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Local Government Employee Retention 2023: The Ultimate Guide

By GovPilot



As Americans quit their jobs at unprecedented rates and organizations struggle to fill open roles, it's critical to recognize the value in retaining high-quality government employees. Unfortunately, for many municipalities, employee retention is mediocre at best, and many of the staff members that do stick around are unengaged and unmotivated.

But why is it so difficult for local governments to find employees that not only

want to stick around, but find meaning in their work and want to give it their all?
What could your local government be doing better? [in](#)

In this article, we're going to acknowledge the challenges that have led to poor employee retention in local governments nationwide, and provide a set of best practices to reduce employee turnover at your municipality. Follow along for everything you need to know about municipal employee retention.



Why is Retaining Government Employees So Difficult?

There are many challenges that make it difficult to keep employees inspired to stick around in local government jobs. This includes but is not limited to:

- The private-sector offers increasingly more competitive salaries at a rate in which the public-sector cannot compete.
- Bureaucratic red tape makes even the most simple tasks take extended periods of time; a frustrating reality for the many that join public entities with the goal of making a difference in their community.
- Antiquated workflows leave many employees doing mindless administrative tasks, often with physical paper.

Regardless of which particular issue pertains to your government workers that are leaving, all of these issues need to be addressed for the long term stability of your municipality when it comes to hiring and keeping qualified government employees.

Why is Employee Retention More Important Than Ever?

Keeping employees happy and motivated to work towards common goals seems like a no brainer. Why get stuck focusing time and resources towards constantly hiring new employees when you can have an experienced office veteran accomplish daily tasks with ease?

That being said, right now it is *especially* important to keep your employees on-board for as long as possible. As a major reckoning occurs in the US labor market and Americans leave jobs they're unhappy at in droves, it is clear that [employee loyalty is declining](#). To make matters worse for municipalities, many private-sector businesses are raising company-wide salaries at a rate the public-sector can't keep up with. That means even a happy employee might put in their two weeks notice knowing the benefits and salary will be better in corporate America.

[What Are the Best Practices For Retaining Municipal Workers?](#)

Retaining government employees isn't all that different from retaining an employee at any organization or business. That being said, limitations in funding, resources, and time can hinder the ability of municipalities to compete with the private-sector.

Here are some of the best ways to retain government employees and to keep them motivated to perform their very best:

1. Use Infrastructure Grants to Bolster Salaries and Make New Hires

Having fully staffed departments and satisfied, well compensated employees is critical to the operations of an effective local government. The American Rescue Plan Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act enable local governments to make necessary hires and to provide pay increases to staff and workers in the following ways:

- Hire back employees who may have been furloughed during the pandemic in order to re-establish pre pandemic staffing numbers.

- Hire additional employees above the pre-pandemic baseline or create flexibility in positions: Local government recipients may use State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to pay for payroll and covered benefits associated with the recipient increasing its number of budgeted full time employees (FTEs) up to 7.5 percent above its pre-pandemic baseline.
- Providing additional funding for employees who experienced pay reductions or were furloughed since the onset of the pandemic, up to the difference in the employee's pay, taking into account unemployment benefits received.
- Maintaining current compensation levels to prevent layoffs. SLFRF funds may be used to maintain current compensation levels, with adjustments for inflation, in order to prevent layoffs that would otherwise be necessary.
- Providing worker retention incentives, including reasonable increases in compensation to persuade employees to remain with the employer as compared to other employment options. Retention incentives must be entirely additive to an employee's regular compensation, narrowly tailored to need, and should not exceed incentives traditionally offered by the recipient or compensation that alternative employers may offer to compete for the employees.

2. Employee Recognition - Consistent Encouragement

If you've ever been a hard-working employee, you know how amazing it feels when your hard effort gets recognized by your boss. On the flip side, if you've been in a situation where your boss failed to recognize your hard-work, you must know how frustrating it is to have your actions go seemingly unnoticed.

Put yourself in your municipal workers' shoes. They're working at a slow-moving bureaucratic pace for less pay than their private-sector counterparts, all while actively working to make their community a better place. Municipal leadership should regularly let their employees know that they appreciate them and all of their hard work.

3. Embrace a True Sense of Work Culture

A sense of community in the workplace goes a long way. Yet, government entities are often criticized for a lack of work culture. Government leadership should encourage social interaction amongst employees, remind them of the important task of public service and the noble goal of improving communities and creating positive experiences for everyone.

Here are better ways to [Set Community Goals & Missions in Local Governments](#)

4. Offer a Hybrid Work Schedule

As the pandemic shifted work norms, many Americans grew accustomed to working from the comfort of their home while others yearned for a return to the office. A [hybrid government work culture](#) is an enticing offer that makes for the best of both worlds. With a unified, [cloud-based government management platform](#) like GovPilot, employees can do their work from anywhere at any time.

5. Get Honest Feedback From Exit Interviews

With high-turnover in local governments, even your best efforts won't prevent people from retiring or switching jobs quite regularly. When an employee informs your locality that they'll be leaving, you should ask for honest feedback of their overall experience working at your municipality and their thoughts on the workflows of their department.

According to the guide on the [best exit questions to ask](#), top questions your government leadership should consider asking include:

- What made them decide to switch jobs?
- If they're staying in government, why did they decide to work elsewhere?
- If they're switching careers overall, why?
- What aspects of the job could have been better?
- What didn't they like about the day-to-day workflows?

6. Provide Ongoing Training and Mentorship

Employees gravitate towards leadership that is eager to help them learn. Government leadership should make an active effort to lend a guiding hand to employees in need of help. To take things a step further, your municipality should offer training sessions that provide education on meaningful departmental subject matter on a regular basis.

With mentorship and educational training, the hardest-working employees that are eager to learn will feel motivated to stay working for your municipality.

Consider these resources for [Training Government Workers on Cybersecurity Best Practices](#) and [Tips for Onboarding Government Technology](#).

7. Offer Constructive Feedback

A core aspect of being a good mentor is providing honest feedback. Good employees want to do the best job possible, and your feedback will not only make them better at their jobs, but more loyal to you and your municipality.

[How Can Government Leadership Provide Great Employee Performance Reviews?](#) Here's your answer.

Pro Tip: Remember, the importance here is on *constructive* feedback. Make sure you're approaching feedback with a positive atmosphere, as someone feeling belittled will actually be more inclined to go elsewhere.

8. Eliminate Repetitive, Manual Tasks With Automation

Many municipal departments spend their days dealing with repetitive administrative tasks like filing paperwork or passing along documents to relevant government officials. Employees stuck doing mindless tasks are often more inclined to find work opportunities that feel more rewarding.

With government software, technology known as [robotic process automation](#) automates simple administrative tasks, saving clerks and other administrative professionals hours a day to spend on more important tasks. Giving municipal workers more meaningful tasks will keep them inspired and more inclined to stick around.

Explore the [13 Benefits of Automating Government Tasks with Digital Transformation](#).

[How to Bring On Big Changes Without Discouraging Employees?](#)

With the recent passage of the infrastructure bill and the American Rescue Plan, trillions are being allocated towards improving digital and physical infrastructure nationwide. While this has most government officials optimistic about the future, many municipal workers feel anxious about the sea of changes that will come in terms of construction, urban development, and moving towards cloud-based infrastructure.

The key to addressing these changes will be full transparency and proper training. Government leadership will need to keep communication clear about what infrastructure projects are coming to your community and provide regular updates on progress being made and the tasks needed from each department as infrastructure projects take place.

If you're leveraging infrastructure funds to move your government to a digital, cloud-based infrastructure, keep in mind that training government workers is straightforward. Tasks like electronically filing permits and licenses, document requests, and inspection requests can be integrated in no time, with a GovPilot [digital transformation case study](#) finding that it took municipal workers just one day to feel comfortable and trained on using government management software.

To learn more about how the exciting opportunities for local governments that are included in recent legislation, read on:

- [What the Infrastructure Bill Means for Local Governments](#)
- [What the American Rescue Plan Act Means for Local Governments](#)

[Municipal & County Employee Retention](#)

In order to retain your top talent in coming years, recent trends show that municipal governments will need to drastically step up their game. With budgets limiting the amount that your government can offer in terms of salary, your community will need to focus on having a positive work culture, offering guidance to municipal workers through mentorship and training, and giving people purpose by reducing time spent on mindless tasks.

By making your workflows better and more community-oriented, happiness

levels will rise at your municipality and employees will be more inclined to stick around.

To learn how government management software can transform your local government's workflows, schedule a 15-minute consultation.

[Get Demo](#)

To learn about the modules for various department types, explore these relevant solutions:

- [American Rescue Plan Act for IT Modernization](#)
- [Construction and Permitting Software](#)
- [Building Inspection Software](#)
- [Municipal Clerk's Software](#)
- [Health Department Software](#)
- [Planning and Zoning Software](#)
- [Court Management Software](#)

[Reducing Government Turnover - FAQs](#)



Why Are So Many Government Workers Switching Jobs?

Americans in general are leaving their jobs in droves due to low-wages, toxic work cultures, boring day-to-day tasks and countless other reasons.

For government jobs specifically, retaining workers is an even harder challenge due to the private-sectors enticing benefits and salaries.

How to Retain Government Employees?

Keeping government employees happy in their day job is your safest bet for keeping employees long-term. Embrace a work culture with camaraderie, employee recognition, constructive feedback, and insightful training sessions. Offer hybrid work schedules that allow employees to work from home a few days a week. And don't forget to innovate internally with government software so that employees aren't stuck doing mindless, repetitive tasks that can be automated.

What to Do If You Can't Find a Replacement for an Employee?

Unfortunately, geographic locations often pose a major challenge when it comes to hiring someone new after an employee moves on.

If a role has been open for a while, consider leveraging automated govtech to take over instead. Any administrative tasks can be accomplished via government management software, which means you may not even need to fill the open role after all.

If the role is absolutely necessary, read our guides on [Recruiting in the Public Sector](#) and [How to Hire Government Tech Workers](#) for more advice on how to land a new employee.

For more local government resources, read on:

- [How to Build a 15-Minute City](#)
- [Building Inspections 101: How Municipalities Can Improve Public Safety](#)
- [Should The Public Sector Use the Cloud or In-House Servers](#)
- [Municipal Planning: Reclaiming Your City Streets](#)
- [What is Disaster Resilient Infrastructure?](#)
- [Disaster Preparedness: How Local Governments Build Resilient Communities](#)
- [Local Government Wildfire Mitigation & Disaster Plan](#)
- [Local Government Flood Mitigation & Disaster Plan](#)
- [Local Government Tornado Mitigation & Disaster Plan](#)
- [How to Form a Community Emergency Response Team](#)
- [Florida House Bills 667 and 1059: Latest Permit and Inspection Laws](#)
- [NJ Electronic Construction Permit Law: What it Means for Local Governments](#)
- [Pedestrian Zones & Bike Lanes: Improving City's Car Free Zones](#)

External Sources

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