
WHITE PAPER

Workforce Investments: Priorities for FY 2026 Spending

Critical Capabilities, Strategic Priorities & Actionable Insights for Federal Leaders



Leadership Development • Executive Coaching • Workforce Solutions

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report reflects discussions and polling of Federal Government executives, technology leaders, organizational development professionals, change practitioners, and workforce development communities regarding workforce capabilities most critical for government organizations before 2030.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW (BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30)

Federal agencies currently face **expiring training dollars, continuing workforce uncertainty, AI implementation, retirement waves, gaps in knowledge transfer, leadership bench issues, and challenges to employee engagement.**

The remainder of FY2026 represents a unique opportunity to make strategic workforce investments that strengthen organizational capability while positioning agencies for FY2027 and beyond.

Published: June 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many government agencies are simultaneously preparing for AI adoption, workforce restructuring, retirements, leadership shortages and increasing mission demands. Two critical questions emerge: what workforce capabilities will matter most by 2030, and how do agencies ensure they are adequately prepared for the demands of the future? The question is not whether to invest in workforce development, rather it is how to generate the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time with limited resources.

This issue is timely as **federal leaders have less than 90 days to make workforce investments before FY2026 funding expires.**

To explore this issue, Boxer Advisors conducted leadership discussions and polling of government executives, technology leaders, organizational development professionals, change practitioners, and workforce development communities. The findings reveal a clear hierarchy of **priorities that federal leaders must address now** to remain mission-effective through the end of the decade. Additionally, we offer examples and suggestions for how agencies can act now to generate the greatest returns with the lowest investment.

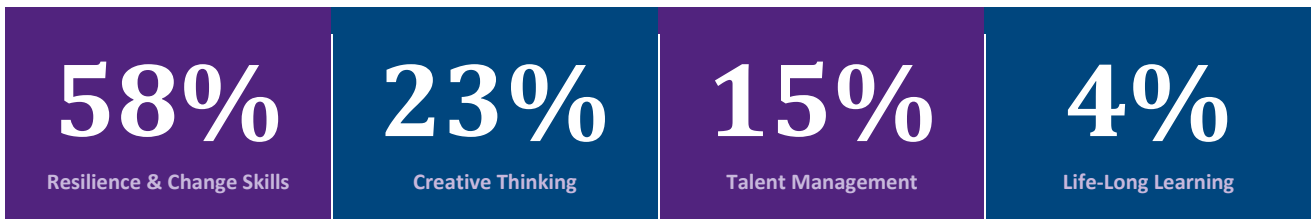


Figure 1: Workforce capabilities viewed as most critical for 2030 — Boxer Advisors government leadership polling.

► Key Finding

More than half of government leaders surveyed identified resilience and change skills as the single most critical workforce capability for 2030 — outpacing creative thinking, talent management, and continuous learning, combined. Boxer Advisors explains how to translate these research findings into results.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS: FROM RESEARCH TO RESULTS

1. Resilience and Change Skills Have Become Mission-Critical

Government leaders are operating in environments shaped by accelerating AI adoption, organizational restructuring, budget uncertainty, hybrid workforce challenges, increased operational complexity, workforce fatigue and burnout, and rapid policy and operational shifts. These forces are not temporary — they represent the new operating baseline for federal agencies.

58%

of Leaders Surveyed

Identified resilience and change skills as the most critical workforce capability for 2030 — reflecting the sustained pressure of continuous transformation across federal agencies.

Specific challenges for government agencies:

- Maintain workforce engagement during periods of sustained uncertainty
- Communicate with clarity and consistency during policy and operational change
- Build and sustain trust during organizational disruption
- Help teams adapt while continuing to deliver on mission-critical objectives
- Support workforce resilience during prolonged transformation cycles

► Boxer Advisors Perspective

*Resilience is no longer a soft skill — it is a strategic capability. Organizations that invest in structured resilience-building programs today will be better positioned to sustain mission delivery through the inevitable disruptions of the next five years. **The National Institutes of Health realized a \$500,000 return on their engagement with Boxer Advisors to support navigating organizational change with document improved team performance, better communication, and greater organizational readiness.***

2. Creative Thinking Is Becoming a Strategic Differentiator

Creative thinking — encompassing innovative problem-solving, strategic thinking, cross-functional collaboration, new approaches to service delivery, and adaptive decision-making — has emerged as the second most critical capability for 2030. Government organizations that encourage innovation and empower employees to think creatively may be better positioned to solve complex public sector challenges.

23%

of Leaders Surveyed

Ranked creative thinking as the top workforce priority — signaling a shift in how federal agencies view innovation as a core operational competency, not just an aspirational value.

Organizations that cultivate creative thinking across all levels of the workforce may gain measurable advantages in organizational agility, employee engagement, and the acceleration of modernization and service delivery improvements.

► Boxer Advisors Perspective

*Every agency leader should be asking the following questions: **Is our leadership bench ready?***

Are we prepared for AI? What institutional knowledge are we about to lose? Which investments can still be implemented before September 30? How are we measuring workforce ROI? Boxer Advisors offer a 20-minute executive strategy conversation to discuss practical, low-risk workforce investments that can still be implemented before the end of the fiscal year.

3. Talent Management Remains a Strategic Leadership Priority

Government organizations continue to face compounding talent challenges: retirement and succession risks, competition for specialized talent, leadership pipeline concerns, knowledge transfer challenges, and difficulties attracting and retaining high performers. These are not new problems — but they are intensifying as the workforce ages and the competition for skilled professionals grows.

15%

of Leaders Surveyed

Cited talent management as the most critical capability — underscoring that workforce planning and leadership development remain foundational to long-term mission effectiveness.

Organizations that invest strategically in workforce planning and leadership development may have a substantial long-term advantage in sustaining mission effectiveness. The window to act is narrowing as retirement waves accelerate and institutional knowledge walks out the door.

► Boxer Advisors Perspective

Workforce planning and leadership development is more critical today than ever. The Department of Energy partnered with Boxer Advisors to prepare their workforce for evolving mission priorities, organizational change, and increasing operational complexity. Hundreds of leaders participated in more than 40 customized programs covering leadership development, strategic planning, executive coaching, communication, project management, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, hybrid work, federal budgeting, retirement planning, and train-the-trainer initiatives. Programs were delivered in both classroom and virtual environments using interactive simulations, workplace case studies, peer coaching, and action planning to help participants immediately apply new skills on the job.

4. Continuous Learning Is Increasingly a Baseline Expectation

The pace of technological change — particularly the rapid adoption of AI tools across government — means that employees increasingly must learn continuously, adapt quickly, update skills regularly, remain technologically fluent, and build interdisciplinary capabilities. Continuous learning is no longer a development initiative; it is an operational requirement.

4%

of Leaders Surveyed

Identified life-long learning as the top priority — yet this finding should not be misread as low importance. Rather, it reflects that continuous learning is increasingly viewed as a baseline expectation embedded within all other capability areas.

► **Boxer Advisors Perspective**

Self Assessment: Is Your Agency Ready for 2030? Rate yourself from 1–5 on the following areas.

- Leadership Development
- AI Readiness
- Succession planning
- Employee engagement
- Knowledge transfer
- Coaching culture
- Change capability
- Innovation

Agencies scoring below 28 typically benefit from a structured workforce assessment with Boxer Advisors.

HIGH IMPACT LOW-COST SOLUTIONS FOR FY 2026

The agencies making the fastest progress are not necessarily spending more, they are investing in targeted workforce interventions that can be implemented within one quarter. Many of the highest-return workforce initiatives can be launched before September 30, using existing training funds, to produce immediate improvements in leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, organizational resilience, and mission execution.

Impactful Workforce Investments Before September 30

Solution	Typical Time to Launch	Typical Investment	Business Impact
Executive Coaching	2 weeks	Low	Accelerated leadership effectiveness, improved decision-making, greater resilience, stronger executive performance
New Supervisor Boot Camp	3 weeks	Moderate	Improved supervisor confidence, better performance management, stronger employee engagement

Solution	Typical Time to Launch	Typical Investment	Business Impact
AI Readiness for Managers	2 weeks	Low	Increased AI literacy, improved productivity, better decision-making, responsible AI adoption
Communication During Change	1 week	Low	Greater trust, reduced uncertainty, improved morale, stronger change adoption
Team Effectiveness Workshop	2 weeks	Moderate	Improved collaboration, higher productivity, stronger accountability, better conflict resolution
Mentoring Program Design	3–4 weeks	Low–Moderate	Knowledge transfer, leadership pipeline development, improved retention, accelerated onboarding
Strategic Planning Facilitation	2–4 weeks	Moderate	Clear organizational priorities, aligned leadership, actionable implementation roadmap
Employee Engagement Action Planning	2–3 weeks	Low	Higher engagement, improved retention, stronger manager-employee communication, increased accountability
Retirement Knowledge Transfer Facilitation	2–4 weeks	Low	Reduced knowledge loss, smoother succession, documented institutional knowledge, improved workforce continuity
Executive Team Alignment Session	1–2 weeks	Moderate	Greater leadership alignment, faster decision-making, improved collaboration, unified strategic direction

EXECUTIVE PLAYBOOK: FIVE ACTIONS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FY 2026 TO POSITION AGENCY FOR 2030 READINESS

- Prioritize leadership development programs focused on change management and workforce resilience — particularly for mid-level and senior leaders navigating ongoing transformation.
- Expand coaching and mentoring investments to accelerate leadership pipeline development and knowledge transfer across generations of federal employees.
- Strengthen frontline and mid-level leadership capability through targeted academies, action learning programs, and peer coaching cohorts.

- Create more structured opportunities for cross-functional collaboration and innovation — including design thinking workshops, innovation labs, and cross-agency problem-solving initiatives.
- Reevaluate workforce development priorities to ensure training investments align with the capabilities identified as most critical for 2030.

CONCLUSION: FROM CONVERSATION TO IMPLEMENTATION IN 30 DAYS

The workforce capabilities that government organizations prioritize today may significantly shape organizational effectiveness by 2030. The findings from Boxer Advisors' research are clear: federal agencies increasingly need leaders and employees who can adapt rapidly, think creatively, lead through uncertainty, develop others, and sustain resilience during continuous change.

The organizations that begin building these capabilities now — through intentional investment in leadership development, coaching, talent management, and continuous learning — will be better positioned to deliver on their missions in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment.

► The Bottom Line

Workforce readiness for 2030 is not a future problem — it is a present imperative. The decisions federal leaders make about workforce development in FY 2026 will determine whether their organizations are positioned to lead or struggle to keep pace with the demands of the next decade.

HIGH IMPACT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS DELIVER

- Better retention
- Reduced burnout
- Increased engagement
- Improved collaboration
- Leadership bench strength
- Knowledge transfer
- Higher productivity
- Reduced turnover risk

ABOUT BOXER ADVISORS

Boxer Advisors provides leadership development, executive coaching, workforce development training, organizational effectiveness consulting, and customized learning solutions to federal agencies, corporations, and mission-driven organizations nationwide, all with proven results.

Credentials

- 25+ years of consulting, coaching & training
- 100+ certified coaches, trainers & consultants
- 75+ standard training offerings
- 80% repeat business rate

Federal Clients Include

- Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Interior, Justice, Labor, Transportation, Treasury, Veterans Affairs and War
- GSA, EPA, FRTIB, NASA, SBA & SSA

Translate Insights into Action

Contact us today to discuss how Boxer Advisors can help your organization build the workforce capabilities needed for 2030.

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