

Hiring and Retaining Staff to Build a Strong Procurement Team

Procurement Excellence Network Roundtable

February 22, 2023



HARVARD Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab

Icebreaker



In the chat:

Share your name, what government you represent, and the most valuable skill you seek in a new hire!



Agenda

- *[10 min]* Overview
 - *[15 min]* Hiring Revamp: Long Beach, CA
 - *[15 min]* Apprenticeship Programs: Phoenix, AZ
 - *[15 min]* Group Discussion
 - *[5 min]* Additional Resources
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Overview

COVID-19 changed the way we work – and the way we hire

The Great Resignation & Labor Shortages

- More than [47 million people](#) quit their jobs in 2021 during the Great Resignation
- More adults are retiring earlier, leaving many vacancies behind
- U.S. unemployment rate was 3.4% in January 2023

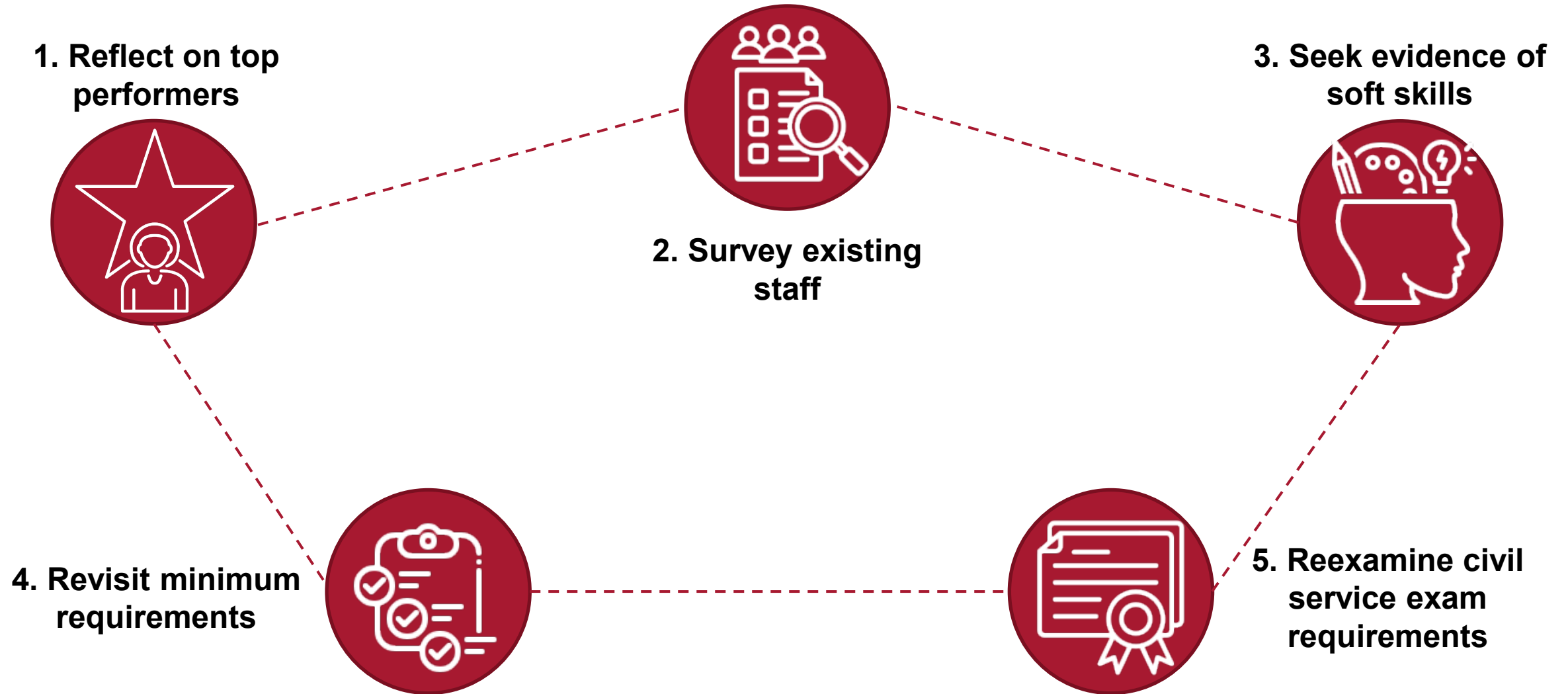
Skills Shift

- A new way of working requires different skills: adaptability, technology capabilities
- A results-driven procurement shop may need analytic and strategic capacity more than administrative capacity

Changing Work, Changing Workforce

- Younger workers may have different expectations for what they get out of work
- A recent employee wellbeing [report](#) found that fostering belonging and providing opportunities to learn and grow are most important in a workplace

Reconsider what you're looking for



Offer more than just a paycheck



1. Accommodate flexibility

2. Provide professional development & promotion opportunities



3. Invest in a positive team culture

Get the word out wherever you can



**1. Leverage
your existing
network**

**2. Promote on
PEN**

**Procurement
Excellence Network**



**3. Utilize
recruitment
platforms**

Hiring Revamp: Long Beach, CA

Project Overview



Are you thinking about how to get started with updating your job descriptions and hiring process to recruit the strongest people to your procurement team? So was Long Beach!

Project Objective: Update hiring process and materials (including job description, minimum requirements, and recruitment process)

- Arose from internal frustrations and anecdotal reflections
- Part of the close-out of our three-year technical assistance engagement supporting procurement transformation, so designing a process that attracted staff to sustain procurement excellence was a priority

Steps Completed

1. Defined research objectives
 - Example: what are the skills and responsibilities for desired staff?
2. Investigated how things were currently operating
 - Identified what was working well and where there were opportunities for improvement
3. Started with a team-wide survey and follow-up interviews
 - Identified key traits that make staff successful (ex: collaborative) and not successful (ex: unaccommodating)
4. Conducted benchmarking of peer cities and interviews with user departments
 - Pulled buyer job descriptions from 10 peer cities to review their responsibilities, minimum requirements, and processes
5. Formed recommendations based on findings

Adjusting language

Recommendation: Align job description language with desired duties and values for position

Example: Better depict responsibilities, and expectations for relationship, between buyers and departments

<u>Old Language</u>		<u>New Language</u>
Issues purchase orders	➔	<u>Confers with user departments</u> to issue purchase orders as needed
Evaluates the quality and suitability of products and services and makes or recommends purchases	➔	<u>Supports user departments</u> to evaluate responses to solicitations
Receives and analyzes requisitions	➔	Receives, analyzes, and <u>recommends any needed changes</u> to requisitions for accuracy, compliance with applicable laws and policies, short-term and long-term needs of departments, and other related considerations

Note: These are examples of changes proposed by the GPL. Final language is still in progress.

Revisiting minimum requirements

Recommendation: Revisit minimum requirements to better represent needed qualifications

Example: Allow more pathways to qualify for the position without a four-year degree

Old Minimum Requirements

- A. Graduation from a four-year accredited college or university with major work in business or public administration or closely related field;

AND

- B. Two years of full-time experience in purchasing a wide variety of industrial and governmental equipment, supplies, and materials for use rather than for resale.

Additional experience of the specified type may be substituted on a year-for-year basis for up to two years of the required education



New Minimum Requirements

Applicants must meet one of the following options:

- A. Graduation from a four-year accredited college or university with major work in business or public administration or closely related field; and two years of full-time experience in purchasing a wide variety of materials for use rather than for resale

OR

- B. One year of satisfactory performance as an Assistant Buyer with the City of Long Beach

OR

- C. A current certification as a "Certified Public Procurement Officer" (CPPO), "Certified Professional Public Buyer" (CPPB), or "Certified Purchasing Manager" (CPM) by the National Association of Purchasing Managers (NAPM), or the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) or equivalent professional certification.

Additional experience of the specified type may be substituted on a year-for-year basis for the required education

Note: These are examples of changes proposed by the GPL. Final language is still in progress.

Discussion Questions

- What soft skills do you think are most important for the staff on your team?
- What is the wildest minimum requirement you have seen in a job description for a position in your city?



Apprenticeship Program: Phoenix, AZ

Discussion Questions

- Where did the impetus for this program come from?
- How does the program work? What do apprentices do?
- How do you advertise the program? Where do you recruit participants from?
- What skills (soft and hard) are you looking for in your apprentices/entry-level hires?



Group Discussion

Discussion Questions

Reconsider what you're looking for

- Which skills have you found most important in a new procurement hire?

Offer more than just a paycheck

- How have you offered your employees flexibility in their jobs? Were there any pitfalls?
- How have you invested in creating a positive culture on your team?

Get the word out wherever you can

- Have you tried any unconventional recruitment tactics?
- Are there any particularly successful places you've posted jobs?

Additional Resources

Upcoming Events



Training: Process Efficiency

Wednesday,
March 8

12:00pm –
1:00pm ET

Thursday,
March 30

2:00pm –
3:00pm ET



Training: IT Procurement