Digital Hiring Practices

Sam Cathcart, Lauren Duncan, and Mallory Verez

Instructor: Dr. Leisha DeHart-Davis
PUBA 723: Human Resources Management
Spring 2021

UNC | SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Table of Contents

Background

The work of local governments is essential and never comes to a halt. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, local governments demonstrated not only their commitment to the public, but their patience and resiliency. Local governments have traditionally operated in the public space to best serve the public. Operations were primarily, if not exclusively, in-person. As the pandemic hit, local government employees transitioned to remote work when possible and had to swiftly transition to virtual hiring. Now, many applicants apply, interview, and onboard virtually. Some local governments questioned the effectiveness of this digital shift, and many continue to struggle to fill needed positions with qualified candidates. Some municipalities and departments have found issues such as finding a "new normal," standing out to candidates on digital platforms, changes to interview processes, receiving fewer applications, attracting less diverse candidates, and complications in the onboarding process.

After hearing about some of these challenges, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL), a professional organization for local government employees, approached the School of Government at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. ELGL wanted assistance in helping their local government members navigate the transition to virtual hiring practices. To address the challenges and opportunities involved with this, a team of UNC Master of Public Administration students conducted a literature review, shared a survey with local governments, and interviewed local government representatives.

ELGL, a nonprofit founded in 2012, has a mission to "engage the brightest minds in local government" (ELGL, About). They are a membership-based organization, and their services support all local government employees including mayors, parks & recreation staff, police, analysts, and beyond. ELGL interacts with their members through podcasts, blogs, webinars, social media, and conference gatherings (ELGL, About). One of their goals is to foster connections between members who are in all 50 states plus four additional countries. ELGL's work is grounded in equity and inclusion (ELGL, About).

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to create "best practices" for digital hiring effectiveness and share them with local government leaders for implementation. This project focuses on local governments ranging in size from servicing 10,000-150,000 residents. The original intention was to center on the eastern seaboard, but as we compiled research, survey, and interview results, we found that the recommendations were national in scope. Consequently, we expanded the focus to the entire United States.

This report discusses our findings and recommendations for local governments across the United States in their implementation of digital hiring practices. We focused on issues including digitally portraying an organization's brand to candidates, digital interviewing, getting to know candidates through virtual platforms, preparing candidates for their first day of virtual work, and digital onboarding.

Research Approach

To begin this project, we gathered background information and literature on digital hiring. We divided this topic into six content areas: Digitally portraying your brand, digital interviewing, digital hiring, digital candidate evaluation, preparing your employees for the first day, and digital onboarding. Background literature for each content area was pulled from both academic and industry sources. In total, data was pulled from 20 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources and 23 industry/trade sources. The majority of our industry/trade sources came from publications by the Society for Human Resource Management. From this background literature, we developed a set of six to seven recommendations, or best practices, for each content area. Recommendations were only included if they were consistent across at least three sources.

Once we had a list of best practices and recommendations for each content area, we developed a survey to be taken by local government practitioners who have been involved in hiring or who have been hired since the start of the pandemic. Survey questions were based off of the list of recommendations and prominent themes from the literature. The survey included an initial section of demographic questions asking for state, municipality/county, job title, how they have been involved in hiring, and whether their hiring process is entirely virtual, in-person, or a hybrid. From there, participants chose whether they were involved in hiring or had been hired and answered questions specific to those roles. A copy of the survey is included in this report as Appendix B. The survey was distributed through ELGL's social media network and newsletters to garner engagement and participation with local government practitioners. In total, we received 21 valid responses to our survey. Responses were considered valid if the participant answered any questions beyond the demographics section. Survey participants came from a variety of states including Florida, Virginia, Oregon, Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin, California, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Georgia, and Washington. Local government practitioners involved in hiring constituted 17 of the participants in the survey and practitioners who had recently been hired constituted 4 of the participants in the survey. Responses to the survey were used for initial confirmation or denial of recommendations and best practices from the literature.

We also interviewed nine local government practitioners, geographically dispersed from the East coast to the West coast. Interviewees were located in Minnesota, Washington, Maine, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina. Interviews were requested via direct email to local government practitioners and through the survey.

Questions asked during each interview mirrored the questions in the survey, with increased focus on certain content areas depending on the experiences of the interviewees. A copy of the baseline interview questions is included in this report as Appendix C. Seven interviewees were local government practitioners involved in the hiring process, one interviewee was a recently hired practitioner, and one interviewee was a combination of both. These interviews were used to further confirm or deny the recommendations and best practices pulled from the literature. From the survey responses and interviews, we were able to focus our recommendations to address the most common issues local governments are facing. At the culmination of our research, we have three to four recommendations for each content area.

Results and Recommendations

Digital Branding

<u>Literature Findings</u>

New technologies and the general ease of access to those technologies allows organizations to create and share their personal brand with a broader audience. This general ease became a necessity for organizations wishing to portray their brand as the pandemic forced local governments to close their doors to non-essential personnel. However, the exacerbation of this trend has created an opportunity for local governments to share their values, missions, and internal culture with a larger population of potential employees, especially those who are seeking to learn more about an organization before applying.

To portray aspects of organizational brand accurately and fully, a shared understanding of internal culture must first be established. This shared understanding requires trust, communication, and strong leadership throughout the office or department. Liang et al. found that team members in a virtual environment that had higher levels of trust, communication, and leadership were better able to share knowledge and information across the organization. This increased level of knowledge sharing allowed the employees to ensure they were on the same page and function as a more cohesive unit. The cohesion and trust within these organizations also created more practical work interactions, creating better products to be shared outside the organization and stronger shared culture (Liang et al. 2017).

Large "jolts" in environments, such as COVID-19, can create internal changes to culture and work practices that need to be addressed. The changes that result from these jolts may be temporary, but some become more fixed, such as the shift to virtual work. When jolts cause changes in culture it is important to recognize them and make an active effort to maintain the positive changes while allowing the organization to discard negative cultural aspects. In his article on organizational culture, André Spicer notes that positive cultural shifts should be communicated and reinforced within the organization. Reinforcing these positive changes can be achieved by advertising them to potential candidates looking to join a local government (Spicer 2020).

The explosion of virtual communication mediums has led to increased interest in virtual job fairs and marketing online (Maurer 2020). These events allow organizations to market themselves to

a broader audience both in terms of geography and demographics. A study in the European Journal of Marketing found that virtual job fairs provide interactions with existing and potential customers as well as future employees. Virtual job and trade fairs also allow interactions between organizations in the same sector or geographic area, which helps build organizational brands and reputations (Sarmento and Simõnes 2019).

Survey and Interview Findings

The survey and interview findings confirmed several findings from the literature surrounding branding and digital portrayals of organizational brands. For example, James Malloy of Lexington, Massachusetts stated that his government needs to do better at marketing their internal brand and culture externally. Leann Shaw of State College, Pennsylvania echoed a similar sentiment when answering a question about providing candidates a description of their mission, stating that they don't do this as much as they should. It is clear that local government leaders understand the importance of portraying their brand but do not have the infrastructure in place to do so.

The interviews also revealed that there are differences in how individual departments share their brand digitally. For example, police departments generally excel in this area while many other departments lag behind. Gina Tapp of Portland, Maine shared that the city's police chief regularly talks publicly about what it is like to work for the Portland Police Department (PPD), and that their website gives potential candidates a great idea of what a job with PPD entails. There was a general sense from multiple interviews that departments could learn from one another regarding digital branding.

The mediums used for organizational brand presentation varied across local governments, but most indicated they portray their brand and culture primarily through interviews with candidates. Interviews and surveys confirmed this finding, with 15 survey respondents reporting they use job interviews to share their brand, this was higher than any other method of brand portrayal.

The interviews also revealed that videos produced by local governments in which employees discuss their work with the municipality receive overwhelmingly positive reactions from candidates and new hires. All interviewees who work for local governments that utilize this practice reported positive feedback. However, in the survey only 5 of 17 survey respondents reported using videos to portray their brand.

<u>Digital Branding Recommendations</u>

Based on the research findings the following recommendations will help local governments seeking to build and portray their internal brand and culture to the outside environment. The main recommendations are that governments take the time internally to understand their culture, reinforce this culture through leadership and communication, use culture to build an organizational brand, and actively portray this brand through job descriptions, interviews, online artifacts such as social media and websites, and participate in virtual job fairs.

Build Your Brand

In order to portray an organizational brand it must first be built and understood by team members. According to Liang's research local governments use online and offline methods to build leadership, trust, and stronger communication (Liang et al. 2017). Organizations with higher levels of these attributes create a shared sense of vision and goals and ultimately create better work products. Building and understanding internal culture takes time but helps organizations create brands that are accurate and long lasting.

Liang's research also shows that stronger trust, communication, and leadership allow organizations to create artifacts that can be shared outside of the organization. Local governments that have strong internal brands and cultures can better portray these to outsiders, especially job applicants, who are looking for work environments that fit their personal values.

Reinforce Your Brand

The "jolts" discussed in Spicer's article give organizations an opportunity to discard outdated or negative cultural aspects and build on the newer and more positive changes that have arisen from the tumult (Spicer 2020). Individual departments and local governments as a whole should take time to assess changes to their internal brand that have arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic. Identifying positive changes should include all team members, and consistent communication should be used to reinforce them. This requires employees to use these cultural and brand aspects as touchstones when making decisions and interacting with the public.

Hiring can also be used as a tool for reinforcing aspects of organizational brands. Creating cultural artifacts that display organizational brand will attract candidates that fit the values inherent in that brand. This allows the organization to be selective in hiring decisions and

choose employees that embody important cultural aspects, thus reinforcing them by adding strong employees to the team.

Portray Your Brand

Displaying organizational brands externally can be difficult as there are various methods of achieving this goal. As noted by the interviews from this research many local governments discuss brand and culture during job interviews but do not take further steps. This practice is limiting as applicants do not have an opportunity to consider the brand before the interview stage of the application process. Local governments should be more proactive in portraying their brand in their community and beyond through digital means.

Digitally portraying culture can take many forms. Local governments should begin by simply stating their departmental missions, visions, and goals on their websites. This practice is simple but serves as an introduction to the government for potential candidates. Job descriptions should also be updated to include aspects of organizational brand. This allows candidates to better understand what their work environment may look like.

More interactive portrayals of organizational brand include creating cultural artifacts that can be shared on social media and government websites. These artifacts can be descriptions of a recent work product or service and the process that produced it. This gives external people an opportunity to understand how the department operates and what it is like to work in the government. These testimonials can also be in the form of a video. Based on the interviews conducted for this project, videos of this type are highly effective in providing candidates a sense of the personalities that make up the department.

Lastly, virtual job fairs allow local governments to interact with a broader range of people as well as other governments. Participating in these events, especially when neighboring municipalities participate, provides an opportunity to learn from similar organizations while also sharing their brand with others. These events provide employees of neighboring communities an opening to interact with and learn about the organization and make decisions about a possible change in employment.

Digital Interviewing

<u>Literature Findings</u>

As virtual interviews become more common the literature surrounding this issue will grow immensely. Academic scholarship is unfortunately limited but is ramping up quickly as researchers react to the rise in digital interviewing. However, industry sources such as LinkedIn and SHRM have been prolific in publishing articles about virtual interviews for both candidates and those conducting interviews.

As technology has become more accessible to employers, new products have become available for hiring entities. In the digital hiring process, some employers may be made aware of automated interview platforms that allow applicants to submit recordings of their answers to interview questions. However, research into these software has shown that they are not helpful for employers looking to "get a feel" for who a candidate is, and they also make candidates feel uncomfortable. Research by Langer et al. found that participants in automated interviews found the process "creepy" and received lower interview ratings than they did when participating in video conferencing interviews (Langer et al. 2017).

Research has also found that well-conducted interviews using situational based questioning and a set structure are highly predictive of job performance. Multiple studies have been conducted in that attempt to determine the validity of job interviews. A meta-analysis from 1994 found that situational interviews had higher validity in predicting job performance than simple job-related interviews, which had higher validity than psychological or personality-based interviews. This study also noted that structured interviews had more predictive power than unstructured interviews (Mcdaniel et al. 1994). Another study from 2016 had similar results. Rodriguez found that structured behavioral interviews had significant predictive validity in the public sector. Structured behavioral interviews use highly structured interviews with situational-based questions to determine how an applicant will interact in the work environment (Rodriguez 2016).

Industry sources have presented an immense amount of material to assist practitioners in conducting virtual interviews. These resources are generally in agreement in their recommendations. Each of the sources cited here state that interviewers should practice with their technology before the interview begins. This allows interviewers to be familiar with the platform before beginning the interview. Interviewers should also ensure that their technology

e.g., camera, microphone, internet connection, are all in working order before the interview begins (Anderson 2020; Bombaro 2020; Indeed 2020; Purdue 2020; and Yale 2020).

These sources also point out that interviewers should conduct the interview as they would with an in-person interview, dressing and remaining professional throughout. This also includes creating a professional environment to conduct the interview, the interviewer's surroundings should be as presentable as their in-person office is (Anderson; Indeed; and Purdue).

Preparing for virtual interviews includes creating a list of questions and a set structure. Bombaro et al. encourage the interview team to provide an agenda to the applicant. This allows the person being interviewed to understand how the interview will be conducted, how long it should take, and who will be in attendance (Bombaro et al. 2016). Lastly these articles discuss providing applicants with an alternative method of communication in case of technology failure (Anderson; and Bombaro et al).

Survey and Interview Findings

Survey and interview findings mainly supported the ideas found throughout the literature and even provided additional ideas that are worth considering. The first of these findings regards how comfortable candidates feel in virtual job interviews. The survey respondents overwhelmingly stated that they felt more comfortable in virtual interviews, all newly hired survey respondents made this claim. Interviewees also reported similar sentiments with Matthew Williams, a performance analyst in Alexandria, Virginia, reporting that he feels more comfortable conducting virtual interviews, and feels that candidates become more comfortable as the conversation goes on, especially when asked behavioral or situational questions.

Interviewees also reported that virtual interviews allow for easier scheduling of interviews. Gina Tapp of Portland, Maine and Andrew Ross of Roswell, Georgia confirmed that interviews and scheduling being set up online, make the interview process smoother and faster than it was before, especially for out-of-state candidates. These interviews also confirmed that there is a learning curve with technology. Multiple practitioners reported some struggles in the early stages of virtual interviews but are now more comfortable and familiar with the process.

Lastly, most interviewees did not report providing an agenda to candidates but seemed open to the idea. However, Leann Shaw from State College, Pennsylvania confirmed that structured

interviews are far more effective. State College uses a panel interview for their virtual interviews with employees from multiple levels of seniority and job-title in attendance. Providing each panelist a list of questions and a predetermined order in which to ask those questions allows the government to conduct professional and efficient interviews that involve important stakeholders.

Digital Interviewing Recommendations

Based on the literature, survey, and interview findings the following recommendation have been made for local governments conducting virtual interviews. The main recommendations are to prepare structured interviews with the same questions, practice the interview with the team to check technology, remain professional, and provide important information about the interview to candidates beforehand.

Automated Interviews

Based on the literature and interview findings it is not recommended that automated interviews be used in the hiring process. An important aspect of applicant interviews is getting a feel for the candidate's fit and personality and automated interviews reduce this ability (Langer et al. 2017). One drawback of virtual interviews for some practitioners such as Andrew Ross, a staffing manager in Roswell, Georgia, is that they feel they cannot read the applicant as easily and miss out on body language ques. As limited as this ability is over virtual platforms it is essentially eliminated in automated interviews as interviewers do not have the opportunity to see the candidate react in real-time.

Preparing Interview Questions

Utilizing aspects of organizational brand, culture, and job-related requirements, local governments should create a list of interview questions that produce responses that give the hiring managers a strong idea of how this candidate will act on the job. Using situational and behavioral-based questions often produces responses that are predictive of success (Rodriguez 2016, and McDaniel et al. 1994). Many local governments have already adopted this practice and should continue to do so in virtual interviews. We also recommend that the same question set is used for all candidate interviews. Allowing each candidate to answer the same questions is not only fair to the candidates but also allows supervisors to better assess the differences between the candidates when making hiring decisions.

Technical Interview Preparation

It is important to remember that although the interview is being conducted virtually, it is still a professional job interview. Supervisors conducting interviews should appear and remain professional throughout the interview. This includes dressing as you would for an in-person interview, as well as preparing your interview space. Home offices or virtual workspaces should be as neat, organized, and well-lit as in-person office settings. This serves as a reminder to those in the interview that they are in a professional setting and reduces distractions. Other distractions, including interruptions should be limited, this may mean letting other people in the physical space know that an interview is being conducted.

Before conducting an interview, it is crucial to become familiar with the platform and ensure that all technology including, internet service, computer camera, and computer microphone are working properly. Practicing interviews with appropriate team members can limit technological failures or mishaps. Practicing the interview also allows team members in a panel interview to understand their roles and order of speaking, this should be determined beforehand.

Preparing Candidates for the Interview

The team conducting the interview should communicate all necessary information to the candidate before the interview begins. This includes the platform on which the interview will be conducted and a link to the meeting room. An agenda should be provided to the candidate that explains the length of time that the interview will take, who will be in the interview and their roles in the government, as well as a back-up method of communication in case of technology failure. This information allows the candidate to feel more at ease and relaxed during the interview. Ensuring the candidate that a technology failure on their end will not reflect poorly on their interview performance, as long as they utilize the back-up method, also relaxes the candidate and allows them to be less distracted during the interview.

Digital Hiring

<u>Literature Findings</u>

The trend of selecting and hiring candidates digitally was already underway when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in March 2020. The pandemic, and the closure of most in-person activities, accelerated the private and public sectors' shifts to digital hiring practices. Current research in the private sector finds that digital hiring will remain, even when the pandemic ends (Esman 2021).

Remote hiring can allow for more in-depth interview engagement. Esman found that organizations can make "meaningful and impactful personal and professional connections" (2021) through digital platforms when selecting candidates. In addition, they found that "virtual hiring allows clients to actually hone in and get to know potential talent better than ever before" (2021). This is because the people involved in the interview and selection process have fewer distractions. Many people are more open, transparent, and forthright when answering interview questions from the comfort of their own homes (Esman 2021).

Hiring through digital practices can increase the range of applicants to an organization because people are more willing to apply to positions outside of their regions and states. Tali Mandelzweig, COO at MeetFox, said "When only hiring someone in your desired area, you are limiting the talent pool dramatically. Many jobs can be done remotely and hiring someone digitally can allow you to find better-quality candidates." (COVID-19 Ushers 2020).

In addition to increasing the applicant range, selecting new employees through digital processes has been shown to shrink skills gaps. Over 60% of companies have difficulties finding talent to meet their needs (Orrell and Leger 2020, 4). The change to remote work has diminished "the skills gap by expanding— perhaps even globalizing—the talent catchment area." (Orrell and Leger 2020, 4). Digital hiring and remote work create more diverse workforces (Orrell and Leger 2020, 4), thereby helping companies to meet their diversity goals and make the company even more attractive to candidates.

Candidates now expect some virtual work options to continue past the pandemic. Offering remote work can increase an organization's retention because it is a job benefit that attracts candidates. Orrell and Leger found that 50% of candidates are specifically looking for remote work as an option (2020, 4). In addition, 75% of employers who offer remote work have found their retention improved in positions where remote work is an option (Orrell and Leger 2020, 4).

Survey and Interview Findings
Research emphasized how through digital hiring practices organizations could increase their talent pool and attract more diverse candidates. This finding was supported by four interviewees who shared that the diversity of applicants to their organizations increased after the start of the pandemic. By simplifying their application process and making the application available on the ADP online app, Fountain Inn, SC, has found a significant increase in diverse applicants. HR

Director of Fountain Inn, Rebecca Ward, said that the HR department decided to make the application easy for applicants and "We decided to put our hard work into the portion when we're talking to people, screening, and bringing people in." This strategy has been well-liked by candidates in Fountain Inn. In contrast, three interviewees were not sure if applicant diversity had changed, and one found that diversity had decreased significantly. Portland, ME experienced a huge drop in candidates of color when libraries and public computer stations closed due to the pandemic. Gina Tapp of Portland, Maine found that people who did not have stable internet now do not have access to the virtual job platforms, and they can't even walk into City Hall to ask for paper applications. The digital divide has negatively impacted the diversity of Portland's applicant pool.

<u>Digital Hiring Recommendations</u>

Based on the literature findings, surveys, and interviews the main recommendations for digital hiring include using multiple methods of technology and communication to leverage fast, safe, and efficient hiring; actively promoting your organization to potential candidates; looking for potential in candidates, not just their experience; and updating job descriptions.

Use Multiple Methods of Technology and Communication

Private companies and public organizations use many methods of technology and communication with job candidates. Burkhart (2021), Esman (2021), and other trade sources found organizations using a wide range of platforms including Zoom, Teams, LinkedIn, specialty databases, industry referrals, and personal contacts to maintain regular contact with candidates. Many organizations have done more social media, online chats, and emailing during the pandemic. Using multiple methods helps keep the candidates and hiring managers connected and allows organizations to complete the hiring process more quickly (O'Donnell 2020).

Interviewees supported the literature in that they use multiple methods of technology and communication to interact with potential applicants and candidates. Interviewees used LinkedIn, Indeed, social media, trade listservs, and diversity forums to reach potential applicants. They also used Zoom, Skype, Teams, phone, and email to communicate directly with candidates.

Actively Promote Your Organization

Organizations need to promote themselves to potential candidates through digital apps and platforms. Burkhardt recommends aggressively promoting the organization and any open

positions, "particularly with hard-to-fill roles" (2021). Many candidates are increasingly selective about whom they work for" (Burkhardt 2021), so organizations have to actively push out messaging about their mission, vision, purpose, and work. O'Donnell recommends upping LinkedIn presences (2020), and Burkhardt emphasizes tailoring recruitment approaches to each available position (2021). Malatestinic emphasizes spending time and money on promoting an organizational brand because candidates perceive organizations through that brand messaging (2020). By improving digital brand messaging, organizations can attract candidates who have the needed technical and social skills for open positions (Malatestinic 2020).

Organizations can actively promote themselves at virtual job fairs. This allows organizations to communicate directly with potential candidates and reach beyond their traditional recruiting locations. During the pandemic, local governments have increased their virtual recruiting strategies and actively promoted their organizations. As Gina Tapp shared, recruiting has been moving to virtual spaces for years. However, since the pandemic stopped in-person job fairs, organizations that used to do some in-person and some virtual recruiting have switched their efforts fully to virtual recruiting. Mike Sable emphasized how Maplewood, Minnesota changed their recruitment strategies to be highly intentional in their organizational promotion to communities of color. In interviews, Maplewood employees turn off their cameras to reduce biases and help candidates to only feel judged by their verbal answers, not by their appearances. James Malloy discussed how Lexington, Massachusetts has changed their job promotion efforts to attract younger, more diverse candidates. Lexington has also joined up with nearby jurisdictions to cross-promote at hiring fairs.

Look for Potential in Candidates, Not Just Their Experience
Organizations need to seek out the skills, characteristics, and abilities for the future – not just a replacement for a past employee in a position. Only 29% of new hires have all the skills required for their current roles, let alone for future skills (Burkhardt 2021). In addition, as remote work has taken hold in many industries, there is increasing uncertainty about the skills of the future and how much work will be redesigned or automated (Burkhardt 2021). During the pandemic, many candidates spent time learning new skills outside of their work hours, so Burkhardt has found candidates with advanced skills that they learned outside of traditional work means (2021). Recruiters are finding talent with all the required skills coming from untraditional avenues.

Haley Bizzell, interim HR director in Hillsborough, North Carolina, shared that Hillsborough uses Zoom webinars for interviews instead of Zoom meetings. This enables them to have additional attendees in the room, but without videos on. In addition to making the interview less intimidating for candidates, this can help broaden the organization's perspective on candidates' potential. With more people listening, they can have more input on the characteristics and skills of candidates beyond their resume experience.

Update Job Descriptions

For many employees, the pandemic has changed their work priorities, and they now emphasize doing meaningful and valued work (Burkhardt 2021 and Gelle-Jimenez 2021). In addition to the job having a positive purpose, candidates also seek organizations who do good and treat their employees well. Candidates expect that they will be able to control the design of their jobs and when they do their tasks. Having remote or hybrid working arrangements will "enhance employees' evaluations of organizational attractiveness" (Wortler et al 2020). Up to 65% of recent job candidates even reported halting an "application process because they found some aspects of the job or the company unattractive" (Burkhardt 2021).

Therefore, public and private organizations need to consider the importance of employee value propositions when recruiting candidates. Updating job descriptions is an important step in highlighting the organization's values to candidates. A job description highlights the abilities and personal characteristics an organization is seeking in a candidate. The skills needed for success in virtual work environments are often different from in-person skills. Research by Biron et al. has found that virtual work skills include increased optimism, resiliency, and flexibility (2020), and these are the characteristics that organizations should emphasize in updated job descriptions. Updating job descriptions will help organizations to manage organization and candidate value propositions (Burkhardt 2021).

From the survey, we found that 14 out of 17 of local governments update job descriptions prior to posting them. From our interviews, we found that most job description updates focus on adding in remote and hybrid work policies and availability. Few local governments are updating the abilities and characteristics necessary for successful work from home employment. The one local government representative whose jurisdiction has updated remote work policies and value propositions was Leann Shaw from State College, Pennsylvania. She discussed in her interview

how the borough has added wording about employees being able to communicate with diverse groups of people and communicating with people across the community.

Assessing Candidate Fit

<u>Literature Findings</u>

Hire people for their motivations and fit with the organization, job, and team - not just their skills. When hiring any candidate, whether or not the process is virtual, it is critical to find a candidate whose values and motivations match the organization's. In the public sector, many employees have Public Service Motivation (PSM), a person's predisposition to respond to motives from public organizations (Perry 2021, 20).

Part of PSM is Person-Organization Fit, or the congruency or compatibility between an employee's values, skills, and abilities and an organization's values, environment, and resources. Fit requires two components: the fit between the tasks of a job and a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities; and the fit between the organizational culture and a person's personality (needs, interests, values) (Bowen et al. 1991, 38). Person-Organization Fit is a perceived compatibility determined by the candidate or employee (Biron et al. 2020). Person-Organization Fit includes common values and attitudes; and emphasizes conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience (Pearce and Sowa 2019, 37-38). Employees who have strong connections with an organization's values and mission tend to be happier and less likely to leave (Pearce and Sowa 2019, 37). People who are motivated by the organization will see their jobs as important and meaningful, consequently increasing their work efforts (Perry 2021, 47). Employees who have good fits are happier, but they are not necessarily the most efficient employees.

Every organization has specific core values, and matching those values with a potential employee's values "ensures that the actions of [future] employees are consistent and aligned with organizational strategies." (Gelle-Jimenez et al. 2021). With their connection to the organization's mission, employees with good fits are more likely to be self-motivated and eager to contribute to organizational effectiveness.

In our highly technological world, job skills change rapidly. Therefore, it is important to hire for fit with an organization's values rather than technical skills that may be obsolete within a year. It is

much easier to teach technical skills to employees than it is to coach someone on soft, interpersonal skills (Bowen et al. 1991, 36).

Survey and Interview Findings

Through survey responses and interviews, we found that local governments try to hire employees for good fits with their job, team, department, and entire organization. However, only six local government representatives thought that they successfully hired for fit during the pandemic, and two recently hired survey respondents felt that they did not get a good idea of the organization's values and cultures through the interview process.

Leann Shaw of State College, Pennsylvania discussed working with new hires regularly during their first year and how, during the pandemic, new hires were often hesitant to ask questions. Consequently, she has been deliberate about reaching out to new hires to check in, answer questions, and see how they are fitting in.

Assessing Candidate Fit Recommendations

Based on the literature, survey, and interview findings, the main recommendations for digitally assessing candidate fit include reviewing job descriptions; assessing the candidate's fit with the organization and helping candidates assess their fit; reinforcing cultural fit during onboarding and beyond; and hiring for fit to maintain motivation while working from home.

Review Job Descriptions

It is essential to have clarity on job descriptions. That will help with finding a person with the job-related criteria (qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities) that an organization seeks versus only describing job responsibilities (Pearce and Sowa 2019, 39). This is to ensure the description accurately portrays the qualities needed in a candidate and the type of candidate who will have a good fit with the organization.

As mentioned previously, our survey found that 14 of 17 local governments update job descriptions prior to posting them. One survey respondent wrote that their organization updated job descriptions to include the "skills and scope of work to ensure it attracts the right candidate and truly reflects the role." Haley Bizzell from Hillsborough, North Carolina, reviews job descriptions to "focus on the town's needs to clearly identify what the position is responsible for to ensure we attract interested, qualified candidates." Matthew Williams, from Alexandria,

Virginia, updates job description knowledge, skills, and abilities to the current, remote needs of the organization.

However, most (11 of 17) of the local government updates do not include updates on the characteristics and abilities needed for remote work. They focus updates on job tasks and qualifications. This is an area of improvement for local governments because the job description is one of the primary ways that applicants learn about a position, department, and organization.

Assess the Candidates' Fit with the Organization, and Help Candidates Assess Their Fit
Since fit is perceived, organizations need to assess each candidate and let candidates evaluate their own fit with the organization. It is important for organizations to know what abilities they are looking for before interviewing. It is fine for organizations to be selective because hiring the right people for the job will benefit an organization whereas hiring a wrong person can damage a culture for a long time (Bolman & Deal 2017, 139). In order to find the right candidate, organizations can look for applicants who "articulate values consistent with the formally established values of the organization" (Vveinhardt, J., Gulbovaitė, E. & Štreimikiene, D., 2016 in Gelle-Jimenez 2021). Organizations should share their culture, leadership styles, and preferred methods of communication with candidates upfront to help find good fits.

The organizations we surveyed and interviewed all assessed candidate fit. In cover letters and interviews, organizations search for the candidates' expressions of values, such as customer service and diversity, that are in line with organizations' values. Common ways to assess candidate motivation, commitment, and personality included asking behavioral interview questions, asking situational interview questions, assessing candidates' understanding of a strategic plan, and completing reference calls. Other strategies included asking candidates to do mini presentations or assignments. Some governments used Zoom webinars, Zoom breakout rooms, and virtual 'meet and greets' to get to know candidates' personalities and how they might fit in with the team. One town shares information about their culture and values through the website, job description, and pre-filmed videos to help candidates assess their own fit with the town. Another small city police department shares messages about what it is like to work for the department and what is its culture through radio broadcasts.

Many government organizations expressed challenges with getting to know candidates through Zoom. They found it harder to read body language through the digital platform, and especially

hard through masks. Around a third of organizations have attempted to make interviews more conversational than formal to get to know candidates better and see how they interact.

Reinforce Cultural Fit During Onboarding and Beyond
Organizations should reinforce fit with new employees to ensure that employees' congruence with the organization is strong. Gelle-Jimenez et al. recommend including strategic activities during onboarding that "develop engagement and introduce the norms of the institution" (2021). Orientation should include coaching on espoused values, the organization's history and founding, and cultural norms. HR staff should also focus on the personal values needed for success in the organization, including competence, commitment, and compassion (Gelle-Jimenez et al 2021). Beyond orientation, organizations can use training and management of task design to reinforce skills and knowledge needed (Bowen et al. 1991, 37). Through organizational design, organizations can reinforce personal orientation and connection with the organization's mission (Bowen et al. 1991, 37).

Many government organizations share pre-filmed videos during orientation to teach their cultural norms. They also do virtual gatherings with team members. One organization also does icebreakers with new hires so that the new hires can meet and get to know their teammates.

Leann Shaw from State College, Pennsylvania realized early in the pandemic that sometimes there are things that pile up on new hires and they did not have an outlet. Even three months or six months into a job some people are still nervous about asking questions to supervisors. Leann Shaw reaches out to new hires regularly in hopes that HR can be an outlet for new hires to ask questions and make new hires feel comfortable in the organization. She thinks this can also help with retention, as it compounds with State College's strong benefits and culture.

Mike Sable has new employees complete psych profiles and leadership strengths finders to help employees increase their self-awareness. Sable finds these techniques helpful during onboarding so that new hires understand where they can help the department and team. The techniques also help new hires get integrated into the team.

Hire for Fit to Maintain Employee Motivation While Working from Home
Hiring for fit is especially important now because the pandemic has removed employees from offices and transitioned them to working from home thereby distancing people from the office

culture. COVID has been an organizational crisis where "employees and managers were totally unprepared to manage this cognitive, affective and behavioral" transition (Manuti et al. 2020). Employees needed to display and develop soft skills, especially resilience, optimism, innovation, and adaptability, to cope with the unexpected (Manuti et al. 2020). Therefore, hiring for fit is critical to maintain motivation in remote work situations.

Wortler et al. found that remote employees maintained their intrinsic work motivation, but only those employees who had a strong work-related "sense of choice and psychological freedom" (2020). Organizations need staff who can easily manage, learn, and cope from changes in work structure (Biron et al. 2020). This is likely to happen when employees are motivated and optimistic. They need to believe that they can alter the job tasks for remote work or alter themselves to meet the new demands (Biron et al. 2020). Optimism, a personality trait, can help people to adjust to new roles, expectations, identities, and environments. In their research, Biron et al. found that people who show optimism are considered more resilient and that they use problem-solving strategies, rather than emotion-focused strategies, to manage their stressors (2020). These people also rebound more quickly from stressors and can focus on fulfilling projects and goals.

By having good employee fits, employees and organizations are more likely to have successful remote work experiences. Our interviews with local government staff confirmed that, in their experiences, employees have shown incredible resilience, creativity, and optimism over the past year's chaotic transitions. Staff in Lexington, MA expected to only tread water while working from home, but they have maintained motivation and made significant progress on some of their organizational goals. Multiple interviewees discussed how their organizations continued to do high quality work during the pandemic because of the strong values and public service motivation present in many of their employees. Having strong values has helped to maintain work motivation during the pandemic because employees have a customer mindset and show the town's values to citizens.

New Hire Preparation

<u>Literature Findings</u>

When employees are hired, unanswered questions about characteristics of the organization are front and center. As Krasman states, "The gap between the employment decision and the first day of work is a critical time because the weeks leading up to that first day are filled with stress

and uncertainty" (2015, 11). While organizations often consider the quality of candidates being hired as the reason for failure or success, preparing new hires for the work can also play an important role. Although a lot of organizations have focused on the rapid shift to digital hiring and onboarding, new hire preparation has been less discussed. Still, many Human Resource departments and managers are looking for new ways to integrate employees into offices they have never visited (Dill 2020). First day jitters are always a concern, but taking the extra step to encourage employee engagement and retention prior to the first day can help mitigate these situations and effectively manage new hires (Sull, Sull, and Bersin 2020).

Ziden and Joo suggest beginning onboarding as soon as a job offer is accepted with the idea of pre-onboarding (2020). This allows organizations to engage a new employee earlier and doing so digitally allows for more personalized engagement. When new employees can begin learning their new job and its expectations before their first day, it can lead to better productivity and higher retention (2020). Overall, it improves an employee's self-confidence, lowering the first day jitters and ensuring that employees can get settled in and get started (Bannan 2020).

There are a variety of ways that digital pre-onboarding can be implemented in an organization. Some suggest using it as a form of training or e-learning prior to the first day, (Ziden and Joo 2020), but most argue its use as an early method of communication and team-building (Cleary 2021; Dill 2020; Francis 2020; Kitani 2020; Krasman 2015).

Survey and Interview Findings
From the survey and interviews conducted, we found that most local governments engage in some level of digital pre-onboarding and engagement with new hires. While this primarily involves communicating the start date and time with new employees and providing access to standard paperwork and Human Resource documents, only 8 of 17 survey respondents involved in hiring offered anything more than the bare minimum. Furthermore, 11 of 21 survey respondents stated that there are no opportunities for introductions or connections prior to the first day. As James Malloy from Lexington, Massachusetts stated, "New hires feel like it's harder to be part of a team." This means that the socialization aspect of pre-onboarding is even more important during the digital hiring process.

Rebecca Ward from Fountain Inn, South Carolina, emphasized the importance of frequent communication during her interview. She stated that she is always looking for feedback on the

hiring process and wants to ensure that personalization is not taken out of the digital process, it just looks different now. A lot of emphasis was placed on letting new hires know that someone is there to help if they have concerns or run into problems.

We also found that only 2 of 17 local government practitioners involved in hiring maintain first day rituals and celebrations. These interview responses were conflicting as 3 out of 4 recently hired survey respondents said that their organization did maintain first day rituals. This was a high point for new employees as it made them feel welcomed. Leann Shaw from State College, Pennsylvania, discussed the importance of checking in with new hires on the first day, giving them traditional first day gifts like a State College umbrella, and ensuring that they feel comfortable and know the basics. This was her way of welcoming new employees to the team.

New Hire Preparation Recommendations

Based on findings from the literature, survey, and interviews, the main recommendations for new hire preparation include making effective communication a priority, providing resources before the first day, making connections and introductions ahead of the first day, and maintaining first day rituals and celebrations.

Make Effective Communication a Priority

Digital communication often involves a lot of emails, phone calls, and video meetings. It is easy to miss a point or get lost on a project when you cannot speak face to face (Cleary 2021). As Aisyah and Susanty wrote, "In the digital business, the competency of communication is needed to ensure the flow of information to be transferred without distortion and to achieve the goals" (2017, 113). In a study by Sull, Sull, and Bersin, nearly half of participants cited effective communication as crucial to their transition to remote work (2020). They further identified five characteristics in effective communication: frequent, transparent, part of a two-way dialogue, easy to navigate, and consistent (2020). One method of ensuring effective communication is to focus on clear expectations, regular feedback through check-ins, and communicating more than you would in-person (Dill 2020; Francis 2020).

One recently hired survey respondent said that the virtual nature of their remote work meant that their only source of truth and learning was from their direct supervisor. This can be problematic if a subject is outside of their area of expertise or if they provide incorrect information. We emphasize the "easy to navigate" characteristic of effective communication in

suggesting the implementation of multiple sources of feedback (Sull, Sull, and Bersin 2020). It is important to provide new employees with multiple avenues to get feedback or ask questions so that the right person can always respond to comments or concerns.

Provide Resources Before the First Day

A common new employee concern is whether they will have the proper tools and equipment to get started right away (Bannan 2020). While many organizations have begun providing training through Zoom, Adobe Connect, and Microsoft Teams, this does not address the concern of not being able to access such training (Cleary 2021). We recommend ensuring that employees physically have the technology needed to do their work. This may involve setting up email addresses, providing computers, and having access to organizational software before the new employee's first day. Bannan references organizations that ship laptops when a new hire is added to the payroll or sends new employees a document listing everything they need to know about the technology they will be using (2020). This allows potential problems to be mitigated by allowing employees to become familiar with technology and prepare for the first day. Still, when providing technology for remote work, it is important to test it ahead of time and offer guidance for using it (Dill 2020).

Krasman also suggested centralizing all useful information for new employees (2015). He argues that "New hires shouldn't have to hunt for the information they need" (2015, 11). To streamline the process, compile job-related information in an accessible location, like a shared folder, and confirm with new employees where things can be found. If unsure what to include in this shared folder, ask employees in the position what they wish they had known before their first day and what would have been useful to have. These responses can inform the information included in what is provided to employees. From our survey, 11 of 17 respondents involved in hiring said that they provide resources to new hires ahead of the first day. James Malloy of Lexington, Massachusetts discussed in his interview the emphasis they place on ensuring that new employees can hit the ground running when they start. He stated that they get email addresses assigned to new employees immediately, teach them how to log into the system, and get them up to speed on expectations and background information. This relieves some of the pressure on new employees and ensures that there are no delays for their first day of work.

Make Connections and Introductions Ahead of the First Day
Almost all of the literature highlighted the necessity of making preliminary introductions prior to the first day (Bannan 2020; Cleary 2021; Dill 2020; Francis 2020; Krasman 2015; Sull, Sull, and Bersin 2020). As Cleary mentioned, "For retention and long-term success… professionals must feel like part of the team and engage in activities" (2021, 52). The initial transition period to working with a new team can be challenging and new employees often worry that their coworkers will not accept them (Bannan 2020). The relationships and connections that enable a sense of belonging, increase long-term productivity, and encourage staying with an organization are based on trust built over time with repeated positive interactions (2020). Francis argues that it is important for employers to make sure new hires are communicating consistently with other team members to ensure the establishment of those relationships (2020).

We recommend always reaching out to employees in advance of their first day and setting up meet-and-greets with team members, hosting virtual lunches where everyone can get together, or even using video bios to initiate introductions (Bannan 2020; Francis 2020; Sull, Sull, and Bersin 2020). 8 of 21 survey respondents stated that their organizations do not reach out to new employees prior to the first day and 11 of 21 said that there were no opportunities for socialization and connection prior to the first day. Research suggests that introductions and opportunities for connection can help employees overcome social isolation. In one study, these activities were frequently mentioned in a survey as ways that organizations can help support employees and enhance remote work (Sull, Sull, and Bersin 2020). One interviewee from Portland, Maine stated that she thinks socialization is happening within each department, but she could not be sure. Local government practitioners should take a more active role in ensuring that opportunities for connection are being provided to increase the potential of attracting and retaining quality employees.

Maintain First Day Rituals and Celebrations
As Krasman states, "The first day in any workplace is a milestone" (2015, 12). The impression that an organization makes on this day can and will influence an employee's perception of the organization. We recommend making the day as pleasant and memorable as possible by maintaining traditional first day activities as you would in-person. Dill argues that organizations should not skip the first-day festivities (2020). These festivities are often having a picture taken for an ID badge, gifting organizationally branded items, or hosting a welcome lunch (Dill 2020;

Krasman 2015). These efforts can go a long way in helping a new employee feel comfortable, excited, and welcomed to the organization.

From our survey, we found that 3 out of 4 recently hired respondents said their organization maintained first day activities that made them excited to join the team. One interviewee, Mika Ansley from King County, Washington, stated that on her first day, she had a photo taken for an ID badge and signed out supplies. This made her feel like she was immediately invited in and included in the team. Another interviewee, Leann Shaw of State College, Pennsylvania said they provide "Borough of State College masks and umbrellas… small items like that" to celebrate the first day and make the new hire feel welcome.

Digital Onboarding

Literature Findings

The rapid shift to remote work and digital processes does not end on an employee's first day of work. For many organizations, the onboarding process is another difficult piece of the puzzle to navigate through the pandemic. As Bannan writes, "Even those organizations with typically strong onboarding processes may be struggling now as they transition from in-person to virtual programs, making it more difficult for employees to settle in and get started" (2020, 1). The idea of onboarding entirely virtually is new for most organizations, but likely a necessity in response to remote work policies in the pandemic. This step of training new employees and getting them acquainted with the organization is more important now than ever before (Maurer 2020). The onboarding process integrates new employees into an organization and often involves a series of training and orientation programs that enable them to perform well in the new position and meet an organizations' expectations (Ziden and Joo 2020).

One of the most prevalent and wide-ranging issues with effective virtual onboarding is creating an experience that sets up new employees for success (Cleary 2015). There are challenges in organization and repeatability, technological infrastructure, and communicating organizational expectations (Bannan 2020; Hughes 2020; O'Donnell 2020). Prior to the pandemic, many organizations had developed either an in-person onboarding process or were "doing it on the fly" for each new employee (Maurer 2020). According to Cleary, this is a problem. "You have to be organized and structured with everything laid out. You can't just wing it" (2021, 51). Using a comprehensive digital onboarding platform allows the process to be standardized, repeatable, and helps organizations provide a consistent experience for new hires (O'Donnell 2020).

Many organizations have also experienced a lack of technological infrastructure and expertise (Hughes 2020). Although managers and trainers often prefer in-person interactions for onboarding, it is important to note that the pandemic has illustrated how training can be done effectively using technology (2020). It is because of this that multiple technology options are important. Larson, Vroman, and Makarius argue that "Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from having a 'richer' technology, such as video conferencing" (2020). This is further emphasized by Maurer with the sentiment that "using video is critical to virtual onboarding" (2020, 57). Virtual onboarding can be very beneficial if organizations put in the effort. As Ziden and Joo state, "technology like online onboarding will make onboarding a more meaningful experience for new employees" (2020, 746).

Finally, communicating clear roles and expectations can be difficult to do virtually. As Cleary states, "It's easier to get distracted on a virtual call" (2015, 52). For this reason, it is important to set expectations and encourage feedback (White 2020). Because the onboarding process is meant to make a new employee comfortable in their role, they need to know what is expected of them and who to contact with questions (2020). According to Bannan, "Employees need realistic, measurable goals when they get started, and a way to keep track of what they're charged with" (2020, 2). This is the responsibility of the organization and direct supervisors to the new employees.

<u>Survey and Interview Findings</u>

From the surveys and interviews conducted, we found that 3 out of 4 recently hired local government practitioners felt that their virtual onboarding process was only somewhat useful. Some pointed to having to lead their own onboarding instead of being trained by someone in the organization and others pointed to the lack of feedback received from anyone other than their direct supervisor. Although this is not representative of every local government, all methods of onboarding should be meaningful and useful experiences for new employees. Still, 2 out of 4 recently hired local government practitioners felt that expectations were clearly communicated by supervisors. This suggests that local governments are on the right track with their virtual onboarding, but it can still use some improvement.

Haley Bizzell from Hillsborough, North Carolina, said that the biggest weakness in their digital hiring practice was onboarding. She pointed to a handful of challenges with virtual onboarding,

but the primary challenges were in effective communication and consistent experiences for new employees. James Malloy of Lexington, Massachusetts echoed with similar challenges. Their virtual onboarding process differs significantly from their traditional onboarding as much of the process centered around in-person activities and they have had trouble adjusting. From the literature, we have found that many of these issues can be counteracted with the use of available technology and virtual platforms for onboarding.

We also found from the interviews that many local governments have big ideas for what they would like virtual onboarding to look like. They would like to take advantage of the switch to digital practices to make the onboarding process more consistent while still forming connections with each new employee. Leann Shaw and Rebecca Ward from Fountain Inn, South Carolina, spoke to their interest in including more technology in their virtual onboarding throughout the pandemic and maintaining it as local governments are allowed to return to in-person work. Both highlighted the need for feedback on the new processes but ultimately, the pandemic has pushed virtual onboarding to be a top priority.

Digital Onboarding Recommendations

Based on the literature, survey, and interview findings, we recommend utilizing all available technology to ensure that the onboarding process is seamless and useful for new employees, using an onboarding portal or dashboard, and checking in with new employees frequently during onboarding to set up roles, rules, and expectations.

Utilize All Available Technology

While all local governments have gotten accustomed to some form of technology when onboarding new employees, usually email or phone calls, many are hesitant to branch out beyond what is comfortable. Others are reluctant to transition to virtual onboarding because they prefer in-person interactions and think this is only a temporary problem (Hughes 2020). However, we know that the goal of onboarding is to provide effective training and if this can be done with the help of new technology, then that is the future of onboarding (Ziden and Joo 2020). We recommend utilizing all available technology in an organization to connect with new employees and to provide a consistent onboarding experience (Bannan 2020). If done well, it also organizes the process and allows new employees to become familiar with technology that they will likely use in their work. As Francis states, "Make sure that all training materials, instructions, and guidelines are easily accessible and user-friendly" (2020, 2).

All of the local government practitioners interviewed acknowledged using some method of videoconferencing in onboarding and some used pre-recorded videos to streamline the onboarding process. Mike Sable from Maplewood, Minnesota, discussed how they tried to transition to virtual onboarding prior to the pandemic, and have completed the transition during the pandemic. Now their entire onboarding process is done virtually and he referred to it as one of their successes with digital hiring during the pandemic. Andrew Ross from Roswell, Georgia said that the use of virtual onboarding has helped with productivity even though he would rather train new employees in-person. Overall, local government practitioners have found successes, small and large, with transitions to virtual onboarding. The important part has been ensuring that technology meets the organization's needs and can be adapted as necessary (Hughes 2020).

Consider an Onboarding Portal or Dashboard
Many learning management systems and online portals exist to help organizations track applicants and onboard new employees. As Francis states, "When virtually onboarding a new employee, it can be difficult to effectively provide all the resources needed in his or her first few weeks" (2020, 2). Because of this, it is important to create an onboarding system that works virtually that can act as a consistent model for all new employees. We recommend creating an onboarding portal or dashboard to centralize useful information, videos, and trainings for new employees and ensure a consistent experience for everyone being onboarded. A portal or dashboard can allow paperwork to be digital and accessible where appropriate, ensure new hires have a good experience as a first impression with the organization, and can be designed for interaction to keep participants engaged and connected (Cleary 2020; Francis 2020; Maurer 2020; Murphey 2020). As O'Donnell states, "Comprehensive solutions [to common virtual onboarding issues] include onboarding portals to help companies provide a consistent experience for new hires, while ensuring that those new hires have a good experience as they come through the door" (2020, 2).

Four local government practitioners interviewed stated that they use a form of onboarding portal or dashboard during the pandemic. Gina Tapp from Portland, Maine, highlighted the use of MUNIS as an employee/applicant tracking system with employee self-service and digitally accessible paperwork. Mike Sable from Maplewood, Minnesota mentioned the use of NeoGov where new employees can go through benefits packages and watch pre-recorded videos as part of their training process. Rebecca Ward from Fountain Inn, South Carolina, and James

Malloy from Lexington, Massachusetts mentioned the development of pre-recorded videos and online onboarding systems throughout the pandemic to provide consistent and streamlined experiences for new employees. These local government practitioners are putting in extra effort to make their onboarding process better and through employee feedback, they have found that it can be successful and worthwhile.

Check in Frequently During Onboarding and Set Up Roles, Rules, and Expectations
As Cleary states, "Setting clear expectations is an essential leadership role that becomes even more important with remote teams" (2015, 53). Beginning a new job can be overwhelming and employees need consistent communication and feedback during the initial transition period (Francis 2020). Regularly meeting with a new employee can be used to evaluate progress, ensure that the onboarding process is going well, and provide an avenue for open discussion and communication. White argues that it is important to "set expectations and encourage feedback" (2020, 2). We recommend checking in frequently during onboarding and setting up roles, rules, and expectations. Larson, roman, and Makarius suggest that managers can support remote employees by establishing structured daily check-ins and "rules of engagement" for virtual work (2020). Regular check-ins with new employees during their first 30-60 days can ensure that they have the right tools to be successful (Francis 2020).

We also suggest that check-ins involve direct supervisors, Human Resources, and anyone involved in the onboarding process. As Bannan states, "Sometimes problems come up, and even those employees who work autonomously have issues they need to discuss during the first weeks and months after starting a new position" (2020, 2). We heard a similar sentiment reiterated in our interviews with local government practitioners. Leann Shaw of State College, Pennsylvania mentioned that "sometimes there are things that pile up on new hires and they don't have an outlet, so even after three months or even six months some people are still nervous about asking questions to supervisors." We also found from the survey of a recently hired local government practitioner that they would have appreciated feedback and communication outside of their direct supervisor during onboarding. Human Resource directors and team members can often provide a learning opportunity to new employees or answer questions that a direct supervisor cannot. For this reason, multiple people should be involved in new hire check-ins to ensure that there are multiple avenues for clarification and accountability as well as ensuring that some opportunity for remote social interaction is provided (Larson, Vroman, and Makarius 2020).

Limitations

Due to the recency of the pandemic, there has not been sufficient time for digital hiring studies to take place. The research and publishing process often takes longer than a year and we are only one year and two months into the pandemic. Because there have not been many scholarly articles published on the topic of digital hiring and remote work in the pandemic, most literature in our background research was published prior to the pandemic. While this research is still a good source of information, it is not specific to the forced nature of digital hiring in the pandemic. Future research on this topic should focus on the rapid transition to digital hiring that occurred out of necessity due to the pandemic. This shift to digital hiring did not take place as it would if it was by choice, which informs both the challenges and necessity of digital hiring.

While our survey was taken by local government practitioners in a variety of states and municipalities, there was still a relatively low response rate. Because of these minimal responses, findings from this project cannot generalize for all local governments or practitioners. This project also focused on small municipalities and counties with populations between 10,000 and 150,000, meaning that the challenges and opportunities identified may not be relevant to larger jurisdictions or very small jurisdictions. Future research should expand the scope of this project to include local governments serving a variety of population sizes. We also only interviewed nine local government practitioners for this project, and only two of them could speak to being hired virtually. The experiences of the interviewees, while mostly consistent, cannot generalize for the experience of all local government practitioners involved in hiring. Future research should aim to not only interview more practitioners, but to focus on the experiences of practitioners who have been hired virtually during the pandemic.

Finally, this project took place over the course of three months. This allowed only minimal time for information gathering and engagement in both the survey and interviews. The survey and interview requests were also only shared via direct emails to practitioners and through ELGL's social media network. Future research should utilize a variety of recruitment methods to garner more engagement for interviews and survey responses.

Implications

Understanding that digital work, including digital hiring is here to stay, it is important that local governments assess the potential implications of these changes for their future work practices. Incorporating these suggestions requires time, effort, and potentially further funding, all of which should be closely considered when making decisions.

Not all the above recommendations will be right for each local government. Individual organizations should take a whole of government approach in deciding which practices will work best for their needs. This decision process will require time and effort to be done correctly. Department heads, supervisors, and frontline employees should be consulted in many of these cases. For example, rewriting job descriptions requires feedback from employees who currently occupy a similar role; practicing cohesive interview techniques requires time from supervisors who plan to participate in the interview. Time and effort are important not just for maintaining internal cohesion and efficiency, but also for ensuring that applicants are provided a smooth and comfortable process.

Some recommendations presented in this report require financial expenditures. Digital onboarding platforms for example have been proven to be effective in acclimating a new employee to their role, however these platforms often require payment. Virtual job fairs and publication of online marketing materials may also require a financial investment. When governments are considering using their limited funds it is crucial that they consider the impact of that cost and spend those funds where they can be most effective. Assessing human resource practices and budgets is necessary for local governments in determining which of these recommendations can be the most impactful.

Conclusion

The use of digital hiring practices, as with many trends during the pandemic, has risen dramatically. The literature and findings discussed in this report suggest that this increase will not slow down any time soon, and local governments need to adapt to these changes. A common theme in many of the interviews for this project was a sense of pride that local government professionals felt during the pandemic about their ability to shift course and be resilient in the face of a changing environment. This flexibility is crucial for local governments in the face of a changing job market, one in which digital hiring practices are more common. Local governments must put in the time and effort to create these practices so they can recruit and retain the best and brightest candidates on the job market.

The recommendations presented in this report are not comprehensive nor are they all-or-nothing. Local governments vary widely in their needs and should evaluate each recommendation for their circumstances. However, for local governments trying to compete in a changing work environment and job market, we hope that these suggestions for digital branding, interviewing, recruiting, hiring, and onboarding can begin to guide you and lead you to success.

References

Aisyah, Supriyati Nur, and Ade Irma Susanty. 2017. "Measurement Gap of Competency in Preparing Employees for Digital Company (A Case Study of Telecommunication Company in Indonesia)." Essay. In *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 150, 150:108–14. Atlantis Press.

Anderson, Bruce. 2020. "7 Tips For Conducting A Seamless Video Job Interview". Business.Linkedin.Com. https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/candidate-experience/2020/tips-for-conducting-seamless-virtual-job-interview.

Bannan, Karen J. 2020. "6 things about virtual onboarding that worry new hires." *HRNews,* http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/trade-journals/6-things-about-virtual-onboarding-that-worry-new/docview/2409650229/se-2?accountid=14244

Indeed. 2020. "Best Practices For Virtual Interviews" Indeed.com. https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/best-practices-for-virtual-interviews.

Biron, Michal; Peretz, Hilla; Turgeman-Lupo, Keren. 2020. "Trait Optimism and Work from Home Adjustment in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Considering the Mediating Role of Situational Optimism and the Moderating Role of Cultural Optimism" Sustainability 12, no. 22: 9773. https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.3390/su12229773

Bolman, Lee G. and Terrence E. Deal. 2017. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. 6th edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bombaro, C., Howard, J. and Kozlowska, A., 2016. Online Interview Advice for Candidates and Employers. College and Research Library News, [online] 77(3). https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9459/10705

Bowen, David E., Gerald E. Ledford, and Barry R. Nathan. 1991. "Hiring for the Organization; Not the Job." *The Executive.* Academy of Management Executive. Vol. 5: No. 4. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4165035.

Burkardt. Mar/Apr 2021. "Reengineering the Recruitment Process." Harvard Business Review. Vol. 99: Iss. 2. http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=43c1dff2-e652-4c52-b5f2-b88daf4c8c91%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=148829340&db=buh.

Cleary, Richard "Dick". 2021. "THE ROAD AHEAD: Opportunities and Strategies for Virtual
　　　　Onboarding and Accountability." *LIMRA's MarketFacts Quarterly* (1): 50-54.
　　　　http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/trade-
　　　　journals/road-ahead-opportunities-strategies-virtual/docview/2480824274/se-
　　　　2?accountid=14244.

Dill, Kathryn. 2020. "It's Not just Working Remotely; Hiring and Onboarding Go Virtual, Too; with
　　　　Many Workplaces Closed during the Pandemic, Hiring and Onboarding are Moving
　　　　Online; New Employees Bond Virtually Over DoorDash Delivery." *Wall Street Journal
　　　　(Online)*, Apr 15. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-
　　　　com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/newspapers/not-just-working-remotely-hiring-onboarding-
　　　　go/docview/2389718597/se-2?accountid=14244.

Engaging Local Government Leaders. "About." Accessed April 25, 2021. https://elgl.org/about/.

Esman, Oliver. Jan 18, 2021. "Embracing the Virtual World: Why Some Pandemic-Era Hiring
　　　　Practices are Here to Stay." Northern Exposure Blog. Brentwood: Newstex.
　　　　https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2478439735?pq-
　　　　origsite=summon.

Francis, Karrien and City Harvest CHRO at. 2020. "4 Tips on how Employers can Adjust to the
　　　　'New Norm' of Virtual Onboarding." Brentwood: Newstex.
　　　　http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/blogs-
　　　　podcasts-websites/4-tips-on-how-employers-can-adjust-new-
　　　　norm/docview/2434379524/se-2?accountid=14244.

Gelle-Jimenez, Maureen and Hector M. Aguiling. 2021. "Leveraging human resources
　　　　management (HRM) practices toward congruence of values." International Journal of
　　　　Research in Business and Social Science. Vol. 10: Iss. 1. Istanbul. https://search-
　　　　proquest-
　　　　com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2495510673/5197FDC5D05F45B2PQ/1?accountid=14
　　　　244.

Grensing-Pophal, Lin. Apr 21, 2020. "COVID-19 Ushers in New Outlook on Hiring Remote
　　　　Workers." Society for Human Resource Management. Alexandria: HRNews.
　　　　https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2393051546?pq-
　　　　origsite=summon.

Hughes, Claretha. 2020. "The Changing Learning Technological Landscape for Trainers in the
　　　　Wake of COVID-19." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 23, no. 1: 66–74.
　　　　https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422320972108.

Kitani, Keith. Jan 17, 2020. "Preparing Reticent Workers for Digital Transformation."
　　　　Manufacturing.Net http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/trade-journals/preparing-reticent-workers-digital-transformation/docview/2340159673/se-2?accountid=14244.

Krasman, Michael. 2015. "Three Must-Have Onboarding Elements for New and Relocated Employees." *Employment Relations Today* 42, no. 2: 9–14. https://doi.org/10.1002/ert.21493.

Langer, M, König, CJ, Krause, K. Examining digital interviews for personnel selection: Applicant reactions and interviewer ratings. Int J Select Assess. 2017; 25: 371– 382. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12191

Larson, Barbara Z., Susan R. Vroman, and Erin E. Makarius. 2020. "A Guide to Managing Your (Newly) Remote Workers." Essay. In *Coronavirus + Business*, 55–59. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.

Liang, Chaoyun, Chi-Cheng Chang, William Rothwell, and Kuen-Ming Shu. 2016. "Influences of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing in an Online Virtual Community: Interactive Effects of Trust, Communication and Leadership." Journal of Organizational and End User Computing 28 (4): 15-32.

Malatestinic, Liz. Nov 27, 2020. "The Zoom Job Interview". Indianapolis Business Journal. Vol. 41: Iss. 40. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2466371726?pq-origsite=summon.

Manuti, Amelia, Maria Luisa Giancaspro, Monica Molino, Emanuela Ingusci, et al. 2020. "Everything Will Be Fine": A Study on the Relationship between Employees' Perception of Sustainable HRM Practices and Positive Organizational Behavior during COVID19." *Sustainability*. Vol. 12: Iss. 23. Basel, Switzerland: Sustainability. DOI:10.3390/su122310216. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2469478523?pq-origsite=summon.

Maurer, Roy., 2020. Career Fairs Go Virtual in Reaction to Pandemic. SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/career-fairs-go-virtual-reaction-covid19.aspx

Maurer, Roy. Apr, 2020. "Virtual Onboarding of Remote Workers More Important than Ever." 2020. *HRNews*. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/trade-journals/virtual-onboarding-remote-workers-more-important/docview/2392451560/se-2?accountid=14244.

McDaniel, M. A., Whetzel, D. L., Schmidt, F. L., & Maurer, S. D. (1994). The validity of employment interviews: A comprehensive review and meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, 79(4), 599–616. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.4.599

Murphey, Dakota. 2020. "Better Onboarding: How to Get Employees Off to a Strong Start After COVID-19." *BenefitsPRO*. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/trade-journals/better-onboarding-how-get-employees-off-strong/docview/2424197829/se-2?accountid=14244.

O'Donnell, Riia. Mar 29, 2020. "Employers Still Hiring During Coronavirus Pandemic". Society For Human Resource Management. Alexandria: HRNews. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2384200555?pq-origsite=summon.

Orrell, Brent and Matthew Leger. Nov 16, 2020. "The trade-offs of remote work: Building a more resilient workplace for the post-COVID-19 world." American Enterprise Institute Research Papers. Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/2460657623?pq-origsite=summon.

Pearce, Jone L. and Jessica E. Sowa. 2019. *Organizational Behavior: Real Research for Public and Nonprofit Managers.* Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh, Publishers.

Perry, James L. 2021. *Managing Organizations to Sustain Passion for Public Service.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Purdue.edu. 2021. Virtual Interview Guidance and Best Practice - Human Resources - Purdue University. https://www.purdue.edu/hr/COVID-19/hireonb/bestpracvirtual.php

Rodríguez, Alexander. 2016. "Predictive Validity and Adverse Impact of the Structured Behavioral Interview in the Public Sector)."Revista De Psicología Del Trabajo y De Las Organizaciones 32 (2) (08): 75-85. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/predictive-validity-adverse-impact-structured/docview/1827838476/se-2?accountid=14244.

Sarmento, M., & Simões, C. (2019). Trade fairs as engagement platforms: The interplay between physical and virtual touch points. European Journal of Marketing, 53(9), 1782-1807. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2017-0791

Spicer, Andre. (2020), Organizational Culture and COVID-19. J. Manage. Stud., 57: 1737-1740. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12625

Sull, Donald, Charles Sull, and Josh Bersin. 2020. "Five Ways Leaders can Support Remote Work." *MIT Sloan Management Review* 61 (4) (Summer): 1-10. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/scholarly-journals/five-ways-leaders-can-support-remote-work/docview/2427314594/se-2?accountid=14244.

White, Linda. 2020. "Onboarding Remote Employees during the Pandemic." *The Ottawa Sun*. http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/newspapers/onboarding-remote-employees-during-pandemic/docview/2421255321/se-2?accountid=14244.

Wortler, Burkhard, Nico W. Van Yperen and Dick P. H. Barelds. Dec 20, 2020."Do blended working arrangements enhance organizational attractiveness and organizational citizenship behaviour intentions? An individual difference perspective." European Journal of Work and Organizational Philosophy. https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1080/1359432X.2020.1844663.

Yale. 2020. "Conducting A Virtual Interview Amid The COVID-19 Outbreak". Your.Yale.Edu. https://your.yale.edu/work-yale/manager-toolkit/recruiting-and-hiring/conducting-virtual-interview-amid-covid-19-outbreak.

Ziden, Azidah Abu, and Ong Chin Joo. 2020. "Exploring Digital Onboarding for Organisations: A Concept Paper." *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 13, no. 9: 734–50. https://doi.org/https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol_13/Iss_9/13957_Ziden_2020_E_R.pdf.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recommendation Sheets for Local Governments

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Top Ideas for Your Organization

Top Point:

Virtual hiring practices will continue – so you've got to think about it and the best ways to include it in your organization.

Implications:

- Get buy-in amongst leadership staff.
- Hire more HR and media staff.
- Purchase improved HR and onboarding technologies.

Recommendations:

1. If you want to hire high-quality candidates and retain them, your organization needs to remain competitive in the digital hiring environment.
2. Fully understand your organization's brand and culture so that it can be presented to candidates accurately.
3. During virtual interviews, ask all candidates the same questions, remain professional, provide candidates with an agenda, practice, and double check your technology.
4. Look for potential, not just for experience. You want to seek out the skills, characteristics, and abilities for the future.
5. Hire for organizational fit to maintain motivation while working from home.
6. Provide resources ahead of the first day and communicate more than you would in-person.
7. Use all available technology to help onboard new hires and mimic hallway conversations and office drop-ins.

ELGL
ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Digital Branding

Try out this idea:

Create a virtual tour of your office for potential candidates to view.

Make sure to:

- Fully understand your organization's brand so that it can be presented to candidates accurately.
- Share your mission and values, both of the organization as a whole and the specific department, with each candidate.

Recommendations:

1. Trust, Communication, and Leadership have Effects on Culture:
   - These factors are important in the virtual work environment to ensure that everyone is on the same page. This is especially important so that you can better communicate your culture outside of the organization.
   - Many applicants (especially in the public sector) want to join an organization that fits their values and needs.
2. Reinforce Brand and Culture:
   - Positive changes in brand or culture should be actively reinforced through communication among the team.
3. Presenting Brand and Culture:
   - Use virtual job fairs to present your brand to the job market.
   - Create promotional items on your website that discuss the work environment.

ENGAGING
**LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
LEADERS**

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Digital Interviewing

Top Point:

Virtual interviews are more comfortable for some candidates. Offering a virtual interview shows candidates that you care about their needs.

Be sure to:

- Avoid automated interviews.
- Practice with your team.
- Give candidates time to respond to questions.
- Use situational-based questions.

Recommendations:

1. Work with your team to determine what you're looking for in a candidate.
   - This should include technical skills as well as values. Use these ideas as a guide when creating interview questions.
2. Prepare the same questions and format for every interview.
   - Your surroundings should be as clean and organized as your in-person interview space would be.
   - Avoid interruptions.
   - Allowing each candidate to anser the same questions makes it easier to compare candidates.
   - Provide candidates with a breakdown of the interview structure and who will be in attendance before the interview begins.
3. Make sure your technology is working.
4. Give an alternative method of communication in case of technology failures.
5. Treat Virtual Interviews the same as in-person interviews.
   - Your surroundings should be as clean and organized as your in-person interview space would be.
   - Maintain eye contact with the camera.

ELGL — ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Digital Hiring

Did you know?

Having a sense of doing meaningful work has become more important during the pandemic.

Why do digital?

- Candidates now expect some virtual work options to continue past the pandemic.
- You can increase the talent pool and diversity of candidates.
- Offering remote work can increase retention.

Recommendations:

1. Hiring candidates using virtual technologies and practices is here to stay. Plan to use components of it in your organization to recruit and hire the best employees!
2. Use multiple methods of virtual technology and communication to leverage fast, safe, and efficient hiring in all departments.
3. Actively promote your organization:
   - Make sure that your brand is visible to candidates.
   - Expand your recruiting to include virtual hiring fairs.
4. Hire for potential, not just for experience:
   - Seek out the skills, characteristics, and abilities for the future – not just a replacement for the past employee.
   - The skills needed for success in virtual work environments include increased optimism, resiliency, and flexibility.
   - Update job descriptions.

ELGL — ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Digital Candidate Evaluation

Top Point:

Hire people for their motivations and fit with your team, job, and organization – don't hire them just for their skills.

What is Fit?

Person-Organization fit is the congruency between an employee's values, skills, and abilities and an organization's values, environment, and resources. Having matching values leads to happier employees- virtual or in-person!

Recommendations:

1. Review job descriptions before posting to ensure the description portrays the qualities and values needed in a candidate, especially for remote work success.
2. Assess the candidates' fit with your organization, and help candidates assess their fit with you!
   - Use behavioral interview questions
   - Look for candidates who express values that are consistent with your organization.
   - Share a link to or pdf of the team's member bios, leadership styles, preferred methods of communication, and culture.
   - Post a video about your organization's culture.
3. Reinforce cultural fit during onboarding and beyond:
   - Share videos during orientation that introduce organizational norms.
   - HR reps can contact employees semi-regularly to check-in on fit
4. Hire for fit to maintain motivation while working from home.

ELGL ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

New Hire Preparations

Tips:

- Test the technology before giving it to new staff.
- Put all required software on laptops.
- Set up email addresses before staff's first day.

Try out this idea:

Ask recent hires what they wish they had known before their first day. Then centralize that information for new employees in an accessible digital location.

Recommendations:

1. Make effective communication a priority.
   - Focus on clear expectations, regular feedback, and communicate more than you would in-person to ensure understanding.
   - 5 key characteristics of effective communication: frequent, transparent, part of a two-way dialogue, easy to navigate, and consistent.
2. Provide resources ahead of the first day.
   - See the tips section for ideas.
3. Make connections and introductions before the first day.
   - Consider setting up meet-and-greets with team members, virtual lunches, or video bios to initiate introductions. Always reach out to new employees in advance.
4. Maintain first-day rituals.
   - Do not skip first day festivities or rituals like having a photo taken for an ID or hosting a welcome lunch. This helps a new employee feel comfortable and welcomed.

ELGL ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Recommendations for Digital Hiring Practices

Digital Onboarding

Communicate:

Communicate through all possible channels. This will allow formal and informal communication to take place that can mimic hallway conversations and office drop-ins even though everyone is remote.

Try out this idea:

Offer open office hours, just like college professors. New staff are likely to ask questions during this low-pressure time.

Recommendations:

1. Utilize all available technology.
   - Take advantage of the variety of conferencing tools available, as well as email, phone calls, and chat apps.
2. Consider an onboarding portal or dashboard.
   - This helps to provide a consistent experience for new hires, ensure paperwork is digital and accessible when appropriate, and can manage applicant tracking and employee self-service.
   - Consistency and accessibility is the key.
3. Check in frequently during onboarding and set up roles, rules, and expectations.
   - Check-ins can be used to evaluate progress, ensure the onboarding process is going well, and provide an avenue for communication and feedback.

ELGL ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Appendix B: Survey Questions

All respondents,
1. What state do you work in?
    a. Short answer
2. What municipality/county do you work in?
    a. Short answer
3. What is your job title?
    a. Short answer
4. How have you been involved with digital interviewing and hiring processes within the last year? Please select all that apply.
    a. I was hired through a digital interview, hiring, and onboarding process.
    b. I have been a hiring manager doing digital interviewing and hiring.
    c. I have digitally onboarded employees.
    d. I have participated on digital panels during the interview process.
    e. I have been in another role.
        i. Please describe. (short answer)
    f. None of the above.
5. Is your organization's whole hiring process:
    a. Virtual
    b. In-person
    c. Hybrid
        i. If hybrid, please briefly describe the process.
            1. (Text Answer)

If you are involved in hiring,
6. How long have you been involved in hiring at your organization?
    a. Short answer
7. Prior to the hiring process, does your organization review job descriptions and update them? (fit)
    a. No
    b. Yes
    c. If yes, what do you focus on and emphasize in new/revised job descriptions? (Short answer)
8. When selecting a candidate, how do you assess their personality, motivation, and commitments with your organization? (fit)
    a. Short answer
9. How do you get to know candidates through virtual platforms? (fit)
    a. Short answer
10. How do you present your organization and its mission to candidates? (fit, branding)
    a. Website
    b. Job description
    c. Verbal descriptions during interviews
    d. Pre-filmed videos

11. Do you attempt to share your office culture with: (please select all that apply)
    a. Candidates
    b. New hires
    c. Neither
12. How does your organization share its office culture? (fit, branding, etc)
    a. We don't share descriptions of our culture
    b. In job descriptions
    c. Interviews
    d. Online chats with candidates
    e. Pre-filmed videos
    f. Documents about our organization
    g. Virtual gatherings with team members
    h. Other (please describe)
13. What aspects have been most successful for you in the digital hiring process?
    a. Recruiting and getting people to apply
    b. Sharing who we are as an organization
    c. Interviewing
    d. Finding good fits with our organization and team
    e. Deciding who to hire
    f. Onboarding
    g. Other (please describe)
    h.
14. What have been your biggest challenges or hurdles in the digital hiring process?
    a. Short answer
15. Is it more difficult to make hiring decisions virtually or in-person? (hiring and interviewing)
    a. Virtually
    b. In-person
    c. No difference
16. Do you use any type of pre-onboarding for new employees? E.g. communication, forms, providing access to internal dashboards.
    a. Yes
    b. No
17. Do coworkers begin communicating with new hires before the new hire's first day of work? (onboarding)
    a. No
    b. Yes
        i. If yes, how far in advance?
            1. Text
18. Who in your organization communicates the most information to new hires?
    a. HR reps
    b. Direct manager
    c. Team members
    d. Trainers

19. What information do you share with new hires prior to their first day? Please check all that apply.
    a. Absolutely nothing.
    b. Start date and time.
    c. HR forms, tax forms, compliance documents, and other standardized paperwork.
    d. Login information, technology, and technology access.
    e. Stipends for at-home office set up.
    f. Information about job tasks and responsibilities.
    g. Information about organizational culture, terminology, expectations.
    h. Pre-employment training.
    i. Other (please describe).
20. How long is your onboarding process?
    a. One week
    b. Two weeks to one month
    c. One month to six months
    d. Six months to one year
    e. Longer than one year

If you were recently hired,
21. When were you hired?
    a. Short answer
22. In comparison to full in-person interviews that you've done in the past, what did your organization do differently for a virtual/hybrid interview process?
    a. Short answer
23. What do you think your organization did well in your virtual hiring process? Select all that apply.
    a. Sharing/advertising the open position
    b. Communicating job roles and responsibilities in job description
    c. Responsive communication throughout the process
    d. Accurately shared links, dates, and times of interviews
    e. The interview process
    f. Preparing you for the first day
    g. Onboarding process
24. Did you feel more or less comfortable during your virtual interview than previous in-person interviews?
    a. More comfortable
    b. Less comfortable
    c. No difference
25. Do you feel that your organization **accurately** shared its culture with you during the hiring process?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat (please elaborate)

26. Do you feel that the interview process gave you an understanding of the organization's missions and goals? (fit, branding)
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat
27. How did you evaluate your compatibility with the organization and team? (fit)
    a. Short answer
28. Roughly how far in advance of your first day did you begin receiving communications from your coworkers?
    a. Short answer
29. Were you provided the opportunity to meet other team members prior to your first day (virtually or otherwise)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
30. How long was your onboarding process?
    a. One week
    b. Two weeks to one month
    c. One month to six months
    d. Six months to one year
    e. Longer than one year
    f. Still ongoing… no end in sight
31. Who all did you interact with during the early stages of onboarding? E.g. direct supervisor, HR, team members, leadership, etc.
    a. Short answer
32. Were clear expectations communicated to you by supervisors?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat (please elaborate)
33. Was the onboarding process useful?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat (please elaborate)
34. If no or somewhat, what would you change from your onboarding process?
    a. Short answer
35. Did you receive regular feedback from your supervisor during your first few days on the job?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat (please elaborate)
36. Did your first day on the job involve any of the typical "first-day" activities? E.g. Meet team members, tour the office, take photos, get keys, etc.
    a. Yes
    b. No

General closing

37. Are you interested and available to talk with us more about these topics?
    a. Yes
    b. No
38. If yes, please provide email and phone contact information. (short answer)

Appendix C: Interview Questions

- What has been your experience with virtual hiring practices?
- How have you been involved?
- Is your organization's hiring process virtual, in person, or hybrid
- What do you wish you knew before everything switched to virtual?
  - What did you have to learn on the fly?
- What do you wish you knew more about now (in regard to virtual hiring)?
  - What issues are you still struggling with?
- Hiring
  - What do you focus on and emphasize in a new or revised job description?
    - How do you determine what the most important aspect is and how has that changed virtually if it has/how has assessing that changed?
  - What skills and abilities/qualities are you looking for?
  - Has your recruiting strategy changed since the switch to virtual everything and if so how?
- Interviewing
  - How has your interview process changed now that things are digital?
- Brand/culture and Org Fit
  - Do you have a method for actively presenting your organizational mission and office culture to outsiders--and specifically applicants?
  - When thinking about org fit, How do you assess their personality, motivation, and commitment with your organization?
- New Hire Prep/Onboarding
  - Do you use any specific tools in your onboarding process now that things are virtual?
  - Do you communicate with new hires before their first day and to what extent do you engage with them?
- Wrap-up
  - What are some successes?
  - What are some failures?
  - Is there anything else that you'd like to share?