans offered under section 125 of the internal code of 1989.

The State Retirement System of Alabama (RSA) began in 1945 to provide retirement benefits to state employees, state police, qualified persons of municipalities and quasi-public organizations. In 2012, the legislature made changes to the plan and designated members hired prior to January 1, 2013 as TIER 1 and those hired after that date as TIER 2. Under TIER 1, employees are vested after 10 years and could begin drawing benefits after 25 years of service and at any age. TIER 2 employees have no 25-year retirement option and retirement benefits are paid beginning at age 62. It also raised the age for State police, firefighters, law enforcement, and correctional officers from 52 to 56 and did away with retirement benefits after 25 years. Another major change is basing the benefit calculations on the average highest five years of service out of the last ten years for TIER 2 employees. TIER 1 employee's benefits are based on an average salary of the highest three out of the last ten years. The member contribution rate dropped for TIER 2 employees to 6% from 7.5% for TIER 1. The system pays lifetime benefits to retirees and has provisions for spousal and dependent payments based on options within the plan. The general sentiment is that most of these changes are not at the forefront of discussions among new and older employees.

These benefits afforded to state employees are important in going forward in an increasingly competitive race to recruit and retain good employees in the public sector.

## Recruitment and Retention Practices- Bordering States

### **Georgia**

The State of Georgia's top recruiting strategy is branding. Georgia has created a brand- "Team Georgia Careers-A World of Opportunity". State government offers its employees an engaging and diverse work environment that allows them to fulfill personal and professional ambitions while taking pride in providing services that contribute to Georgia's success.

Georgia uses the following phrases to recruit recent college graduates and veterans:

- "Make a difference in the lives of Georgia's Youth"
- "Congratulations to all recent college graduates. Unlock your future with a career in State government"
- "Represent and positively impact your community"
- "Defend and protect your community"
- "Career opportunities for Veterans. Put skills acquired in the military to work for the state!"
- "Welcome to team Georgia Careers! Unique career and development opportunities."

Georgia's web presence has been applauded for its branding initiative. Every agency has its own mission, but it is also part of the enterprise.

When we think of Georgia Bureau of Investigation, we think of words like "serious" or "official." At the same time agencies dealing with sensitive issues such as child support or behavioral health, can be described as "friendly" or "caring." The web presence reflects these sentiments. The conversation that happens reflects the image portrayed by the agency. As an enterprise, there are several visual elements that tie these sites together.<sup>14</sup>

To help with their branding efforts, the State of Georgia has partnered with IDEO, a global design leader. They are a global company who creates positive impact through design. They have a proven record of helping other government organizations with similar challenges.<sup>15</sup>

Research shows millennials entering the workforce expect to find a job with purpose. They want to feel as if they are a part of something. Georgia's branding strategy gives all potential employees a sense of belonging.

### **Florida**

Florida has a dedicated website for job searches. An applicant can search for a job by keyword, location, career opportunities or agency. Here is a description of working in Florida's public sector.

"Seeking an opportunity to start a new career or enhance your professional development? Envision success in Florida. Join our talented workforce to fulfill your professional goals and



achieve a meaningful career. Our talented public servants work hard to serve more than 20 million residents across Florida, and you, too, can realize success in the Sunshine State.”

“People First” is the State of Florida’s self-service, secure, web-based Human Resource Information System (HRIS) and enterprise-wide suite of human resource (HR) services. The system currently supports more than 230,000 users. The system streamlines and automates many of the state's HR functions. Employees, retirees, and benefits participants have 24/7 web access to their own personnel information at any time or can call an HR advisor at the People First Service Center.

Job applicants search and apply for state positions and maintain their applications online on the People First job site <https://jobs.myflorida.com>. Job applicants do not have to be state employees, nor are they required to log into the People First system to view or apply for a job. Since May 2003, more than 226,000 State of Florida positions have been posted in People First and approximately 15 million employment applications have been submitted for those positions.<sup>17</sup>

On January 7, 2017, the People First Team successfully rolled out its new State of Florida job site, hiring center and performance management systems. These new sites were designed to improve the overall experience for applicants and employees and offer enhanced usability and a modern look. It will also enhance the state’s ability to draw top talent to state government and streamline the performance management process for our current employees and managers.

The People First annual survey was emailed to 25,000 randomly selected employees and retirees with email addresses. The survey ran from March 6, 2017, through March 17, 2017. More than 2,100 responses were received resulting in a 78% overall satisfaction rate. Ideas and suggestions from the annual surveys are used to feed the team’s Potential Work Item list for possible system enhancements and are shared with Northgate Arinso to facilitate system and service center improvements.<sup>18</sup>

Some other information that can be found on the Florida Department of Management Services website includes various training materials for employees, managers, HR staff and candidates. ([https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce\\_operations/people\\_first/for\\_state\\_hr\\_practitioners/performance\\_management\\_and\\_recruiting](https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce_operations/people_first/for_state_hr_practitioners/performance_management_and_recruiting))

## **Mississippi**

The Mississippi State Personnel Board (MSPB) was established in 1980 by the Mississippi Legislature. The vision of the MSPB is to ensure a quality workforce for the State of Mississippi. The mission of the MSPB is to lead the way in human capital and workforce management. The MSPB serves nearly 130 agencies, boards, and commissions. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 only 31% of the 88,879 (about 28,000) state employees were under the control (purview) of the MSPB.<sup>19</sup>

The MSPB is organized into three offices:

1. The **Office of Human Capital Core Processes** is a unique team comprised of MSPB analysts who provide an array of services in three main functional areas: Core Processes, Career Counseling, and Job Description Validation. The MSPB site states that “Agencies are quickly recognizing that human capital is by far their greatest asset because it is the agencies’ employees that possess the skills and knowledge needed to most efficiently carry out day-to-day activities. Now more than ever, finding talented employees and efficiently managing those employees is the key to building a successful workforce.”
2. The **Office of Workforce Development** is an office whose primary goal is to provide state agencies with the tools, information, and training needed to ensure a quality workforce for state government. The office has two areas of focus: Talent management and career development. The Talent Management Division provides agencies with management tools to measure performance, competencies and skill sets, and identify methods to improve performance. The Career Development Division provides agencies and state employees with certification and professional development programs including the Certified Public Manager (CPM) program.
3. The **Employee Appeals Board** provides an outlet beyond the agency level for aggrieved employees to pursue when internal agency grievance procedures are exhausted. There are 3 hearing officers that individually hear appeals assigned to them.<sup>20</sup> Examining the Annual Report for fiscal year (FY) 2017 for the State of Mississippi, the state realizes that retention is the key to ensuring a quality workforce for Mississippi’s future. The annual report states that at the close of FY 2017 that 13% of the workforce were eligible for retirement and that by 2022 that number is expected to grow to 28%. The annual report goes on to discuss that Mississippi’s voluntary turnover rates are consistently higher than the national average and that in FY 2017 the voluntary turnover rate was nearly 18%.<sup>21</sup>

Mississippi’s recruitment practices utilize several different tactics including: listing job announcements on outside sites like indeed.com, the Governor holds a job fair every year with job placement being the focus of the event and changing the degree requirements on some positions, so they would have more applicants.

Mississippi also participates in many job fairs throughout the state and lists all the job fairs on the MSPB website and increased salaries for some positions to be more competitive with the private sector. The State also uses a paid and unpaid internship program.

Mississippi uses the following retention practices. They provide training programs for employees which also includes a Certified Public Manager program that is nationally accredited. They provide a longevity service award program that is awarded in 10 year increments, as well as, an educational assistance program for employees that have 3 years of service. The employee must

also enter into a contract with the State and attend a college or university within the State of Mississippi.

Mississippi also established the Excellence in Government Awards to recognize “excellence and innovation in the management of administrative procedures which increases the quality of public service at the state, district and local government levels.”<sup>23</sup>

## Current Strategies and Findings for the Private Sector

Upon examining current recruitment and retention strategies being used in other public sector environments we need to also look at what the private sector is doing. Are there strategies that could be implemented in Alabama State government agencies? The recruitment strategies which were examined and prove to be effective in the private sectors include: standing out with online media, implementing a friendly application process, developing a strong employer brand, advertising outside of career fairs, and using your best current employees to attract new ones.<sup>24</sup> Once we have hired the best candidates how can state agencies retain those workers? The successful retention strategies we discovered are: employee compensation, recognition and rewards systems, work-life balance, training and development, and fostering teamwork.<sup>25</sup> Through researching the private sector practices in the areas of recruitment and retention we look for strategies that can also be used in Alabama State Government.

### **Social Media**

To attract new employees, we must first understand what they are seeking from an employer. Holly Paul, US recruiting leader at Price Waterhouse Coopers says, “You have to appeal to all those students who are trying to figure out how to stand out in a competitive market”. “Some candidates have told us they want us to be on Facebook and provide an individual to contact”.<sup>26</sup> Some of the best online sites use for attracting new employees are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter<sup>27</sup>. According to Global/Web Index the average internet user has more than five social media accounts.<sup>27</sup> Current employees can assist with online media recruitment by sharing job posts on their Facebook page. Essentially this is free advertisement that can be easily utilized to interest those seeking employment. Once a recruit is interested in applying for a job it is important that the job application process is easy to navigate.

## **Application Process**

When a candidate is looking for a job, they would like to have feedback and information with regards to how the application process will be handled. For many that means that an online application process is preferable. During the application process many private companies like to present information describing what it would be like working for them. Per 4 Point Consulting, the following are four ways to make the application process easy: 1) streamline the application process, 2) make the application process mobile-friendly, 3) update your applicants throughout the process, 4) walk a mile in the applicant's shoes.<sup>26</sup> With a streamlined process it makes it easy for both the employer and employee, which leads to more efficient and effective hiring process by filling the open position with a qualified applicant faster. With a mobile app it is easier to keep everyone updated of how things are progressing. Updates to the applicant keeps them engaged and promotes a supportive work environment before they begin employment. There are many current strategies being used by the private sector to improve the application process that can be implemented by state government.

## **Employer Brand**

State agencies need to also consider developing a strong employer brand like many companies in the private sector. There are many interpretations of "employer branding" however, [blog.beamery.com](http://blog.beamery.com) defines it as "a company's ability to differentiate and promote its identity to a defined group of candidates that they're interested in hiring."<sup>28</sup> When anyone mentions Google, Apple, etc., a picture of the work environment comes quickly to mind. That is part of employee branding. In addition to the work environment, many new employees want to find meaning in the work they do. In 2018, a survey was conducted by *The Fortune 100 Best Places to Work* and the top reasons people enjoyed where they worked were directly impacted by a strong employer brand. Some examples are: "I feel good about the ways we contribute to the community", "I'm proud to tell others I work here", and "our facilities contribute to a good working environment".<sup>29</sup> A question to ask ourselves is, how can state government agencies apply employer branding to attract employees and empower them to believe in their jobs?

## **Job Announcement Advertising**

Many private companies are utilizing methods other than career fairs to reach potential employees. In the current market employers are using more creative methods and thinking outside of the norm. Often college students join local chapters or groups of local professionals in their chosen field of study. Attending some of the organizational meetings can open opportunities for recruiting. Simple classroom presentations done by current employees can give them a glimpse into options they have after graduation and establish a partnership between the college or university and the employer. Another creative solution to recruitment is utilizing self-

selection to find out which applicants really want the job. Per businessinsider.com, having an open house at the place of employment gives the applicant a firsthand look and helps them decide if they are a good fit, or not, eliminating some of the work done by the employer during the application process.<sup>30</sup> At an open house current employees can also give applicants feedback and information about the work environment. There are other ways to also utilize the best current employees to attract new ones.

### **Use Current Employees to Attract New Ones**

An employer's best asset is their employees. One technique currently used internship programs. This gives the applicants an opportunity to work with the employer and receive on the job training. Interns can be assigned special projects utilizing the outside perspective they have to solve real problems. The key is to keep the intern involved with current employees and assign projects to give them goals to obtain at the end of the internship.<sup>31</sup> Another way to use current employees is to involve them in recruitment videos or blogs on social media. When a recruit sees current employees, who are happy and engaged it makes them excited to be a part of that team. Per Harvard Business Review, "a survey shows that over 70 percent of millennials hear about prospective jobs through friends."<sup>32</sup> If a referral bonus program was implemented for current employees, then they might be more enthusiastic about communicating a positive image of the organization in which they work. When using recruitment strategies such as standing out with online media, implementing a friendly application process, developing a strong employer brand, advertising outside of career fairs, and using your best current employees to attract new ones, then how then can we retain those creative new employees we just hired? And, for the current employees we do have, what incentives can we give them to stay?

### **Employee Compensation**

Competitive pay and compensation packages might be the first thing that attracts an employee but once they are hired how can we use employee compensation in a new way to retain them? Several companies are looking at employee compensation in a new way. Salesforce, who is number one on the Fortune 100 Best places to work in 2018, allows parental leave of 26 weeks paid time off and 12 weeks off for secondary caregivers.<sup>33</sup> They also give \$100 a month to employees to spend on health and fitness programs. These are huge incentives to many people to stay and is part of their compensation package. This company is saying "We care about you" and in turn the hope is that employees will be willing to give their best every day. Wegmans Food Market won the second place on the 100 best places to work, and their average salary is \$35,279<sup>18</sup> which is below the Alabama State Employees average salary of \$44,214 according to the State Personnel Department Annual Report of 2016. Even with a low salary, the additional compensation they give employees helps retain them.

## **Employee Recognition**

Another program is to provide a way for employees to receive recognition and rewards for hard work. Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. has a program called the “CARE program “. <sup>34</sup> This program recognizes all employees for milestones in their lives such as, anniversaries, acts of service and developmental goals. This program also allows co-workers to recognize each other instead of having to be a manager or supervisor. The company who claims the sixth spot on the top 100 best places to work is Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants. They have a great program called Bill’s Honor Roll, which congratulates the children of employees for achieving academic success. <sup>35</sup> By doing this it not only gives the parent pride in their own hard work and providing for their children, but it could also be considered an early recruitment tool. If the children are getting recognized for hard work, they are more open to the possibility of future employment there. For those who want more than a thank you or a certificate, Deloitte offers a wide range of bonuses. They give out the “Applause Award which gives \$50-\$500 to employees, while winners of the Outstanding Performance Award may receive up to \$5,000. <sup>36</sup>

## **Work-Life Balance**

In addition to rewards, employees need a good work-life balance if employers expect to retain them for a long period of time. Common ideas to maintain a good work life balance is flextime, paid time off and allowing some employees to work from home. The companies who are the best to work for often have implemented creative work-life balance ideas which could be used in the public sector. Often during a long career with a company people become burned out or need a change. The top ten best companies to work for all provide some type of paid sabbatical. Anywhere from two to five years of employment can earn you five to 26 weeks of paid leave for a sabbatical. <sup>37</sup> This is time for the employee to try new things or just recharge themselves. They will come back fresh and renewed. Many companies, like Deloitte, offer community involvement programs encouraging employees to be active in their communities. Intuit, Inc. has a program called, “Time to Do Good”. This program allows up to four days a year paid leave for employees to volunteer and support their favorite nonprofits. In 2017, Intuit employees volunteered 30,400 hours in their communities. <sup>38</sup> Intuit even gives all employees the day off with pay for their birthday and paid leave to take care of a family member, loved one, or to bond with a new child. This is a high priority for many top corporations. These implemented strategies help employees feel valued and enable them to maintain a better work-life balance.

## **Training and Development**

Once the needs of the employee are met personally it is also important to meet their needs at work in the form of training and development. Harvey S. Firestone once said, “The growth development of people is the highest calling of leadership.” If an employer wants to retain their

employees, it only makes sense to invest in training them and developing them for the future. One way to do this is to provide monetary support for education expenses. Intuit, Inc. gives their employees up to \$5,000 annually to attend college courses and up to \$10,000 for the children of employee's who have worked for the company for at least a year<sup>39</sup>. Training courses can increase retention of good employees by helping them develop themselves and it gives them an opportunity to learn new skills. By a company investing in training and development for an employee it communicates that they are valued, therefore improving morale<sup>40</sup>. Although there might be fear that a highly skilled employee might leave after training, the duty of the employer is to help improve their employees, so that goal was still achieved. Development can also be implemented through mentor programs<sup>41</sup>. Several top Fortune 500 companies offer mentorship programs such as, General Electric, Intel, Google, Deloitte, Boeing and Time Warner. Many young employees look forward to having mentors help them navigate through the first year of a new job<sup>42</sup>. A mentor program can offer support, experience and a community of co-workers who are really invested in making a new hire a success at their company. A mentor relationship can also help foster a teamwork environment, which is in high demand in the current work culture.

### **Team Environment**

Building strong teams helps develop an environment where employees want to stay and remain engaged. Per a 5Dynamics survey, "nearly one third considered leaving their jobs because of a negative team environment."<sup>37</sup> According to the New York Times, "Teams are now the fundamental unit of an organization. If a company wants to outstrip its competitors, it needs to influence not only how people work but also how they work together."<sup>43</sup> Salesforce utilizes team building in a program called VTO. Teams come together to volunteer in their communities and building a closer working relationship through philanthropic experiences together.<sup>18</sup> They also have Global Volunteer Week, where teams work together to build a house for habitat for humanity or assemble bikes for local children.<sup>44</sup> Building a strong team doesn't just have to be done in the workplace. All experiences together can be used to strengthen that bond and therefore produce better results in the workplace in the future.



## Current Strategies and Findings for the Public Sector

Workforce planning for the public sector includes recruitment and retention, staff and leadership development and succession planning. Our team has researched other states efforts compared to Alabama on the following: recruiting, branding, agency specific classifications and exit interviews.

### **Recruitment**

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) hosted the event “Earth Day 2018” onsite for middle and high school students to learn about environmental programs that are implemented daily to protect and preserve Alabama’s air, land and water resources. Students received guided tours and participated in hands-on demonstration from ADEM staff including water quality sampling, fish tissue monitoring, recycling, solid waste disposal, air monitoring, and efforts that ensure Alabamians are provided with clean, safe drinking water. Students were also given the opportunity to learn about career opportunities at ADEM, and they were encouraged to pursue careers in science-related fields<sup>45</sup>. Team members attended the event and saw the ADEM staff engaging the students asking about college and what field of study they were interested in. ADEM let the students know that some jobs consisted of being outdoors a large percentage of the time and not sitting in a cubicle. The employees made it look like fun to work at ADEM and that student could be part of something bigger than themselves. ADEM shared their “agency brand” by giving away items like, bookmarks and mouse pads made from recycled tires and a ruler made from recycled products.<sup>46</sup> The Alabama Department of Labor (DOL) is involved in hosting job fairs through the Alabama Career Center Systems in various regions of Alabama. Employer and Jobseekers can register at [Labor.Alabama.Gov/Jobfair](https://labor.alabama.gov/jobfair) (<https://joblink.alabama.gov/ada/r/>). According to policy, state agencies may use Alabama JobLinks free service to post job openings. It still requires the state application process for being hired.

### **Branding**

Branding is the process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers.<sup>47</sup>

Georgia entices new employees with the following statement on their website, “The work of a state employee impacts economic development, environmental quality, education, housing, health and overall quality of life issues for all Georgians.” This separates Georgia from the other employers by informing the applicant of what is offered. In return, employees have access to a



Total Rewards package that can be tailored to their individual needs. State employees can expect competitive compensation and performance recognition, retirement and pension benefits, paid holidays and time off, opportunities for career development and advancement, flexible work schedules, engaging and diverse work environments and enjoy the satisfaction that comes with being part of a team that keeps Georgia progressive, prosperous and a place we're all proud to call home.<sup>41</sup> Alabama does not have a branding presence for state employment.

However, leaders from the state's education system, government, and private sector companies worked together to create the program Alabama Works, unveiled in 2016, for private sector. It is a new brand and new plan for workforce development that is a network of interconnected providers of workforce services, including all the governmental, educational, and private sector components that train, prepare, and match job seekers with employers.<sup>48</sup>

### **Classifications**

Upon interviewing personnel directors from certain state agencies, it was determined that having a series of job classifications specific to the agency that do not require a specific degree has been a positive strategy in retaining employees. The salary range is in a pay grade of 68, meaning that the starting salary is \$31,488 for someone with no experience. There is a clear career path with advancement into the next series typically after two years of gaining experience in the classification. It also encourages promoting from within the agency and reduced turnover rates.

### **Exit Interviews**

Discovering why employees leave is an essential part of a company's strategic planning, but many miss this opportunity. An exit interview can be used to learn where the company can improve, make sure employees leave feeling good about their service, and define problems that currently exist in the company. Two out of three personnel directors interviewed explained that their agency mailed a packet to the person that retired, resigned or transferred. The agency requests the packet be mailed back to the agency personnel office or another office. They can use the information to analyze factors attributing to turnover and improve the department's efficiency.

According to Brian Stewart with Retirement Systems of Alabama and Renee Minor with the Department of Labor, having a series of job classifications specific to the agency has been a positive strategy for their agencies in many ways by:

- Clear career path with advancement into the next classification
- Open to a variety of different college degrees
- Reduce turnover rate/ Retains good employees with public sector
- Encourages promoting from within agency
- Entry salary range starting at \$31,488.00 for RSA and \$29,224.80 for DOL

## Recommendations

The Solutions Alabama team was tasked to recommend strategies for Alabama's public sector to attract and retain the workforce required to deliver public services for the future by examining Alabama's talent management practices and researching the best practices from other states. Extensive research was conducted, and much thought was put forth to identify areas that current and future employees could benefit personally and productively to ensure agency success. Research revealed four areas needing improvement:

### **Improve Branding of State Agencies**

The Solutions Alabama Team suggests that employer branding helps attract potential applicants and creates a team environment for current employees. States, such as Georgia, capture interested candidates by inspiring them using impactful and sensory phrases showing how working for Georgia makes a difference. The Solutions Alabama Team developed a slogan for State Employees, "Working for a Better Alabama," to excite employees and help them feel proud of the benefit that they can bring to the State of Alabama.



Source: David Calhoun, Alabama Department of Revenue

State Agencies that do not already utilize a slogan would then create one as well. These various logos can be shared via decals on state vehicles, social media sites and various aspects of advertising.

State agencies should also be proactive in ways to recruit by using social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and attend job fairs and recruit on college campuses. State personnel should also utilize Alabama Works to list job announcements as vacancies with links to the application process. In addition, partnering with Commerce and Tourism provides another venue to promote Alabama.

### **Focus on Career Growth**

Employers with mission critical management or leadership roles should identify high-potential employees and implement strategies to retain them. Effective retention strategies should

include: ensuring that high-potential candidates are provided opportunities for development; help candidates understand their next career opportunity and make candidates aware of the technical or soft skills required to be competitive. These individuals should have a documented development plan as part of their performance review plan detailing focused learning assignments; aligning them with mentors or assigning competency-based training considering the kind of managers and leaders the agency wishes to create. Employers should also utilize a management training program. Like some Alabama State Agencies, Mississippi also provides a Certified Public Manager program. Internship programs are used at some local agencies, giving candidates an insight into day to day operations.

### **Increase Fringe Benefits**

Mississippi and other private sector companies currently offer tuition assistance to employees. From the Alabama state employees polled, 47% said they would benefit from employer provided education assistance programs. Another recommendation is to allow a flexible work schedule with options such as a 4-day work week or telecommuting. More than 49% of the current employees surveyed, as referenced from the 2017 State of the American Work Force article, Millennials and longtime career employees want a good work-life balance involving flexible work schedules or remote work access. Another area of recommendation would be to revise the annual Bonus system. Of those Alabama Employees surveyed, 52% responded that they would be most interested in a bonus increase based upon years of service with no cap. The last recommendation would be to allow time off to volunteer in the community. Intuit and Deloitte both offer community involvement programs. With a huge increase of Millennials joining Alabama's workforce, time allowed to volunteer and support nonprofit organizations adds to their work-life balance.

### **Expand Job Announcements**

Retirement benefits play an important part in attracting workers to state employment and in retaining current employees in the workforce. The Solutions Alabama team recommends enhancing the job announcements to reflect salary, health insurance, and retirement benefits making the total compensation package more competitive with private industry. A more detailed job description; the flexible benefits available and the available resources such as wellness centers and Teladoc would impact the number of applicants received.

## Conclusion

Recommendations set forth here are intended to assist the State of Alabama in providing a quality workforce for tomorrow's workplace. Alabama citizens should expect a quality workforce delivering the goods and services provided by this state. We commend those Agencies and individuals who currently recognize and are "Working for a Better Alabama". We encourage others to take part in this effort and to recognize this will be a journey that must be undertaken, now or sometime in the not too distant future.

One fifth, or 20% of Alabama's workforce will leave the workforce over the next few years. The timeframe may extend a short few years should older workers delay retirement but the "Gray Tsunami" will overtake the workplace eventually. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that by 2020 nearly 50% of the workforce will be Millennials. Is it better to address the demographic changes now or later when older workers and their job experience have long since left the playing field? This Solutions Team thinks we are better off to address these issues now and without delay.

The recruitment, training, and retention of tomorrow's workforce is underway in Alabama and other southeastern states. Private industry and public sector employers will be competing for the same talent pool but to what end? Research shows that many private sector firms have a step on the public sector and are addressing the issues relating to a changing workforce. Some of these recruitment and retention strategies impact state budgets, some may require structural changes to various agencies, and some will require actions on the part of the State Legislature. None of these issues are likely to be solved easily and it is certain that none of them will simply go away. Alabama has an opportunity to lead the way in making real and substantive changes to the ways it attracts and retains talented individuals. Together, we can all be "Working for a Better Alabama".

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