

**Within Reach . . . But Out of Synch**  
**The Possibilities and Challenges of Shaping**  
**Tomorrow's Government Workforce**

**A Report by**

**The Council for Excellence in Government**  
**&**  
**The Gallup Organization**

**December 5, 2006**



THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

## **THE LANDSCAPE**

The predictions are dire when it comes to the future of the federal workforce.

According to experts, 60 percent of the federal government's General Schedule (rank and file workforce) employees—and 90 percent of the Senior Executive Service (federal government's top managers)—will be eligible to retire in the next ten years. The nation risks losing a huge portion of government's most precious asset—its people . . . as well as continuity, important technical expertise, and critical institutional knowledge.

If that were the entire story, the challenge would be daunting. But the reality gets worse. In addition to the federal government brain drain (state and local governments also report a looming talent crisis of even larger percentages), the entire US workforce is getting older, with record numbers of baby boomers retiring. At the same time, the next generation of American workers – Gen Y – is a smaller percentage (16%) of the total population when compared to the generation that will retire. (Baby boomers currently make up 25% of the population.) As a result, the competition among the public, private and non-profit sectors for America's best and brightest is going to be unparalleled and fierce.

The effort that government makes now could be its strongest and most competitive edge for the future. Information about tomorrow's workforce, particularly in key areas of experience and expertise, is a critical component. To reach them, we need to understand their wants, needs and preferences about work.

This report identifies trends that will influence the federal government's ability to attract and retain talented workers to replace those who are leaving. Our intention is to get answers to some simple but important questions: What do key/targeted populations value in a job? How do they perceive working in the federal sector? How do they get information about jobs? What is the brand value of selected federal agencies?

## **WHO WE ARE**

This study--and the ongoing projects that will follow as a result of it--is a combined effort of The Council for Excellence in Government and The Gallup Organization.

The Gallup Organization is a world leader in the science of research. Since its founding in the 1930s, Gallup has been at the forefront in developing new research concepts and methodologies. Gallup provides opinion research and management consulting to both Government and industry. By incorporating both data and process-based consulting, Gallup delivers performance breakthroughs for civil agencies, the intelligence community, and the Department of Defense. Gallup leverages its deep understanding of human behavior to consult in the areas of human capital management, branding, and customer engagement. The Gallup Panel is The Gallup Organization's most dynamic research method to date, and is foremost in the field of market and social research. Built on Gallup's rich tradition as the world's leading public opinion pollster, The Gallup Panel gives true representation--and a collective voice--to the people while studying their behaviors, preferences, and attitudes.

The Council for Excellence in Government is a catalyst for constructive change in government. Nonpartisan, nonprofit and national in scope, the Council works to: improve government performance at all levels; attract and retain the best and brightest to public sector jobs; and increase citizen participation, understanding and trust in government. Founded nearly 25 years ago, the Council is recognized across the country and around the world as an authoritative and provocative voice on a range of issues that impact the strength and vitality of our nation's civic life and public service.

The Council has an impressive record of achievement on projects that focus on the government workplace, the government workforce of the future, and broad issues involving American jobs and the economy. The Council's groundbreaking studies on youth and government jobs include: *From the "Ask Not Generation to the Not Ask Generation: Young People and Public Service-2004* and *The Unanswered Call to Public Service-2002*. In 2004/2005 the Council conducted six first-of-their-kind town hall meetings across the country as part of a national conversation on American jobs.

Working together and bringing their unique strengths to bear, The Council and the Gallup Organization will provide innovative research, dialogue opportunities, and other activities to actively engage a broad coalition of public, private and non-profit leaders in a collective effort to shape tomorrow's federal workforce.

### **WHAT WE DID AND HOW WE DID IT**

The findings presented in this report are from a study conducted by The Gallup Organization in late September/early October, 2006. A total of 2,596 members of the Gallup Panel completed an online survey. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of US households. Households cannot volunteer to join the panel. They are scientifically selected to participate and are recruited by experienced Gallup interviewers.

The study consisted of over samples of current government workers (federal, state and local), "creative" professionals (including architects, designers, doctors and lawyers), and 18-29 year olds, in addition to the general population of working adults.

Respondents were asked to share their views on what is important to them as they think about benefits, workplace, job content, and environment of an ideal job. The survey also assessed their awareness of 26 different federal agencies and how interesting they feel it would be to work at each of those agencies.

The analysis in this report shares the work values of three populations: those categorized as "Gen Y" (18-29 year olds), those currently in private or nonprofit sector managerial positions, and finally, those who might be targets for the federal workforce of the future (scientists, engineers, computer systems analysts, and community/ social service workers). We have dubbed this cadre of workers the "Government Go Gets" or "G3s."

## **KEY PROSPECTS**

The key challenge for the federal government of the future is to recruit now--and work to retain--talent from several high-priority target populations, including:

**Generation Y (Gen Y):** They are the workforce of the future – more than 46 million strong – born between 1977 and 1988 (who are currently 18 to 29 year olds).

**Government-Go-Gets (G3s):** This group is comprised of scientists, engineers and computer science professionals and individuals who work in law, public policy and the social services—sectors and occupations that are key prospects for the future federal workforce.

**Managers:** Professionals who are currently in managerial or supervisory positions in the private or nonprofit sector and could potentially transfer to the federal sector.

## **WORKPLACE VALUES**

We identified the types of qualities that a federal agency would need to deliver to interest, attract and retain the populations mentioned above. We have identified 12 factors and grouped them into the top five dimensions that are critical in attracting talent. They are:

### **Intellectual stretch**

- Being intellectually stimulated
- Being able to use what you've learned in your education
- Allowing you to be innovative and creative

### **Mission match**

- Belief in the mission of the organization
- Involving work that has strong impact on important public missions

### **Growth potential**

- Having the potential for growth
- Providing opportunities to develop new and advanced skills

### **Compensation/benefits**

- Amount of money you would earn
- Amount of vacation time you would receive
- The health insurance benefits offered
- The retirement plan offered

### **Job security**

- Having job security

**KEY FINDINGS**

The results of this survey point both to opportunities and barriers to recruit and retain the next generation of federal workers, experienced managers, and those with expertise in target areas – science, technology, engineering, law, public policy and social services.

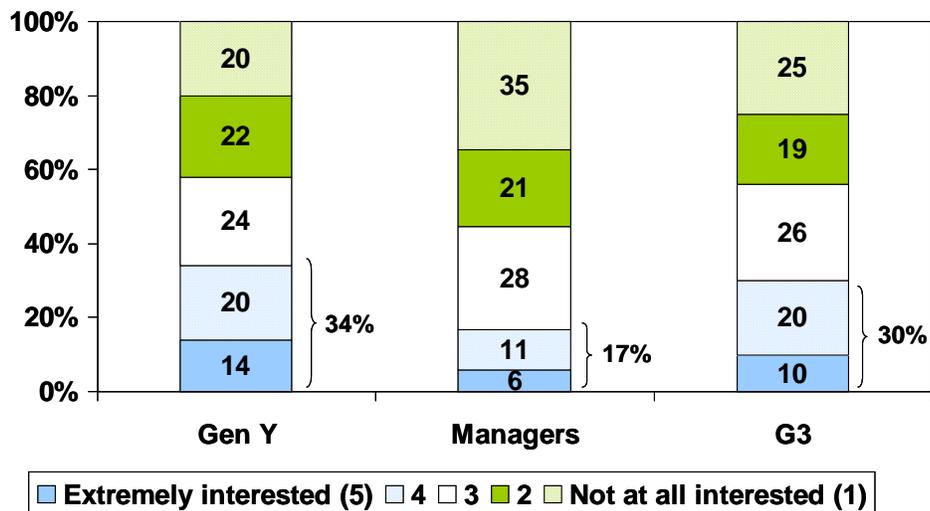
The potential to attract the future workforce clearly is there, but the federal government must sharpen its competitive edge in terms of marketing and branding, and even more challenging, by offering high performing work environments that value innovation and creativity, and provide opportunities for growth and advancement

***1. Gen Y is Within Reach***

Despite predictions to the contrary, a full 34% of those aged 18-29 have an interest in working for the federal government regardless of whether they are currently seeking a job. Also encouraging is the fact that 30% of G3s say they are interested in federal government service.

The challenge remains in attracting managers to federal jobs, since only 17% express interest, and 35% are not interested at all.

**Chart 1. Level of Interest in Working for the Federal Government**



Regardless of whether you are currently seeking a job, how interested are you in a career in the Federal government?

## 2. Among the Key Prospects, Intellectual Stretch is a Common Top Workplace Value

Understanding what these key prospects value is critically important to federal recruiting and workplace strategies.

Growth potential and intellectual stretch are the workplace values that top the list for Gen Y.

For managers and G3s, intellectual stretch is second only to compensation/benefits as a key job dimension.

The lowest workplace value for all three key prospects is mission match, which includes “belief in the mission of the organization” and “strong impact on important public missions.”

**Chart 2a. Workplace Values of Key Prospects**

Very Important (rated above 4.0 on a 5 point scale)	Gen Y	Managers	G3
Intellectual Stretch	49%	46%	47%
Mission Match	30%	30%	30%
Growth Potential	55%	43%	39%
Compensation/ Benefits	38%	53%	51%
Job Security	35%	39%	45%

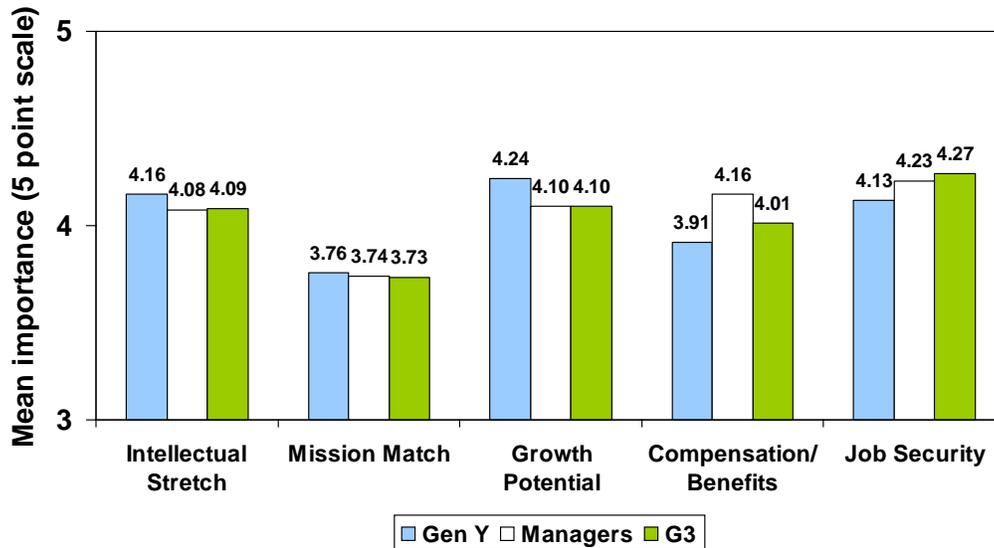
There are interesting differences in the workplace values among the three occupational categories within G3. Most notably, those in community and social services value mission match much more than those in law/public policy and science/engineering/computers. It is also interesting that they place less value on intellectual stretch compared to the others. Among those in law/public policy, job security is the top value, while those in science/engineering/computers rank compensation and benefits as the highest value.

**Chart 2b. Workplace Values of Key Prospects within G3**

Very Important (rated above 4.0 on a 5 point scale)	Science/ Engineer/ Computers	Law/ Public Policy	Community Social Services
Intellectual Stretch	47%	49%	40%
Mission Match	23%	33%	55%
Growth Potential	40%	35%	39%
Compensation/ Benefits	52%	49%	49%
Job Security	42%	50%	44%

The chart below summarizes the average ratings of workplace values by key prospects.

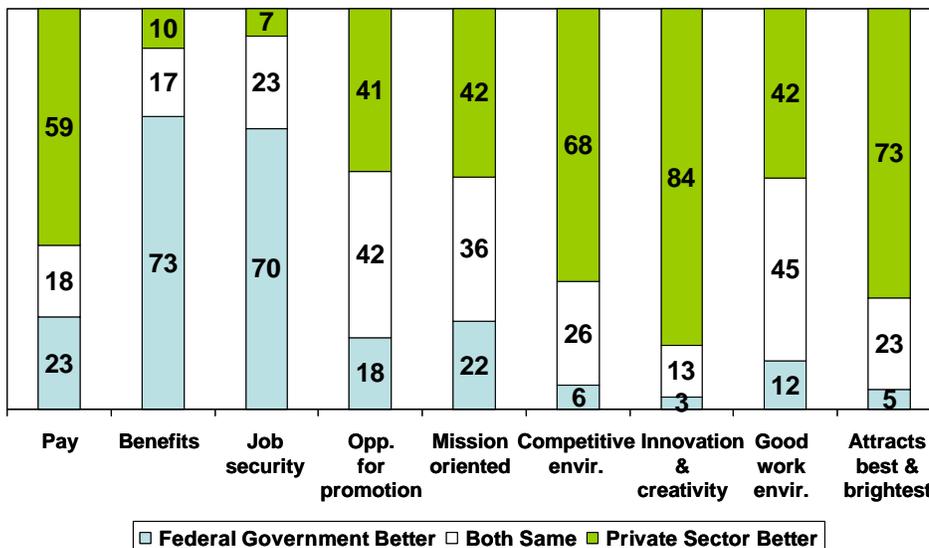
**Chart 2c. Workplace Values of Key Prospects**



**3. There is a Serious Mismatch Between What People Want in a Job and Their Perception of What Government Offers**

The federal government is rated as superb for benefits and job security among all survey respondents. However, they rank lowest the government’s ability to provide a competitive environment, innovation and creativity, and attracting the best and brightest in comparison to the private sector.

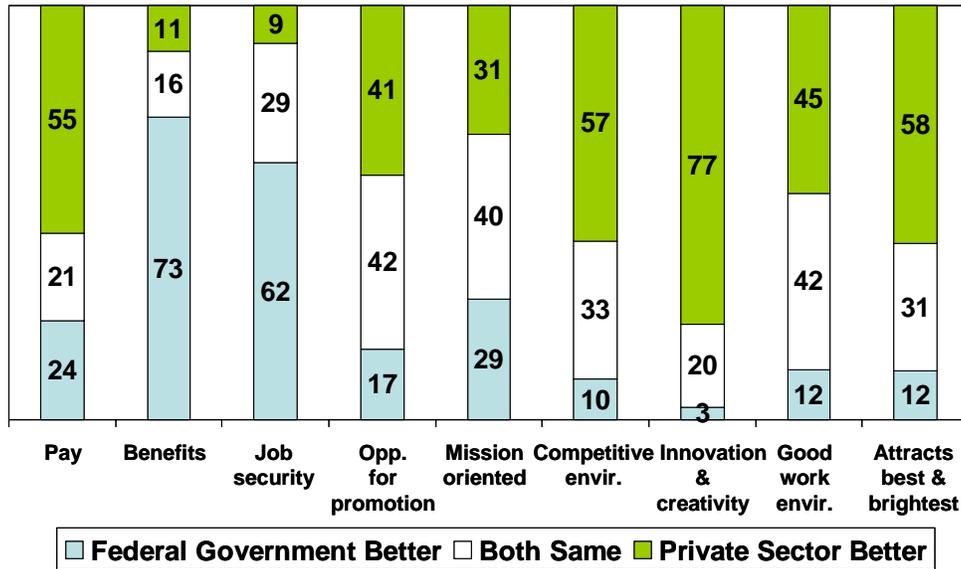
**Chart 3a. Comparison of Federal Government to the Private Sector**



How would you compare a job in the Federal government to the private sector on each of the following dimensions?

In comparison to the overall sample, Gen Y sees the federal government as better at attracting the best and brightest, and for its mission orientation.

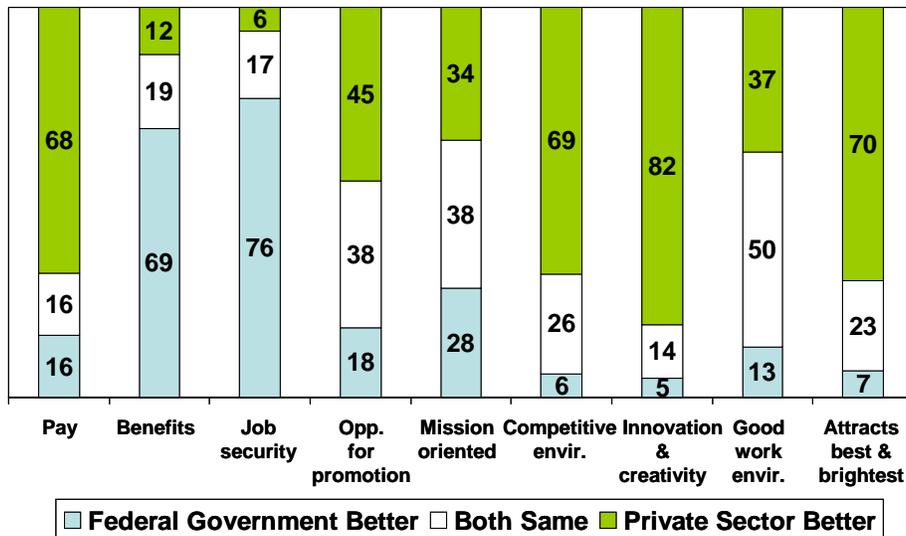
**Chart 3b. Comparison of Federal Government to the Private Sector: Gen Y**



How would you compare a job in the Federal government to the private sector on each of the following dimensions?

G3s rate government better than the overall sample on job security and mission orientation.

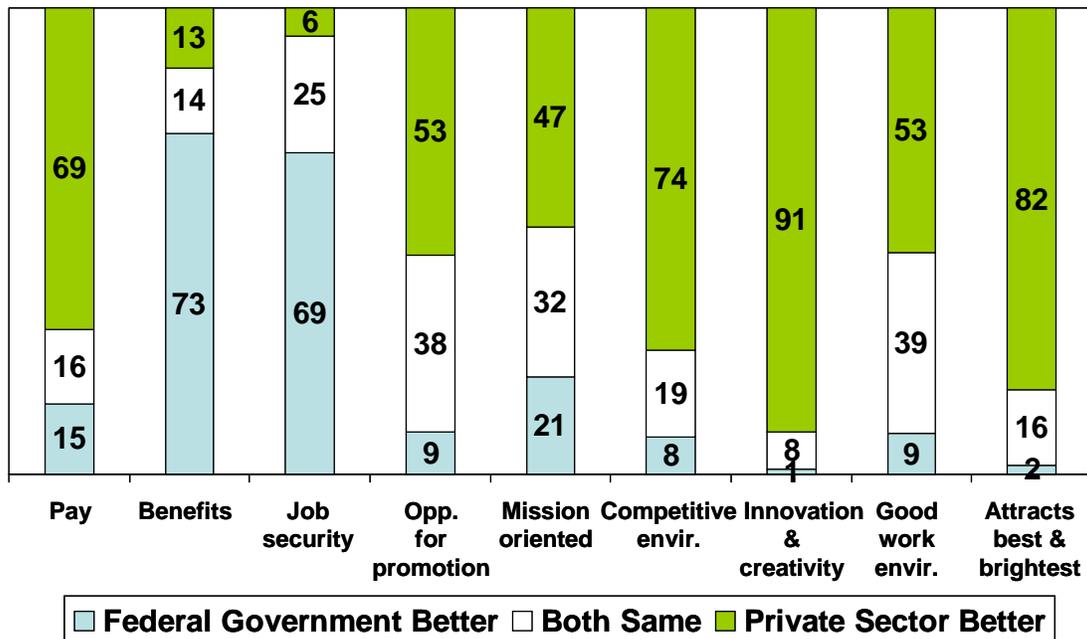
**Chart 3c. Comparison of Federal Government to the Private Sector: G3**



How would you compare a job in the Federal government to the private sector on each of the following dimensions?

Compared to the overall sample, managers rate the private sector as better on every factor except for job security.

**Chart 3d. Comparison of Federal Government to the Private Sector: Managers**



How would you compare a job in the Federal government to the private sector on each of the following dimensions?

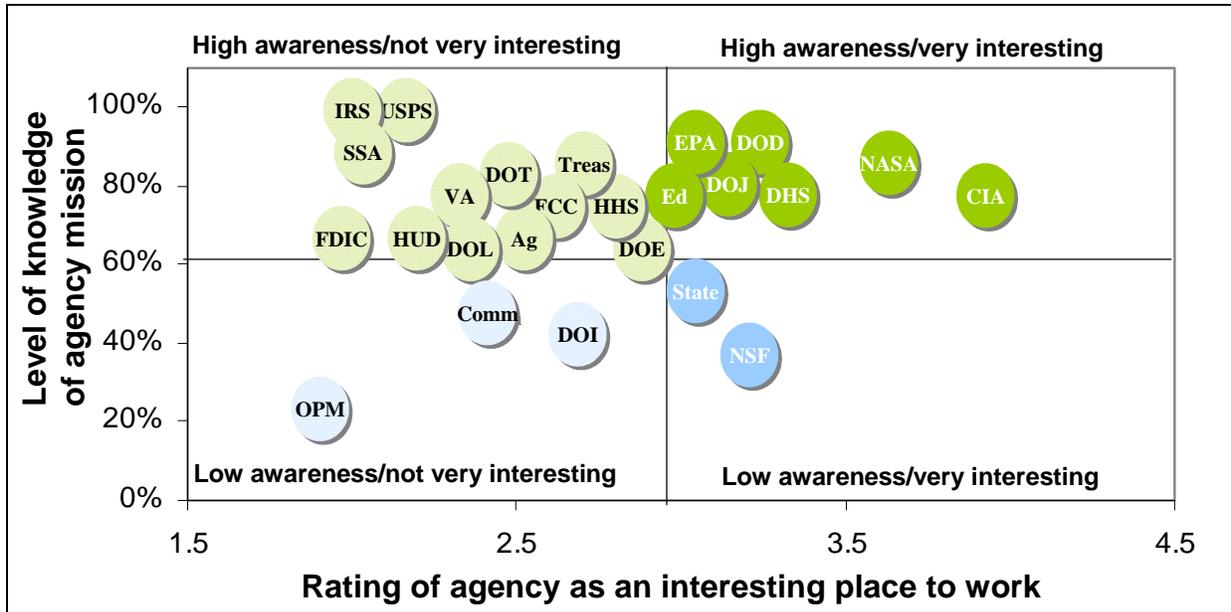
#### ***4. Brand Awareness of an Agency Does Not Equal Interest***

There are as many brands of the government as there are agencies, and each agency needs to define its own brand promise and deliver work opportunities that are consistent with that promise.

Our research shows a high level of awareness of most agencies, but that does not necessary equate to a perception that it would be interesting to work there. For example, 96% of the targeted populations were aware of the mission of the United States Postal Service, yet a very small number thought it would be interesting to work there. On the other hand, agencies such as NASA, the CIA and the U.S. Department of Defense enjoy both high rates of awareness as well as interest.

A particular challenge for an agency like the National Science Foundation is that although it received a high rating for “interesting work,” it scored a low level of awareness amongst the targeted populations.

**Chart 4a. Awareness and Interest in Key Federal Agencies**

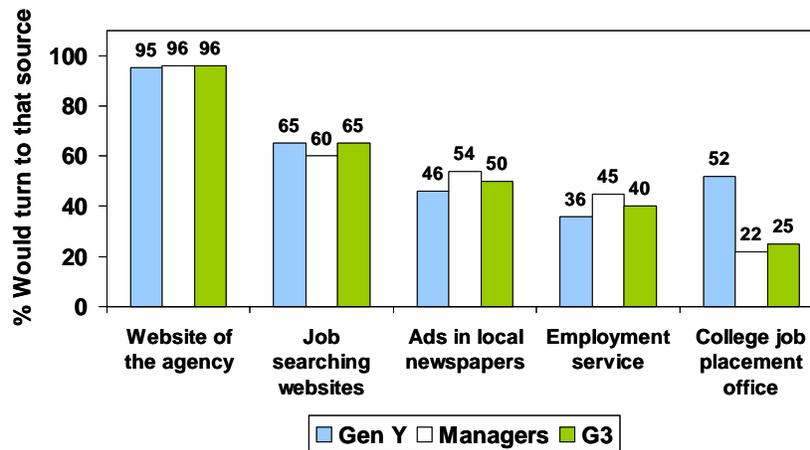


**Chart 4b. Data detail underlying Chart 4a. Awareness and Interest in Key Federal Agencies**

	Interest	Awareness
CIA	3.94	78%
NASA	3.64	86%
DOD	3.25	87%
Homeland Security	3.22	78%
NSF	3.19	37%
DOJ	3.17	80%
EPA	3.05	86%
State	3.05	55%
Education	3.01	83%
Energy	2.87	65%
HHS	2.82	70%
Interior	2.70	44%
Treasury	2.68	80%
FCC	2.62	76%
Agriculture	2.53	71%
DOT	2.43	79%
Commerce	2.43	53%
VA	2.40	78%
Labor	2.32	65%
HUD	2.30	64%
USPS	2.15	96%
IRS	2.04	94%
SSA	2.03	90%
FDIC	2.01	64%
OPM	1.92	24%

In addition, target audiences say they would go to agency websites to explore a job with the federal government. Job searching websites and ads in local newspapers are also popular sources to get information and search for federal jobs.

**Chart 5. Sources for Federal Job Searching**



Please indicate whether or not you would turn to each of the following sources if you wanted to explore a job with the Federal government.

**NEXT STEPS**

This report is a first step in what the Council for Excellence in Government and the Gallup Organization believe will be an important and far-reaching effort to realize the possibilities and face the challenges of shaping tomorrow’s government workforce.

We will make this information available to anyone who will find it useful and can play a constructive role in shaping a high performing public sector workforce. Human resource professionals in government, executive branch and congressional leaders, academics, reporters, pundits, and thinkers and doers in the public, private and nonprofit communities are encouraged to learn more about this effort and to participate in future brainstorming sessions about how to translate this information into an action agenda.

Early in 2007 we intend to conduct a second Gallup Panel survey to follow-up on key findings and new questions. In addition, we plan to discuss this with the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council in the federal government.

In 2007 we will convene a series of summit conferences to explore specific strategies and actions to use this information to shape the future federal workforce. Topics may include: specific agency marketing and branding initiatives to attract new workers; unique strategies to recruit workers with specific skills and specialties; reinventing the government hiring process; how to retain talent in the public sector; and measuring the efficiency/effectiveness of recruiting and retention efforts.

The effort will document innovative best practices in recruiting, hiring and retaining the best and brightest for federal service. The report will also include a series of practical recommendations for action by government culled from our research and dialogue with a broad base of experts and stakeholders.