CHARLES A. GOLDMAN, TEPRING PIQUADO, J. LUKE IRWIN, DANIEL ALLEN, YING ZHOU, SUNG HO RYU

Recruiting and Hiring a Diverse and Talented Public-Sector Workforce

Government agencies must wrestle with complex issues affecting local communities. Having individuals with a range of perspectives and experiences that represent the diversity of the community participate in decision-making can lead to improved outcomes and a closer connection between the government agency and the community it serves. Multiple forums representing public-sector leaders and organizations that support the public sector have called for enhancing the flow of talented and underrepresented individuals into public-sector careers (Center for State and Local Government Excellence [SLGE], 2019, 2020; Partnership for Public Service, 2019, 2020). These forums recognize that increasing representation of underrepresented groups enables public-sector agencies to carry out their missions and provide excellent service to their communities. But there is also concern that talented and underrepresented graduates of colleges and universities seeking career positions might not be considering public-sector jobs or that government agencies might not be well positioned to attract the next generation of a talented, diverse workforce.

Against this background, the Volcker Alliance founded the Government-to-University Initiative (G2U) in 2019 to address challenges of sustaining a healthy pipeline of diverse talent into the public-sector workforce. G2U operates through a series of regional networks around the United States (a total of six as of this writing) that connect leaders of federal, state, and local governments with colleges and universities in their regions.

Increasing representation of underrepresented groups enables public-sector agencies to carry out their missions and provide excellent service to their communities.

One of the member organizations of the G2U network is the Southern California (SoCal) G2U Regional Council, led by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization. SoCal G2U originally focused on Los Angeles County, and in 2021 it expanded its focus to match the six county region served by SCAG depicted in Figure 1: Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. This region covers 38,000 square miles, is home to 19 million people, and, if it stood alone, would represent the 16th-largest economy in the world (SCAG, 2012, undated). We use this six-county region as the geographic focus for this report, although some of the observations may certainly be applicable in other regions.

KEY FINDINGS

To broaden the talent pipeline to traditionally underrepresented groups, community organizations, higher education institutions, and public-sector agencies can collaborate to

- consistently articulate leadership commitment to increasing recruitment of talented and underrepresented individuals into the public sector

- communicate the benefits of public-sector careers

- improve the awareness and sharing of job and internship opportunities

- institutionalize connections between government and higher education.

FIGURE 1
Southern California Region
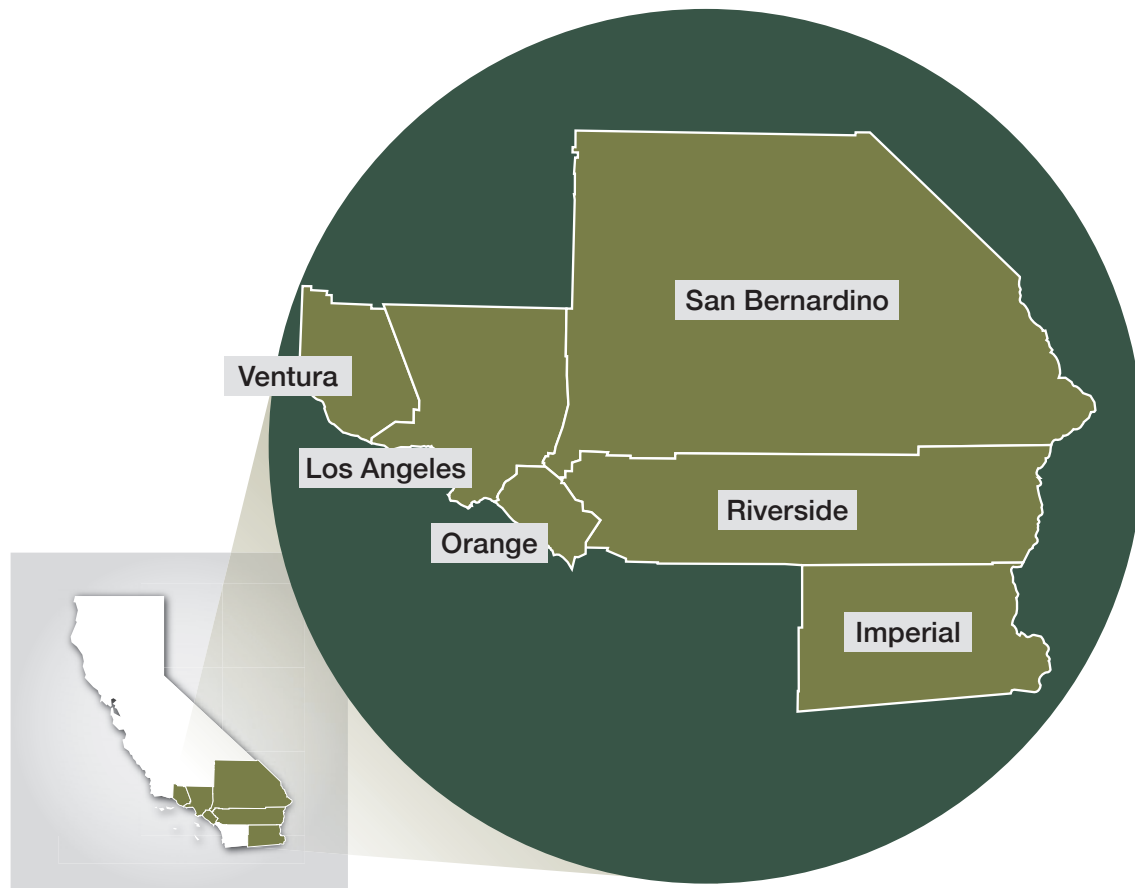
The region hosts about 900,000 full-time workers in the public sector, which includes employees of federal and state agencies, as well as agencies representing the six counties and their 191 cities. This total represents one in eight full-time workers in the region. Local government employs the largest portion of the public-sector workers—7 percent of regional full-time employment—with state government employing 3 percent and federal government employing 2 percent, as shown in Figure 2.
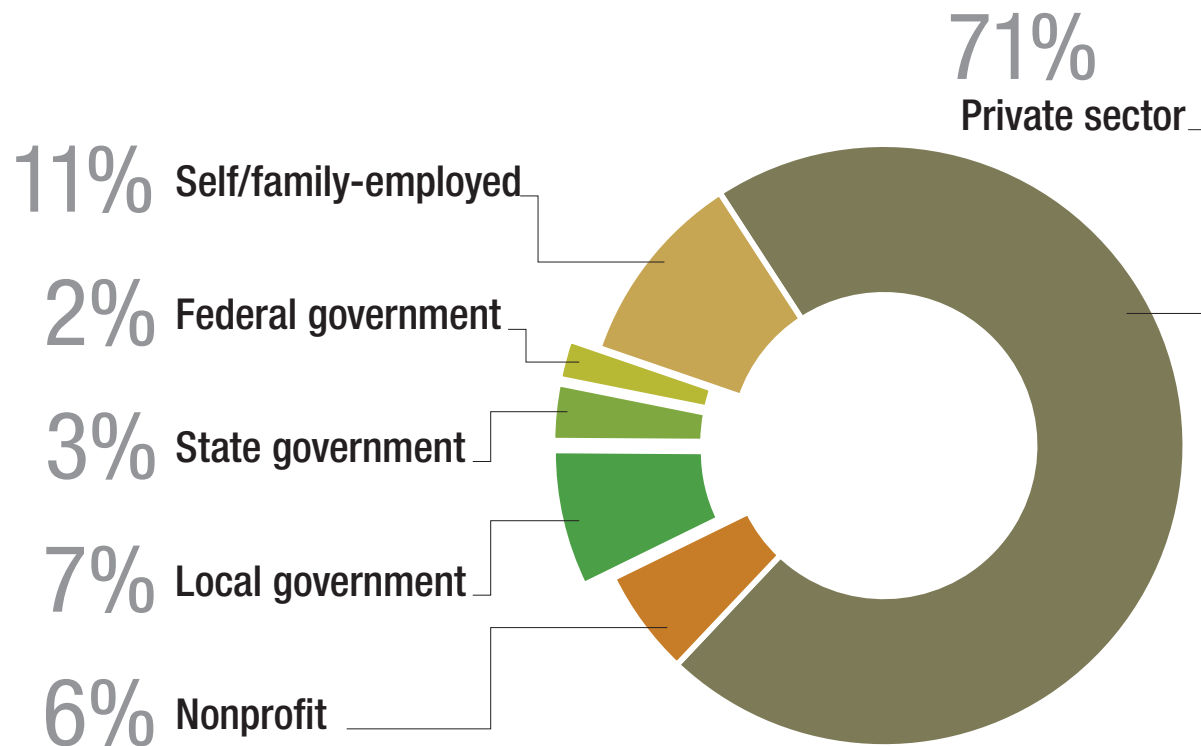
Research Objectives and Approach

SoCal G2U aims to build more robust partnerships among government agencies and higher education institutions in Southern California to increase the number of talented and underrepresented individu-als working within the public sector to reflect local demographics. With such a large geographic area and potential scope of effort, the SoCal G2U requested evidence-based research to identify the highest-value issues that SoCal G2U and others could address to develop a more diverse talent pipeline into the regional public sector. To support SoCal G2U and other regional stakeholders in planning for increasing diversity in a talent pipeline, we undertook this project with the following objectives:

1. Describe the Southern California public-sector workforce in terms of demographics, income, and occupations.
2. Document the facilitators and barriers to recruiting and hiring talented and under-represented individuals into public-sector careers.

FIGURE 2
Distribution of Full-Time Workers, by Sector, Southern California Region

71% Private sector

11% Self/family-employed

2% Federal government

3% State government

7% Local government

6% Nonprofit

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019.

3. Suggest promising strategies that SoCal G2U, public-sector agencies, and colleges and universities might implement to increase the hiring and retention of talented and underrepresented employees into the public sector.

Working closely with the SoCal G2U Steering Committee, we used several approaches to address these objectives. To measure racial demographics and occupations, we analyzed quantitative data on the Southern California public-sector workforce. To review barriers and facilitators and to identify promising strategies, we reviewed the literature, including published studies and reports on the public-sector workforce. To capture local perspectives, we conducted interviews with Southern California college and university students, career services professionals, and public agency hiring managers.

In documenting facilitators and barriers, we combine insights from our literature scan, interviews, and quantitative analysis. In addition to describing facilitators and barriers (organized by stages of the career pipeline), we also present selected strategies that organizations are using to address the barriers, drawing both from literature and interviews. Following this, we provide our analysis of promising strategies for addressing the barriers, elaborating on example strategies that we identified through the literature and interviews.

Many of our sources and methods focus on racial and ethnic diversity, but we also consider facilitators and barriers that can affect individuals from the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning) community and people with disabilities.

Literature Scan

At the outset of the project, we performed a scan of literature related to working in the public sector at the local, state, and federal levels, particularly focusing on younger generations and workforce diversity. Our search included academic literature, reports from related nonprofits, news articles, and government reports over the past ten years. In particular, we focused on positive and negative perceptions of public service, diversity-related barriers (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status), transportation impacts on work, and Millennial and Generation Z attitudes. After a pruning process looking at the sources and strength of evidence, we summarized overarching categories and topics from the remaining articles. These topics contributed to our findings and also informed the development of the interview questions.

Interviews

To gain a local perspective on the issues, we conducted a series of semistructured interviews. We interviewed 16 students from seven colleges and universities. Using an initial self-report, we included men and women; students who identified as Black, Asian, Hispanic, and White; and some who reported having a disability. We also interviewed five career services professionals representing three colleges and universities, all within Southern California. We interviewed 12 hiring managers representing four federal agencies, one state agency, and six local agencies, each located in, or with responsibility for, the Southern California region. We recruited these respondents by working with members of the SoCal G2U Steering Committee with relevant contacts.

In our interviews of college students, we asked about their knowledge, interest, and past experience with public-sector careers, in addition to the resources they use to find jobs. Our interviews of career services professionals asked about public-sector partnerships, resources offered to students about public-sector careers, and student perceptions of the public sector. We asked the public-sector hiring managers about partnerships with colleges and universities, the resources their agency offers

students to explore careers, and student perceptions of their agency.

Quantitative Analysis

To describe the regional public-sector workforce, we analyzed data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), a nationally representative annual survey. Each year, the ACS surveys about 3.5 million American households. For this study, we analyzed the 2015–2019 ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files, so the values we report represent averages over this five-year period.

Limitations of This Study

Because many of our observations are based on a small number of interviews, the findings cannot reflect the full variety of perspectives in the region. Nonetheless, we hope that this report serves a useful function in examining issues that can affect recruiting talented and underrepresented individuals into the public sector and promising strategies to address those issues. Our analysis of these interviews offers a useful scan of issues relevant to the region, especially because we also examine the same issues as identified from the literature.

Organization of This Report

In this report, we present facilitators and barriers to hiring and potential strategies for stakeholders to implement to address barriers, following the three study objectives. The remainder of the report is organized into three sections. The next section presents findings related to facilitators and barriers, along with selected examples of strategies that are already in use to address the barriers. The following section provides the research team's suggestions for strategies that could lead to increasing talent and diversity in the public-sector workforce. A final section offers concluding remarks.

Recruiting and Hiring Facilitators and Barriers

It is useful to think of acquiring high-quality talent for the public workforce in terms of a pipeline with four stages (see Figure 3). Each of these stages has its own facilitators and barriers that can promote or hinder improving recruitment into public-sector careers. We identified these facilitators and barriers through a literature scan and through interviews with public-sector hiring managers, university career services professionals, and job-seeking students. In this section, we organize the discussion of facilitators and barriers thematically across the following career pipeline stages:

1. **Talent attraction** includes awareness and perceptions of public-sector careers. The general impressions of organizational mission and values, compensation, work environment, and workplace diversity and equity can attract or deter candidates.
2. **Candidate qualifications** focuses on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the job-seeker. This includes their professional skills, technical expertise, and career-ready skills.
3. **Entry and hiring process** examines facilitators and barriers that might exist regarding the role of internships, the application process, interviews, and the eventual onboarding of selected candidates.
4. **Career retention and advancement**, the final stage in our career pipeline, describes aspects of a career that might lead to retaining and developing the quality diverse talent that has made it through the hiring process.

Talent Attraction

The first stage in the career pipeline entails attracting talented and underrepresented workers. Here, we review facilitators and barriers to talent attraction, including awareness of opportunities, perceptions of government work, compensation, mission-driven impact, work culture, and diversity and representation of traditionally underrepresented groups within public-sector agencies.

Overview of Career Pipeline

Awareness of Public-Sector Opportunities

Before the public sector can attract talented and underrepresented individuals, potential employees must become aware of the opportunities in the sector. Awareness can represent a significant barrier to attracting talent, particularly for those from underrepresented racial groups. In our student interviews, we found that job-seeking **students were rarely aware of the range of opportunities available in the public sector**. Most students were able to identify only one or two public-sector careers, most commonly police officers or teachers, not the myriad of jobs available for business professions, research scientists, and computer experts listed in Figure 4. Several students said they knew about public-sector careers because of their own employment experience or that of their friends and relatives.

In fact, the Southern California public sector employs a wide range of occupations that draw on skills attained at colleges and universities. To identify the range of occupations represented in the public sector, we analyzed occupations in the sector most commonly held by full-time workers with a bachelor's degree or higher (using the ACS), as shown in Figure 4.

Perceptions of Government as an Employer

Once students become aware of public-sector opportunities, their decisions to pursue these opportunities are shaped by their perceptions of government organizations as desirable employers.

The students we interviewed who had worked in the public sector generally had done so at the local level, and they indicated that their view of the public sector was shaped by local government. In our

FIGURE 4

Public-Sector Occupations Employing College and University Graduates, Southern California Region (occupations in bold employ at least 5,000)

BUSINESS
- **Accountants**
- Human resources
- Compliance
- Project management

COMPUTER
- Software developers
- Systems analysts
- Operations research analysts

EDUCATION
- **Teachers**
- Librarians
- Media collections specialists

MEDICAL
- **Nurses**
- **Physicians**
- Speech-language pathologists
- Psychologists

OFFICE
- **Office clerks**
- Administrative support
- Eligibility interviewers

PUBLIC SAFETY
- **Police officers**
- Firefighters

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
- Civil and other engineers
- Physical scientists

SOCIAL SERVICE
- **Social workers**
- **Guidance counselors**
- Probation officers

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019.

NOTE: Occupations listed employ at least 1,950 full-time workers with bachelor's degrees or higher in the region.

Our student interviewees were concerned that the public sector offers lower compensation than the private sector.

interviews, many **students identified public-sector work as a major way to improve their communities, especially local communities**. Some students also recognized the potential for federal work to affect communities through its broader reach. But this perception of impact may be weaker today than in previous generations. Some authors have argued that talented graduates with a desire for social impact are increasingly choosing to seek careers in private and nonprofit organizations rather than government (Light, 2000).

Both positive and negative perceptions of government organizations can influence students' interest in applying. To some extent, **students' negative perceptions may be associated with low public opinion of the government in general**. For example, Gallup reported that only 25 percent of Americans viewed the federal government positively in 2019—and this number has never risen above 41 percent since Gallup started collecting data in 2003 (Gallup, 2021). But some agencies have been able to distinguish themselves and avoid this overall negative sentiment, perhaps because they articulate a clear mission that gains public support. Specifically, NASA receives 81 percent favorable views, and the National Park Service receives 86 percent favorable views, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Students' broad **perception of government employers may also be shaped by the impact of politics on the stability of government jobs**. For example, from the end of 2018 through the beginning of 2019, nearly 400,000 federal employees were

furloughed for 35 days (the longest in U.S. history) until the executive and legislative branches were able to agree on a national budget (Edwards et al., 2021). Employees find it discouraging when their pay is frozen or reduced through no fault of their own, and job-seekers are shut out of or discouraged from government jobs because of hiring or pay freezes (Ramsey, 2020). These political actions or inactions can have far reaching consequences for the public-sector workforce. In this regard, a 2014 RAND study found that worker retention is reduced when pay freezes last for years (Asch, Mattock, and Hosek, 2014).

Compensation

Many of our student interviewees appreciated the potential to make a positive impact on their communities through public-sector careers, but they were concerned that the public sector offers lower compensation than the private sector. When asked, **students said that they would choose the higher salaries in the private sector over the chance for impact in the public sector**. Governments at all levels have recognized these concerns and tried to address them over the years. For instance, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has created locality pay areas in high-cost-of-living regions to alleviate this issue, but this solution has not succeeded in closing the pay gap with the private sector in these areas (Partnership for Public Service, 2019).

Even when salaries are lower than in the private sector, **government agencies might be able to attract and reward employees by emphasizing more stable employment and generous benefit plans**. According to a recent convening of public-sector workforce stakeholders, these benefits may include health insurance, paid family/medical leave, retirement plans, transportation incentives, and student loan repayment (Ramsey, 2020; SLGE, 2020). These benefits, especially public-sector retirement plans, reward employees who stay for a full career in government. Additionally, a 2018 symposium on the future federal workforce highlighted that improving the overall employee experience, not just compensation, is especially important for public-sector agencies (MITRE Corporation, 2018).

Compensation challenges can be especially significant in high-demand fields. Standardized public-sector salary schedules, such as the federal General Schedule, make it difficult for agencies to vary salaries based on talent market conditions (Partnership for Public Service, 2020). Consistent with these limitations, a recent RAND comparison of public- and private-sector work found that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workers in the private sector make more money than those in the public sector. This study found that STEM workers in the public sector work shorter hours and receive higher benefits than in the private sector (Edwards et al., 2021).

Work Culture

Government work is viewed as cumbersome, old-fashioned, and overly bureaucratic. A 2019 Deloitte survey of public-sector employees found that while 56 percent of respondents think that internal work silos need to be removed in their organization, only 3 percent think that their organization was ready to do so. The same survey found that government entities are behind in switching to a cloud-based work structure—most of the agencies are still using predominantly paper—but only 33 percent thought that their organization was ready to switch over (Deloitte, 2019; Ramsey, 2020).

This inflexible workforce organization and slow adoption of modern technology are also reflected in rigid definitions of job roles and daily work schedules, which appear inconsistent with the current preference for flexible working styles. According to both our interviews and published reports, newer entrants to the workforce value flexible work arrangements that can accommodate schedules that can include classes, day care logistics, and other priorities (SLGE, 2019). Public-sector organizations have had to adopt more flexible approaches to work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they may be able to continue some of these practices to make their agencies more attractive to job-seekers. But the rigid job series definitions and advancement rules typically found in public-sector organizations might especially deter applicants with in-demand technical skills (Clark et al., 2020).

Diversity in the Workforce

Racial, gender, and other types of diversity are vital forms of representation at every level of government as government agencies tackle complex issues affecting their communities. Including a diverse range of individuals can lead to diverse perspectives to improve understanding and better outcomes to support the community it serves.

We found that, generally, **the Southern California public-sector workforce reflects the racial**

and ethnic composition of the local population, as shown in Figure 5. There are some variations between the public-sector workforce and the general population. Specifically, the public-sector workforce employs somewhat fewer Hispanic and more White and Black individuals than the regional population.

These workers, however, are not evenly distributed across the roles within the public sector. When we separate the workforce by earnings level, we see a different pattern in race and ethnicity. Figure 6 shows the total regional public-sector workforce divided into three categories of annual earnings: low, middle, and high. Full-time public-sector workers mostly earn in the middle or high range according to our definitions, which represent a living wage or middle class earnings level.

The figure also shows the same categories for each race and ethnic group. Examining Figure 6, we see that Hispanic and Black public-sector workers are concentrated in the middle earnings range, whereas White workers are concentrated in the high range. Asian and Pacific Islander workers are distributed about evenly between the middle and high earnings range.

Although the overall sector workforce distribution in Figure 5 largely reflects the region's race and ethnicity demographics, **Hispanic and Black workers in the sector are much less represented in the highest earnings group**. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that these groups not only have lower earnings but also, as a result, have less influence on policy and decisionmaking, because higher-paid roles are more often associated with professional and managerial occupations in the public sector.

Public-sector hiring managers we interviewed often saw increasing diversity in their hiring as necessary to advance agency strategic goals and improve service to their communities. A number of students we interviewed perceived that public-sector agencies were making efforts to build a diverse staff. They tended to be most aware of these efforts for local agencies with strong connections to local communities, and less aware of efforts to increase diversity in state and federal organizations.

At a 2019 summit on the future of the public-sector workforce, participants from the public sector or with an interest in public-sector hiring named

diversity and inclusion as the top trend shaping the workforce through 2030. Summit participants emphasized the importance of government agencies at all levels targeting a wide array of candidates who have been historically underrepresented across demographic groups—including racial and ethnic groups, members of the LGBTQ community, and those with physical and mental disabilities (SLGE, 2019).

Job-seekers place a high value on workforce diversity. According to a 2020 Harris Poll survey conducted for Glassdoor, 76 percent of job seekers and current employees report that "a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers" and 32 percent said they "would not apply to a job at a company where there is a lack of diversity among its workforce." An even higher fraction of Black (41 percent) and LGBTQ (41 percent) respondents said they would not apply to such a company, compared with White (30 percent) and non-LGBTQ (32 percent) individuals, respectively (Glassdoor, 2020).

Representation in general terms, however, is not sufficient. It is important that job-seekers see diverse representation at all levels of an organization, including in both entry-level and senior roles, and agencies must also create an inclusive work environment and culture for underrepresented workers to thrive. Employees have said (e.g., in Central Intelligence Agency, 2015) that they value clear and visible leadership commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion—and that they want these commitments demonstrated not only by senior leaders but also by managers and supervisors throughout the organization.

Agencies have recognized these issues and have taken measures to address them. During our interviews, we heard about initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels to promote diversity in hiring processes, although many of these efforts were in their infancy. Local hiring managers described their efforts to identify candidates in the community through partnerships with local schools or other youth-focused organizations. Representatives of state and federal agencies indicated that they are reconsidering their hiring process and internship availability to attract a more diverse candidate pools, as we discuss in later sections.

FIGURE 5

Total Population and Full-Time Public-Sector Workers, by Race/Ethnicity, Southern California Region, 2015–2019
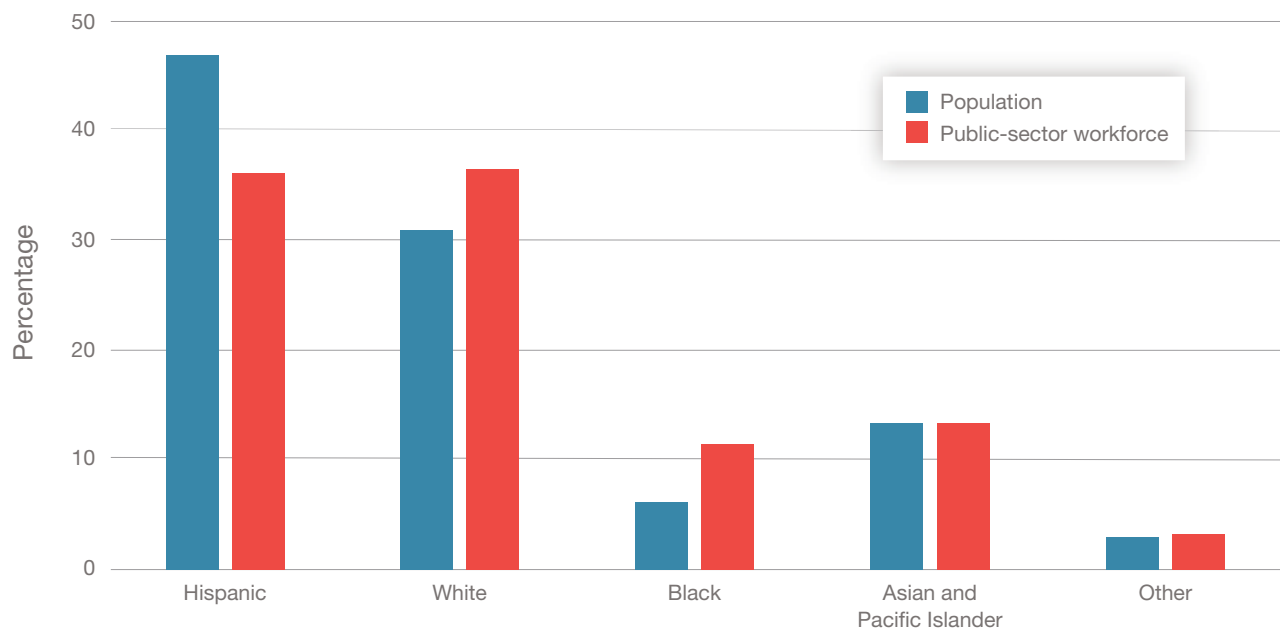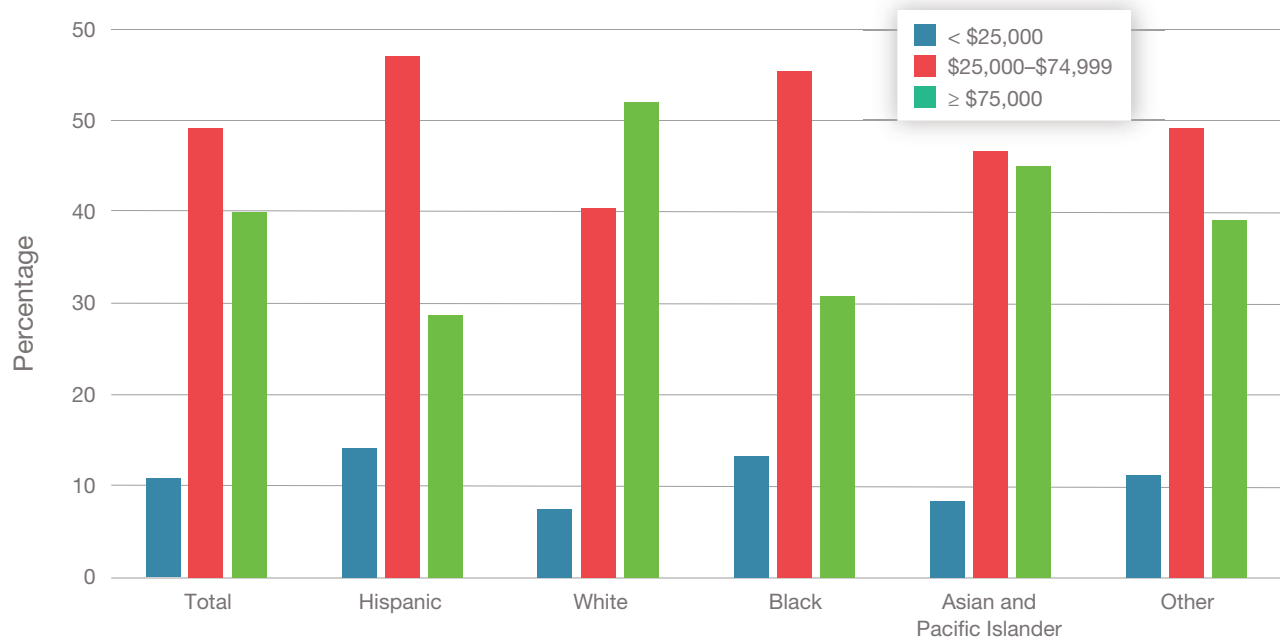

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019.
NOTE: Categories other than Hispanic are non-Hispanic.

FIGURE 6

Full-Time Public-Sector Worker Earnings, by Race/Ethnicity, Southern California Region (2019 $)

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019.
NOTE: Categories other than Hispanic are non-Hispanic.

Transportation

Transportation options can enable or limit individuals' access to employment. Transportation systems vary across the country and within Southern California. Workers in the Southern California region overwhelmingly use private vehicles to commute to work, whether in the public or private sectors. As Figure 7 shows, **just 3 percent of full-time public-sector workers in the region use public transportation**. Because public transportation is more available in Los Angeles County than in the other five counties in the region, public transportation usage is somewhat higher in Los Angeles County (at 5 percent), compared with 1–2 percent in each of the other counties (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019). The workers that do use public transportation tend to spend almost double the amount of time commuting to work each day than those who use private vehicles, as shown in Figure 7.

For urban areas, high costs of living often require public-sector workers to have long commutes from lower-cost-of-living areas. Long commutes have been linked to stress, lower productivity, and absenteeism (Cal-ICMA, 2018).

Both college students and hiring managers we interviewed cited transportation as an important consideration for job-seekers and even a barrier to applying for and accepting employment in public-sector agencies. Some hiring managers reported that offering transit vouchers or other transportation incentives helped overcome these barriers.

The students we interviewed varied significantly on their job location preferences. Some were interested only in jobs to which they could commute easily, in 30 minutes or less. Others were willing to commute considerably longer, or to relocate, to access an attractive job.

Candidate Qualifications

The next stage of the career pipeline considers facilitators and barriers related to the qualifications of prospective public-sector employees. In this section, we review three main areas: students' technical knowledge, their professional skills, and their eligibly for employment.
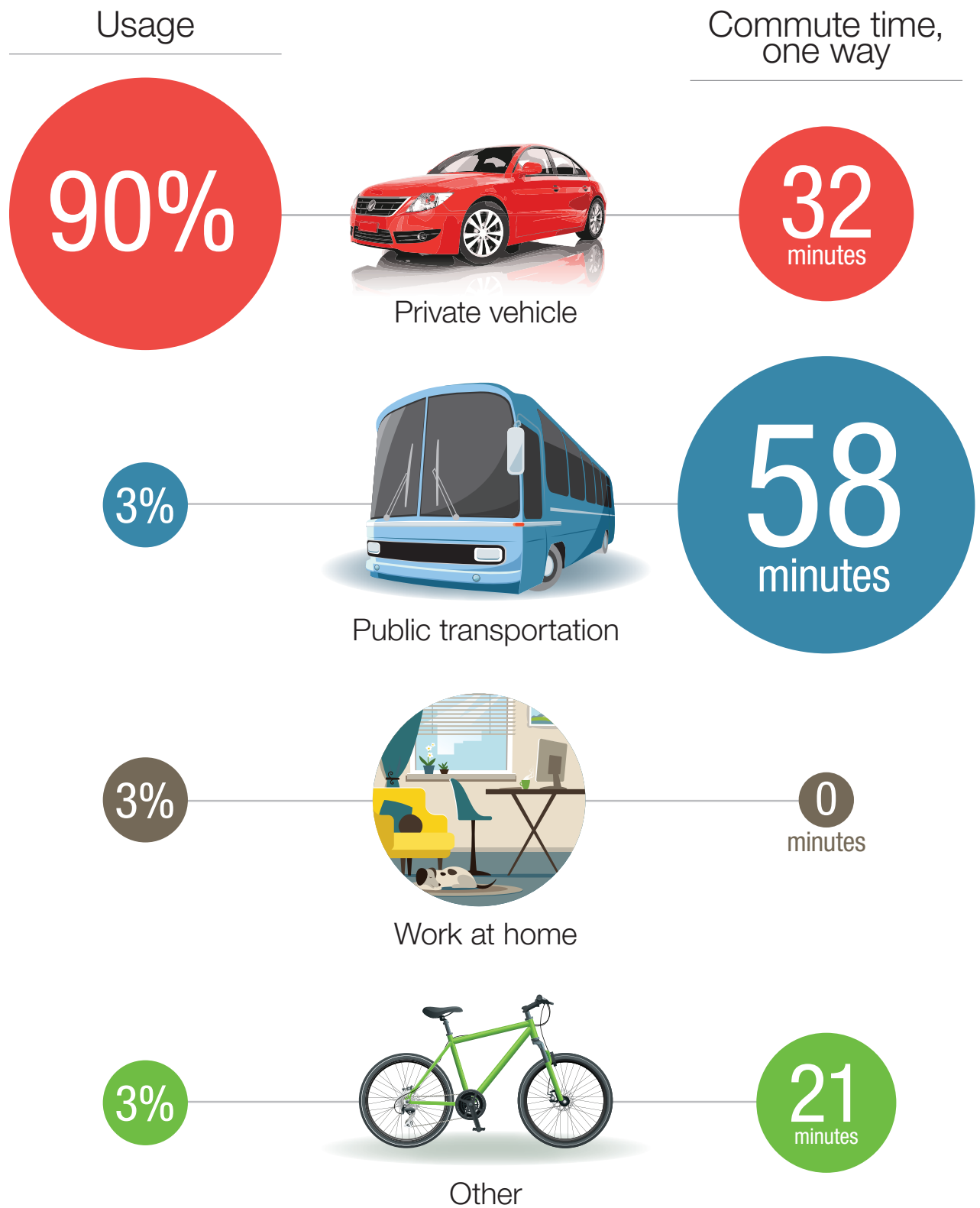
During our interviews, **hiring managers praised Southern California college and universities students' technical skills and willingness to learn**. Career services professionals also agreed that students typically were well equipped with specific skills applicable to public-sector employment. However, interviewees noted that entry-level candidates understandably lack practical experience; their preparation may be mostly theoretical. Some hiring managers observed that recent cohorts of students have sought to develop more practical experience through volunteer work, especially when they cannot complete formal internships. However, valuing volunteer work as good experience potentially gives applicants with more resources and ability to work for free an advantage in obtaining employment.

Public-sector hiring managers and career service professionals reported that **students often lack important professional skills that public-sector leaders value**. These skills encompass both job search skills and workplace essential skills. Job search skills include interviewing, résumé writing, and being punctual for appointments. Sparse résumés or lackluster interview performances might hold recent graduates back from entry-level public-sector jobs. Beyond these skills, California public-sector managers have particularly emphasized that employees need to develop workplace essential skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, leadership, and interpersonal communication (Cal-ICMA, 2018).

In addition to these skill qualifications, candidates must also be eligible for employment. For federal, and sometimes other, government employment, candidates must be U.S. citizens. Limiting the pool of applicants to citizens can affect certain underrepresented communities. For instance, a study of Hispanic representation in the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) civilian workforce found that the citizenship requirement is associated with lower representation of Hispanic workers in DoD compared with the overall American workforce (Matthews et al., 2017).

FIGURE 7
Commuting Methods and Time for Full-Time Public–Sector Workers,
Southern California Region, 2015–2019

Usage

Commute time, one way

90% Private vehicle — **32** minutes

3% Public transportation — **58** minutes

3% Work at home — **0** minutes

3% Other — **21** minutes

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019.

Entry and Hiring Process

We now turn to the entry and hiring stage of the career pipeline. This stage entails efforts to prepare the talent pipeline through programs such as internships, as well as how agencies recruit for and fill full-time positions.

Internship Opportunities

Employers of all types seek to familiarize potential candidates with their workplaces and help them acquire skills through internship programs and other efforts to offer work experience before students graduate from college. **Internships often lead to applicants being more competitive for employment**, either with the same agency or through building skills and credentials for future applications to other organizations. With these goals in mind, the federal government operates formal "Pathways" programs to offer federal internships and employment opportunities to current students and recent graduates. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities runs a National Internship Program which connects more than 470 Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) with federal internship opportunities (Matthews et al., 2017). One example of a federal student recruitment program that has been found to be effective is DoD's Student Training and Academic Recruitment (STAR) Program (Matthews et al., 2018a).

Because student awareness of public-sector opportunities may be low, internships can be a valuable tool to increase awareness in general and also to broaden participation among those traditionally underrepresented in the workforce. Stakeholders have identified internships and fellowships as ways to increase entry into public-sector careers and improve workforce diversity (SLGE, 2020).

Stakeholders and our interviewees have raised two major concerns about public-sector internships. First, **there is a perception that public-sector internship opportunities are not widely and equitably publicized to potential audiences, thus limiting the diversity of the applicant pool**. Second, there is budgetary pressure to rely on unpaid internships, which can make these unaffordable for students with lower family income (Gardner, 2011; SLGE, 2020).

There has been increasing recognition that unpaid internships can limit diversity in the talent pipeline. Recognizing these concerns, President Joe Biden issued an executive order on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the federal workforce, which, among other initiatives, directs federal agencies to increase the availability of paid internships and improve outreach to underrepresented communities to access these internships (Biden, 2021). Aside from these policy initiatives, some foundations are also trying to increase access to public-sector internships by providing grants that can be used to offer stipends when the government agency does not pay students.

Recruitment

Public-sector employers use a range of strategies to connect with potential talented and underrepresented job applicants. They advertise open jobs on internet sites that our student interviewees reported viewing to explore potential jobs. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities often hosted career fairs, visits from professionals, and information sessions, which student interviewees said they attended. Our interviewees reported that while public-sector agencies sometimes participated in these forums, the events were rarely focused on this sector. During the pandemic, these events were often canceled, although some transitioned to virtual events. In some cases, agencies also attempt to build relationships with community organizations, colleges, and universities that are potential sources of talent.

Building local relationships may be especially important in Southern California because the region's high cost of living presents challenges for public-sector recruitment. Although diverse talent is available around the country, agencies have faced difficulty in attracting applicants because of the higher cost of living compared with many other portions of the country. Some agencies have found success by focusing on local colleges and universities, where students are already used to the high cost of living (Partnership for Public Service, 2019).

Agencies, colleges, and students all rely on informal connections and personal networks for recruiting. Our interviews with career services

professionals indicated that few of them had any formal partnerships with public-sector agencies for recruiting. Instead they rely on informal connections between their alumni and faculty and public agencies. Similarly, students make heavy use of informal connections. Even though student job seekers attend career events and search internet job posting sites, most students we interviewed stated that a personal connection to an employee is the best way to get hired into an organization, public sector or otherwise.

The informal nature of these connections poses two important challenges to recruiting a diverse applicant pool. First, according to our interviewees, informal connections get disrupted any time there is turnover at either the agency or the academic institution. As a result, agencies and students can miss out on promising connections. Second, **informal networks tend to connect people of similar characteristics and exclude people from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds from opportunities**. More purposeful and systematic relationships could overcome both of these challenges.

Hiring Process

Government hiring processes are often very lengthy and complicated and may serve to limit the pool of talented and diverse applicants with the knowledge, patience, and resources to persist through these processes. Public-sector agencies often use bureaucratic titles for their jobs, which students find difficult to interpret. Some states, such as Pennsylvania, have experienced significant increases in applications after agencies rewrote job titles and descriptions using language that more clearly describes the position rather than using jargon or catchphrases. For example, Pennsylvania, got many qualified applications by advertising for a "Director of Lottery Sales" instead of an "Administrative Officer 5," which is difficult for job seekers to interpret (Patton, 2019).

Hiring managers we interviewed, as well as previous reports on the topic, emphasize that the public sector's reliance on formal testing requirements and strict minimum qualifications erect barriers to hiring (Cal-ICMA, 2018). In contrast to often quicker

Every stage of the hiring process seems to take longer in the public sector.

private-sector processes, public-sector hiring can take many months, and during most of that time it is unclear to candidates where they are in the process, discouraging and demotivating them (Cal-ICMA, 2018). Job-seekers from less affluent backgrounds might have to take other employment in the interim, lowering the chance that they will continue to remain available for this long hiring period.

These cumbersome processes are exacerbated when agencies require applicants to use government-specific job application sites, such as USAJOBS, rather than making their interest known through the job search websites that are common portals to jobs in the private sector. Research has found that many federal agencies do not provide adequate assistance to students who are struggling with USAJOBS during the hiring process (Matthews et al., 2017, 2018a).

Every stage of the hiring process seems to take longer in the public sector. A 2017 Glassdoor study of the interview process showed that government agencies spend 2.5 times as long on the interview process as the average private-sector industry does (Chamberlain, 2017). Furthermore, government agencies often require time-consuming background and security checks before a candidate can start work (Clark et al., 2020). Some agencies have reduced hiring times by streamlining hiring processes, eliminating hiring bottlenecks, and adopting automation and analytics (Clark et al., 2020). Just like in the private sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has moved many hiring processes online, and several agencies have indicated that they are assessing which of these changes are beneficial enough to be maintained (Partnership for Public Service, 2020).

The federal interview process has been found to be a barrier for individuals with disabilities (IWD)

because of issues related to fear of discrimination, lack of proper interview accommodations, and lack of IWD awareness from organizations (Matthews et al., 2018a).

Although agencies are interested in increasing diversity in their hiring processes, other values may compete. For example, governments at multiple levels give preference to veterans in hiring. Some of the hiring managers we interviewed cited these veteran preferences as making it more difficult to hire entry-level candidates from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. People of color (i.e., Hispanic and non-White individuals) make up 69 percent of the region's overall population, but they make up just 43 percent of the region's veterans (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015–2019). Other research has found that the high proportion of veteran employees in DoD contributes to the gap in women's representation between DoD and the nation's overall civilian workforce (Schulker and Matthews, 2018). In addition, a study found that only 30 percent of federal hiring managers were familiar with Schedule A, the hiring authority for those with cognitive or significant physical disabilities, limiting opportunities to increase the representation of this population. On the other hand, 56 percent were familiar with the hiring authority for veterans with disabilities (Matthews et al., 2018a).

In 1996, Californians passed Proposition 209, which prohibits granting preferential treatment in public employment on the basis of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and sex. And in 2020, a proposition that would have repealed Proposition 209 to allow race-conscious initiatives did not pass. One hiring manager we interviewed suggested that California public policy limits efforts to target diversity in state hiring and employment and that state agency managers might interpret this policy as also prohibiting race-conscious initiatives, such as recognition events, even when the initiatives do not offer specific preferences.

Career Retention and Advancement

The final stage of the career pipeline concerns career advancement and employee retention. In this section,

we discuss professional development, mentoring, and career pathways.

Professional development and mentoring opportunities help attract and retain employees to public-sector agencies (Cal-ICMA, 2018). Stakeholders highlight how offering training on critical thinking, adaptability, and interpersonal communication can help retain employees and develop an internal promotion pipeline (SLGE, 2020). Beyond the skills acquired through formal training and professional development opportunities, informal mentoring helps employees to navigate organizational culture and position themselves for future success. According to a RAND study, mentoring has been found to help employee retention for underrepresented groups (Matthews et al., 2018b).

Professional development and mentoring can help employees increase their capabilities and encourage them to stay by increasing their sense of inclusion. But some **stakeholders express concern that professional development and mentoring programs are not equitably available to all groups**. A 2017 Intelligence Community report found that staff perceived that opportunities like these were disproportionally offered to "impenetrable elite groups," leaving other employees out of these critical developmental opportunities (Intelligence Community Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Office, 2017). That report suggested that agencies could develop leadership education, mentorship opportunities, and shadowing programs to expand access equitably, including to underrepresented groups.

Although we focus mostly on entry-level hiring in this report, we also highlight considerations related to promotion and retention. In addition to professional development and mentoring, employees can develop their skills through challenging job assignments. **Stakeholders have specifically identified cross-cutting and stretch assignments as ways to facilitate the growth of talent in public-sector agencies** (Cal-ICMA, 2018).

Achieving diverse representation at more senior roles faces special challenges. Many public agencies concentrate their hiring at entry-level positions and build their senior staff through internal promotions rather than hiring mid-career professionals from outside their agency. To the extent that these agencies lack diverse representation among their senior staff, this practice significantly slows the pace of increasing representation to match that of the community they serve. Because of the lack of middle- and senior-level opportunities, the public sector often fails to capitalize on the fact that most workers switch careers, companies, and sectors of work (Light, 2000). **Both the development of talented and underrepresented internal leaders to fill mid-level roles and aggressive hiring of mid-level employees can aid in filling the existing gaps in the public sector** (Cal-ICMA, 2018; Light, 2000).

Promising Strategies to Recruit and Hire Diverse Talent

Expanding the pipeline of talented and underrepresented workers for public-sector careers requires strategies to address the barriers and build on the facilitators that we identified through this research. In this section, we offer promising strategies that SoCal G2U and other community organizations , public-sector agencies, and higher education institutions might implement to increase the hiring and retention of traditionally underrepresented groups in the public sector. Our analysis of promising strategies considers ways to overcome the barriers and capitalize on the facilitators, drawing on and extending the

examples of strategies that we identified from the literature scan and interviews.

During our interviews, we heard that organizations in the public sector, higher education institutions, and the wider community all seek to increase representation of talented and underrepresented individuals throughout the workforce, including the public sector. As the analysis in this report demonstrates, the process of attracting and retaining diverse talent entails many stages, each with its own challenges. We offer suggestions that address many of these specific challenges.

Consistently Articulate Leadership Commitment to Increasing Recruitment of Talented and Underrepresented Individuals into the Public Sector

Whenever stakeholders undertake significant changes to improve a complex system, they need to mobilize resources and build relationships that can be sustained over time to make the changes they seek. To sustain those commitments, a key strategy is to start by securing clear commitments to these goals from organizational leaders. Leaders in the public sector, higher education institutions, and community organizations can regularly and consistently express

and demonstrate their commitments both within their own organizations and to external audiences.

Communicate the Benefits of Public-Sector Careers

Students we interviewed were sometimes attracted by the community service mission of public-sector agencies, but many of them had overall negative perceptions of government organizations as employers. Government agencies can seek to improve students' perceptions by emphasizing their purpose-driven mission and the employee benefits and job stability they offer. Building this awareness can productively start with high school students and continue through college.

As Southern California agencies and higher education institutions address some of the barriers we identify, they have a good opportunity to publicize the improvements they are making, which can help to shift these perceptions over time. SoCal G2U and other community organizations can amplify and reinforce these communications through their own platforms and networks.

Improve the Awareness and Sharing of Job and Internship Opportunities

We found that students in Southern California had limited knowledge of the career opportunities in the public sector. The analysis depicted in Figure 4 showcases the wide range of professional roles that the regional public sector can offer. SoCal G2U, higher education institutions, and public-sector agencies can all communicate this wide range of opportunities more clearly to prospective employees. Some of this communication could seamlessly be incorporated into general information campaigns. There are several different strategies to improve awareness.

There is also a wide scope to convey information about the range of public-sector careers that specific academic pathways can support. Such approaches could include guest speakers and panel presentations that expose students to jobs they might pursue with their degrees. It is important that these speakers include individuals who themselves are talented and underrepresented, which is likely to increase connections with underrepresented prospective employees.

Build Platforms to Connect Public-Sector Employers with Prospective Employees

Beyond building general awareness among prospective employees, there are opportunities to develop programming and platforms that can efficiently connect public-sector employers with talented and underrepresented candidates. Colleges and universities often organize job fairs (in person or virtual) to help employers fill specific positions, although we heard that public-sector agencies may not be well represented. SoCal G2U and other community organizations could help by organizing regional virtual or in-person job fairs specifically to promote public-sector opportunities to underrepresented candidates.

Increase Awareness of Internships

We also found that student awareness of public-sector internship opportunities was low. To increase awareness of internship (and job) opportunities, several strategies could be pursued. Thus, there may be value in developing a regional database of public-sector internship opportunities that colleges and groups aiming to increase minority representation can use to match qualified students to these opportunities. Further, to increase exposure and awareness of public-sector careers, both in general terms and for specific opportunities, academic institutions and public-sector agencies can connect with a variety of organizations that aim to increase representation in the workforce.

It is important that public-sector agencies seek funding for student internships.

Align Public-Sector Job Titles with Those in the Private Sector

Public-sector agencies could align their job titles and descriptions more closely with those of similar private-sector jobs. These clearer titles and descriptions can also enable agencies to advertise their opportunities on popular job search sites, such as LinkedIn, Indeed, and Handshake. These popular sites have many features to connect employers and full-time job seekers.

Help Students Understand the Government Hiring Timeline

Because the hiring process often takes months, multiple stakeholders can help students navigate this process. Colleges and universities can build their students' familiarity with government hiring processes and government agencies can engage applicants to retain their interest in the jobs, and more broadly in the public sector.

Highlight Access to Public Transportation When Available

Our interviews and analysis of commuting times show that transportation is a major consideration when prospective employees evaluate job and internship opportunities in Southern California. Agencies that are well served by public transit or offer transportation benefits can publicize these advantages in their recruitment materials to address job-seekers' commuting concerns.

Foster Preparation for Career Entry and Retention

Consider the Impact of Unpaid Internships

As we and others have found, internships provide an important pathway to develop the talent pipeline. Public-sector agencies often rely on unpaid intern-

ships, which are most accessible to economically advantaged students. Reliance on unpaid internships, thus, tends to perpetuate the advantage of majority students and disadvantage of minority students in future employment. To the extent that public-sector agencies are committed to diversifying their talent pipelines, it is important that they seek funding for student internships, either from agency budgets or external philanthropic sources. Promoting funded internships and connecting sources of funding with opportunities are roles that SoCal G2U and other community organizations could lead in the region.

Create Mentoring Programs

Mentoring and professional development programs can serve to both attract and retain workers in the public sector, but these programs might not be equitably available to or effective for all groups. Agencies can focus on making their own programs more inclusive and effective, so that employees from traditionally underrepresented groups receive full benefit. Externally, community organizations such as SoCal G2U could develop regional programs that connect talented and underrepresented job-seekers with developmental activities or experienced mentors, who can offer guidance to navigating a successful public-sector career. Because Southern California is so large and heavily defined by local transportation systems, programming needs to be accessible across the 38,000-square-mile region.

Institutionalize Connections Between Government and Higher Education

To increase the number of talented and underrepresented workers, many of the strategies we offer above can be enhanced by more systematic connections between government agencies and higher

education institutions throughout the region. We found that current partnerships are often based on informal relationships among specific individuals, leaving them vulnerable to disruption whenever there is turnover. Colleges, universities, and government employers can take the opportunity to develop institutionalized relationships that are less dependent on individual connections.

Local governments, in particular, might hire only occasionally, so they could benefit from coordinating with each other to strengthen their relationships with higher education rather than trying to maintain each relationship on their own. These local collaborations could also seek funding for student internships to broaden the pipeline of talent.

People and organizations face many demands on their time and resources, so it can be challenging to dedicate time to building institutional relationships like these. Leaders in public sectors can demonstrate their commitment to improving the pipeline of diverse talent into the public sector by establishing connections with other leaders who are aiming to increase diversity in the workforce, and by requiring their public-sector organizations to developed institutionalized partnerships that can be sustained and can pay dividends well into the future.

We summarize these promising strategies in Figure 8.

Conclusion

There are barriers to increasing the pipeline of talented and underrepresented individuals entering and remaining in public-sector careers, but we have identified a number of strategies that can mitigate these challenges. Public-sector agencies, colleges and universities, and community organizations can all cooperate to refine and implement these strategies. We expect that strategies like these can accomplish two fundamental goals: increasing underrepresented students' awareness of rewarding opportunities in the public sector and making public-sector organizations more diverse. These efforts should reinforce each other. As the workforce diversifies, organizations are likely to find it easier and easier to sustain and expand a diverse talent pipeline as career seekers from different backgrounds will see employees who look like them in the public sector. As more talented and underrepresented employees serve as role models to attract new diverse talent, agencies should be able to more easily strengthen connections with diverse communities.

FIGURE 8
Overview of Promising Strategies

Consistently articulate leadership commitment to increasing recruitment of talented and underrepresented individuals into the public sector

- Secure clear commitments to diversity goals from organizational leaders
- Express and demonstrate commitments

Communicate the benefits of public-sector careers

- Emphasizing purpose-driven mission, employee benefits, and job stability
- Publicize improvements

Improve the awareness and sharing of job and internship opportunities

- Communicate the wide range of opportunities to prospective employees
- Adopt multiple methods of interaction, including information campaigns, speakers, job fairs, and popular job search websites
- Develop regional internship database
- Make job titles and descriptions clearer
- Help students navigate the hiring process
- Publicize transportation benefits

Foster preparation for career entry and retention

- Promote funded internships, either through agency budgets or external funding
- Make agency mentoring and professional development programs inclusive
- Develop external regional mentoring and professional development programs

Institutionalize connections between government and higher education

- Nurture systematic connections between government agencies and higher education institutions
- Build leader-to-leader and organization-to-organization relationships
- Foster collaboration among local governments to broaden the pipeline of talent

References

Asch, Beth J., Michael G. Mattock, and James Hosek, *The Federal Civil Service Workforce: Assessing the Effects on Retention of Pay Freezes, Unpaid Furloughs, and Other Federal-Employee Compensation Changes in the Department of Defense*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-514-OSD, 2014. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR514.html

Biden, Joseph R., *Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce*, Washington, D.C.: The White House, June 25, 2021. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/

Cal-ICMA, *Talent 2.0: A Modern Approach to Attracting and Retaining Top Talent in Local Government*, Spring 2018. As of October 1, 2021:
https://icma.org/sites/default/files/TDT%20REPORT%20-%20 FINAL%20050718.pdf

Center for State and Local Government Excellence, *Workforce 2030 Summit: Planning for the Next Generation of State and Local Government Employees*, 2019. As of October 1, 2021:
https://slge.org/assets/uploads/2020/03/public-sector-workforce-2030-key-takeaways.pdf

Center for State and Local Government Excellence, *Stakeholders Meeting on Developing The Public Sector Workforce of the Future*, 2020. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.slge.org/assets/uploads/2020/12/public-workforce-stakeholders-report.pdf

Central Intelligence Agency, *Director's Diversity in Leadership Study: Overcoming Barriers to Advancement*, April 2015. As of August 20, 2021:
https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=767776

Chamberlain, Andrew, "How Long Does It Take to Hire? Interview Duration in 25 Countries," Glassdoor.com, August 9, 2017. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.glassdoor.com/research/time-to-hire-in-25-countries/

Clark, Danny, Marcy Jacobs, Megan McConnell, and Sarah Tucker-Ray, "Transforming the US Government's Approach to Hiring Digital Talent," September 9, 2020. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/transforming-the-us-governments-approach-to-hiring-digital-talent

Deloitte, *Leading the Social Enterprise: Reinvent with a Human Focus*, 2019. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/5136_HC-Trends-2019/DI_HC-Trends-2019.pdf

Edwards, Kathryn A., Maria McCollester, Brian Phillips, Hannah Acheson-Field, Isabel Leamon, Noah Johnson, and Maria C. Lytell, *Compensation and Benefits for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Workers: A Comparison of the Federal Government and the Private Sector*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-4267-OSD, 2021. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4267.html

Gallup, "In Depth Topics A to Z: Government," 2021. As of October 1, 2021:
https://news.gallup.com/poll/27286/government.aspx

Gardner, Phil, *The Debate over Unpaid College Internships*, Austin, Tex.: Intern Bridge, 2011. As of October 1, 2021:
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.372.1710&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Glassdoor, *Diversity and Inclusion Workplace Survey*, September 2020. As of October 1, 2021:
https://b2b-assets.glassdoor.com/glassdoor-diversity-inclusion-workplace-survey.pdf?_gl=1*4x2kac*_ga*MTg3OTI2NjEuMTYy Njg5NDI1Mw..*_ga_RC95PMVB3H*MTYyNjg5NDI1MS4xLjAu MTYyNjg5NDI1MS42MA

Intelligence Community Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Office, *Diversity and Inclusion: Examining Workforce Concerns Within the Intelligence Community*, January 2017. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/IC_EEOD_Barriers_Analysis.pdf

Light, Paul C., "The Empty Government Talent Pool: The New Public Service Arrives," *Brookings Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, December 1, 2000, pp. 20–23. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-empty-government-talent-pool-the-new-public-service-arrives/

Matthews, Miriam, Bruce R. Orvis, David Schulker, Kimberly Curry Hall, Abigail Haddad, Stefan Zavislan, and Nelson Lim, *Hispanic Representation in the Department of Defense Civilian Workforce: Trend and Barrier Analysis*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1699-OSD, 2017. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1699.html

Matthews, Miriam, David Schulker, Kimberly Curry Hall, Abigail Haddad, and Nelson Lim, *Representation of Persons with Targeted Disabilities: An Analysis of Barriers to Employment in the Department of Defense Civilian Workforce*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2297-OSD, 2018a. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2297.html

Matthews, Miriam, David Schulker, Kimberly Curry Hall, Abigail Haddad, Nelson Lim, Bruce R. Orvis, and Stefan Zavislan, *Unequal Opportunity: Barriers to Employment in the Department of Defense Civilian Workforce*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RB-10017-OSD, 2018b. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10017.html

MITRE Corporation, *Symposium on the Federal Workforce for the 21st Century*, McLean, Va., 2018. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.mitre.org/sites/default/files/publications/PR-18-3746-Symposium-Federal-Workforce-21st-Century-Report.pdf

Partnership for Public Service, *California's Talent Gap: Recruiting and Hiring a New Generation of Federal Employees*, September 2019. As of October 1, 2021:
https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Californias-Talent-Gap-2.pdf

Partnership for Public Service, *A Time for Talent: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring*, August 2020. As of October 1, 2021:
https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-Time-for-Talent.pdf

Patton, Zach, "Why It's Easier to Find a Job in Pennsylvania," *Governing*, April 5, 2019. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-pennsylvania-civil-service-reforms-easier-jobs.html

Pew Research Center, "Public Expresses Favorable Views of a Number of Federal Agencies," October 1, 2019. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/10/01/public-expresses-favorable-views-of-a-number-of-federal-agencies/

Ramsey, Mike, *Hiring Challenges Confront Public-Sector Employers*, SHRM, February 15, 2020. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/Pages/hiring-challenges-confront-public-sector-employers.aspx

SCAG—*See* Southern California Association of Governments.

Schulker, David, and Miriam Matthews, *Women's Representation in the U.S. Department of Defense Workforce: Addressing the Influence of Veterans' Employment*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2458-OSD, 2018. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2458.html

SLGE—*See* Center for State and Local Government Excellence.

Southern California Association of Governments, "About Us," undated. As of October 1, 2021:
https://scag.ca.gov/about-us

Southern California Association of Governments, "SCAG General Fact Sheet," July 3, 2012. As of October 1, 2021:
http://mobility21.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SCAG-Fact-Sheet.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, 2021. As of October 1, 2021:
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/microdata.html

Abbreviations

ACS	American Community Survey
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
G2U	Government-to-University Initiative
IWD	individuals with disabilities
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
SLGE	Center for State and Local Government Excellence

About This Report

Although there is great interest in attracting talented and underrepresented individuals into public-sector careers, there is also concern that graduates of colleges and universities may not be considering the sector and that government agencies are not doing all they could to attract the next generation of workers.

To help bridge these gaps, the Volcker Alliance sponsored the Southern California Government-to-University Initiative (SoCal G2U), hosted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and part of a nationwide network of G2U initiatives. The Volcker Alliance and SCAG supported this study to provide a base of evidence that can guide SoCal G2U and other stakeholders around the country that are committed to increasing the flow of talented and diverse workers into public-sector careers.

RAND Education and Labor

This study was undertaken by RAND Education and Labor, a division of the RAND Corporation that conducts research on early childhood through postsecondary education programs, workforce development, and programs and policies affecting workers, entrepreneurship, and financial literary and decisionmaking.

More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

Southern California Association of Governments

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities, and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to encourage a more sustainable Southern California. More information about SCAG can be found at scag.ca.gov.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the SoCal G2U Steering Committee co-chairs Debbie Dillon and Sandy Buchan for their helpful assistance throughout the project. Members of the Steering Committee, including Jonathan Gereige, Kathrene Hansen, Gayla Hartsough, Christal Murray, Thomas Norman, Denise Ovrom, and Krystal Rawls, assisted the project team in making contact with research participants and providing feedback on the work. Peter Morrissey and Yesenia Martinez of the Volcker Alliance also provided support and encouragement during our work. We thank Katherine Carman, Kimberly Hall, and Shui Yan Tang for their careful reviews of drafts.

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

Research Integrity

Our mission to help improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis is enabled through our core values of quality and objectivity and our unwavering commitment to the highest level of integrity and ethical behavior. To help ensure our research and analysis are rigorous, objective, and nonpartisan, we subject our research publications to a robust and exacting quality-assurance process; avoid both the appearance and reality of financial and other conflicts of interest through staff training, project screening, and a policy of mandatory disclosure; and pursue transparency in our research engagements through our commitment to the open publication of our research findings and recommendations, disclosure of the source of funding of published research, and policies to ensure intellectual independence. For more information, visit www.rand.org/about/principles.

For more information on this publication, visit www.rand.org/t/RRA1255-1.

© 2021 RAND Corporation

www.rand.org