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WHAT'S THIS?

From Reactive to Resilient: Strategic Workforce Planning



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By **NOVEMBER 6, 2025**

Bridging the Federal Skills Gap with AI-Powered Workforce Planning



The quickly evolving landscape of the federal workforce presents both urgent challenges and profound strategic opportunities as agencies aim to "right-size" and position themselves for mission success. Central to this thesis is the reality that agencies cannot simply fill or backfill vacancies based on outdated or pre-existing job titles and organizational structures. The key to building a resilient, adaptable, and future-ready federal workforce is a shift to a proactive, skills-based approach to workforce planning.

Bridging the Federal Skills Gap for Workforce Resilience

Federal agencies are currently grappling with three interconnected pressures that are diminishing their institutional capacity. Firstly, they are at risk of losing crucial institutional knowledge and operational skills and are struggling to recruit new talent quickly enough to replace this expertise. Secondly, the rapid advancements in technology, including AI, cybersecurity, and data analytics, necessitate new competencies that the existing workforce structure was not designed to provide. Lastly, agencies undergoing necessary reorganization need the ability to quickly reallocate talent to new priorities. This process becomes slow, costly, and often ineffective without a clear understanding of the skills within the workforce.

By focusing on skills as the new currency of talent, federal agencies unlock numerous benefits:

- **Improved talent acquisition:** Clearly defining required skills broadens talent pools, helping agencies identify qualified candidates, including those skilled through alternative methods rather than traditional, degree-based education.
- **Enhanced employee development and retention:** A skills-based approach provides a clear roadmap for employees to advance their careers, acquire new expertise, and contribute meaningfully, which is a powerful boost to engagement and retention.
- **Increased organizational agility:** Understanding the true inventory of workforce skills enables agencies to deploy underutilized talent effectively, quickly form high-priority teams, and adapt swiftly to changing national and strategic demands.
- **Optimized resource management:** This transformation allows leaders to predict risks earlier by identifying potential skills shortages or cost variances before they become critical. Effective workforce planning should include dynamic "what-if" analysis to model the real-time impact of scenarios like budget shifts or accelerated retirements. With quick reprioritization of resources (human capital, training budgets, and funding), agencies can reduce variances between plan and execution, ensuring alignment and ultimately optimizing mission performance against strategic objectives.

Workday: The Engine for Future-Ready Workforce Planning

The challenge is not simply putting a plan on paper; it's finding the tools and the assistance to effectively execute that plan at scale. Modern workforce planning requires a unified platform that can close the gap between current state and future needs.

Workday delivers this capability by integrating financial, HR, and talent data into a single, secure platform, making it the indispensable tool for strategic federal workforce planning.

1. Pinpointing the Gaps with AI-Powered Skills Intelligence

The first step in modernization is moving from a headcount focus to a **skills focus**. Workday helps agencies answer the core strategic question: *Where are our greatest skills, people, and technology gaps?*

- **Machine learning-powered skills ontology:** Workday identifies, standardizes, and maps the skills residing within the current workforce—often uncovering underutilized employees who aren't fully doing what they are good at or passionate about.
- **AI-driven gap analysis:** By comparing the current skills inventory against mission-critical future needs (e.g., a massive need for cyber talent), Workday identifies precise skills deficits, allowing agencies to design targeted training and upskilling/reskilling programs instead of blanket initiatives.

2. Accelerating Recruitment and Preserving Institutional Knowledge

As agencies lose institutional knowledge, they need to simultaneously onboard new talent faster and capture the insight of those departing.

- **Scenario modeling for succession:** Workday enables federal leaders to model the impact of different retirement rates and quickly build detailed succession plans, identifying internal candidates for development *before* a departure occurs.
- **Targeted recruitment:** By translating job roles into a set of necessary skills, Workday enables agencies to more effectively recruit the best and brightest talent by focusing on competency and potential, broadening the talent pool beyond the traditional silos of agency hiring.

3. Continuous and Collaborative Planning

Unlike rigid, annual planning cycles, Workday enables true continuous planning. Workforce plans, which include headcount and cost, are directly linked to financial models. This cross-functional alignment between HR and finance is non-negotiable for effective resource stewardship.

- **What-if analysis:** Leaders can run unlimited scenarios—What if funding for a program is cut? What if a new technology requires 50 data scientists?—and immediately see the financial and talent impact, empowering agile decision-making instead of reactive panic.
- **Single source of truth:** By providing a unified data model, Workday eliminates the risk and delays associated with manual data collection and siloed spreadsheets. This is a critical modernization step for federal HR processes that are often still bogged down by legacy systems.

Conclusion

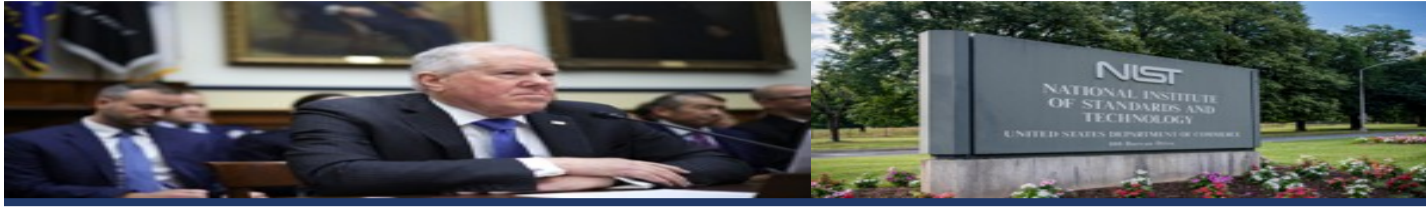
The modernization of federal workforce planning is not a choice; it is a strategic imperative. The confluence of retirement, reorganization, and digital transformation necessitates a decisive pivot to a skills-based approach. Workday provides the integrated, AI-driven platform that empowers federal agencies to move from simply tracking their workforce to actively shaping it—closing critical skill gaps, preserving institutional knowledge, and building an agile, mission-ready government.

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