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MEDIA RELEASE

Louisiana Joins Expanded National Skills-First Accelerator as Governments Triple Efforts to Implement Skills-Based Hiring

Louisiana joins 14 other governments in the ongoing initiative to hire, advance, and retain workers based on skills rather than degrees

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Louisiana State Civil Service, representing the State of Louisiana, today announced that it has joined an expanded coalition of state and city governments working to implement skills-first talent practices as part of the "[Transformers in the Public Sector](#)" initiative, a growing cohort led by the nonprofit social enterprise [Opportunity@Work](#) and supported by the [Volcker Alliance](#). The accelerator has tripled from five to 15 participating governments as states and cities seek proven strategies to hire, advance, and retain workers who are [Skilled Through Alternative Routes \(STARs\)](#), such as community college, military service, or on-the-job training, rather than a bachelor's degree.

"Louisiana has an incredible opportunity to lead by example in transforming how we recruit, hire, and promote talent across our state agencies," said Byron P. Decoteau, Jr., Director of Louisiana State Civil Service. "Through this initiative, we can create new pathways for STARs to contribute to critical public-sector roles. By applying the insights and support from the cohort, we'll expand opportunities for STARs, strengthen our workforce, and enhance how we meet the needs of our state."

Among the 1.9 million people who make up the Louisiana workforce, 1 million are STARs, representing 59% of workers who are too often overlooked in hiring processes that rely on degrees and credentials rather than skills and capabilities. The expansion comes as participating states work to fill over 255,000 jobs they've opened through executive and legislative action, with 100% of inaugural participants renewing and 10 new governments joining – including the initiative's first city partner.

Over the next 12 months, leaders from the Louisiana State Civil Service will collaborate with peers from Alaska, Arizona, California, CapMetro in Austin, Texas, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming, receiving targeted support focused on refining and implementing skills-first talent strategies.

As part of Track 1, Louisiana will receive intensive hands-on technical assistance designed for teams actively driving implementation of skills-based practices in priority roles, including budget/finance, HR/data analysis, and IT/cybersecurity. The state will benefit from tailored coaching sessions, customized guidance from dedicated experts, and hands-on support, such as reviewing job descriptions, stakeholder surveys, and workforce data to ensure the successful implementation of skills-first practices.

“What we’re witnessing is nothing short of a transformation in how governments think about talent,” said Blair Corcoran de Castillo, SVP of Public Sector and Policy at Opportunity@Work. “From state capitals to city halls, leaders across the political spectrum recognize that STARs represent half their workforce and bring critical skills their communities need. The fact that we’re now working with states and cities shows that tearing the paper ceiling isn’t partisan – it’s pragmatic. It’s how we build a skills-based talent infrastructure that enables government to evolve with changing talent needs.”

The urgency is clear: over 62% of public agencies report difficulty finding enough qualified candidates, directly impacting service delivery and operational stability. Yet millions of skilled workers without degrees remain overlooked due to outdated hiring practices. Data from the STARs Public Sector Hub network shows the tangible impact when governments move from policy to practice: 45% of STAR hires gained 10% or more in pay after switching jobs – [five points higher than the national average](#).

“Through our continued partnership with Opportunity@Work, we are equipping public sector leaders with comprehensive support to transform their workforces,” said Sara Mogulescu, President of The Volcker Alliance. “When governments value skills over pedigree, they build stronger institutions while creating pathways to prosperity for workers who have been overlooked for too long.”

About Opportunity@Work

Opportunity@Work is a 501(c)3 nonprofit social enterprise on a mission to rewire the labor market so all Americans can work, learn, and earn to their full potential. Our work advances economic opportunities for the 70+ million U.S. workers who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs) instead of through a bachelor’s degree. Our goal is to enable upward mobility for 1 million STARs by opening up 10 million jobs and boost their earnings by 100 billion dollars by 2035. Learn more at opportunityatwork.org.

About The Volcker Alliance

The Volcker Alliance advances effective management of government to achieve results that matter to citizens. Founded in 2013 by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker, we work toward better implementation of public policies and delivery of public services by strengthening the effectiveness of government at all levels. Learn more at www.volckeralliance.org.

State Civil Service Mission:

To provide human resource services and programs that enable state government to attract, develop, and retain a productive and diverse workforce that excels in delivering quality services to the citizens of Louisiana.

To learn more about Louisiana State Civil Service, follow us on social media.

