



# States plan for work-force success

**W**ith baby boomers in the work force growing older, a number of states are facing mass retirements in state offices. As if that is not enough, states also have had problems recruiting and retaining workers and competing with the private sector for workers.

Overall, however, states are preparing to face these challenges or have the management in place to respond. More than half the states scored well in how they manage their work forces in a recent landmark study of state management. The 1999 Government Performance Project evaluated and awarded grades to all 50 states in five management areas. The project, conducted by the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University and by *Governing* magazine, sought to improve understanding of state government management.

The study graded states on human resources management, financial management, information technology,

capital management and managing for results. The study served as a wake-up call for many state officials, especially in the area of work-force planning. A year later, states have begun to ensure their work forces are ready for the future.

## Planning and flexibility

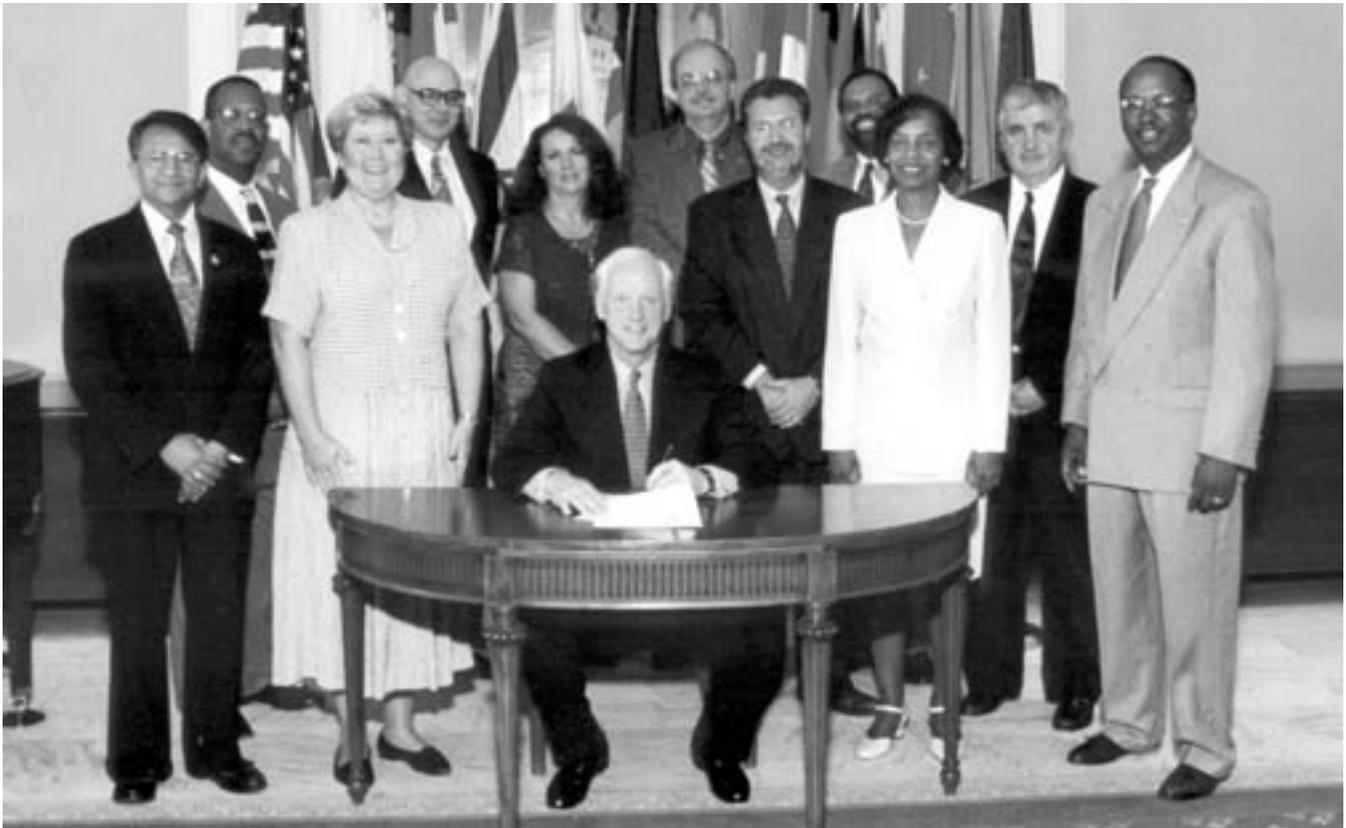
Oklahoma's 1999 legislative session passed and Gov. Frank Keating signed two work-force related laws. The Oklahoma Program Performance Budgeting and Accountability Act requires each state agency to submit long-range strategic plans by Oct. 1, 2001. These plans will provide the basis for appropriations in succeeding years and must include performance measures, schedules of program evaluation and other facets of strategic planning.

The 1999 Oklahoma Classification and Compensation Reform Act corrected several areas, which had resulted in the state receiving a low grade in

*State personnel offices are sprucing up their efforts to plan for replacing retiring state workers and attracting new employees.*

BY LISA R. ANDERSON

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Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating (center) signed the Program Budgeting and Accountability Act as members of the Quality Improvement Task Force and others watched. Pictured (l to r): Yash Fozdar, Bill Franks, Rep. Jari Askins, James Sirmans, Dayna Petete, Steve Tinsley, Rep. John Bryant, Gary Jones, Joyce Smith, Larry Fisher and Oscar B. Jackson Jr., OPM administrator and cabinet secretary of human resources.

the Government Performance Project. The legislation replaced classification and salary grade structures with more expansive job families and broader salary ranges. These changes will give agencies flexibility to align their work forces more directly to agency goals and missions.

The state also established several mechanisms to change salaries, including market adjustments, equity pay movements and skill-based pay mechanisms. All state agencies will use a uniform Performance Management Process as a tool for evaluation and coaching employees. The act did not include a mechanism for providing pay for performance, however.

Oscar B. Jackson Jr., cabinet secretary of human resources and administrator of the Office of the Personnel, said he is "very excited about the changes going on in Oklahoma state govern-

ment in the area of human resources."

His goal for the future is to receive an A on the next GPP.

### Preparing for vacancies

With more than 60 percent of its work force over the age of 40 and a low unemployment rate, Iowa state managers worry about how they will replace current staff and fill positions requiring better technical skills.

The state put two work-force planning projects on hold in the transition following election of a new governor in November 1998. After Mollie Anderson became personnel director in April 1999, the state restarted its efforts. A group of state leaders met in September 1999 on work-force planning, which resulted in agency representatives forming and identifying recruitment, compensation and succession

planning as being in need of immediate attention. Iowa is hiring an outside consultant to proceed.

Barbara Kroon, Iowa's work-force planning section leader, said the national study did not prompt the state to act. Even though Iowa ranked well on the grade report for work-force management, Kroon said, "We had already made that commitment in 1998, although it was placed on hold temporarily in 1999 while we experienced a transition in leadership."

Like Iowa and other states, Kansas also may have many vacancies to fill because of retiring baby boomers. The average Kansas state employee retires at age 62 with 24 years of service. Of all those eligible for early retirement, 12 percent take advantage of the option. With these statistics in mind, managers at the Division of Personnel Services established a Workforce Planning

and Management section to research trends and identify performance management and employee compensation issues that are expected to impact state agencies and employees. The division

sions on work-force planning as well as recruitment and retention, and employee relations.

Bobbi Mariani, DPS assistant director, said, "The success of our human

The state personnel cabinet teamed with the Department for Libraries and Archives and placed computers in local libraries in all 120 counties so residents could have greater access to job information. Access is now available via the Web for all personnel policies and procedures including statutes, regulations and job vacancies.

Kentucky has made a great improvement in reducing the length of time to fill a job order from an average of 65 days to 12 days for all merit jobs within state government. This includes advertising, accepting applications, counseling, testing and referral of applicants to agencies.

Carol Palmore, secretary of Kentucky's personnel cabinet, said she wants to "ensure our staffing levels are adequate to support the needs of the citizens."

For those state personnel offices that did not do as well as expected on the first GPP, a chance to redeem themselves is coming. In a speech at the 2000 Mid-Year Meeting of the National Association of State Personnel Executives, Sally Selden, assistant professor at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, a partner of the GPP, said a second study will be conducted this year with results released in early 2001. States will have the opportunity to report how they plan to reshape their work-force policies or what they have already done to enhance their personnel departments. ★



plans to develop programs, services, resources and tools to deal with a changing work force.

As part of this effort, the division consulted the work-force planning staff at Hallmark Cards Inc., headquartered in Kansas City. As a result of Hallmark's advice, the division now issues quarterly reports, which provide analysis and statistics on a variety of state work-force issues. A recent report included information on the agencies with the highest number of retirements and job classes with the highest number of retirements from January 1996 to December 1999.

Kansas also implemented the Human Resources Training Academy, an employee development program in March 1999. Participants attend eight sessions over a 12-month period to enhance their effectiveness as strategic planners and organizational leaders. The academy challenges participants to recognize the pivotal role they play in carrying out their agency's mission. Managers from Hallmark facilitated academy ses-

resources programs is due to the fact that we are constantly refining our current programs as well as developing new strategies and initiatives to meet the changing needs of the current and future work force."

### Spreading the net

There is a saying that people are an organization's most important asset, but Kentucky officials know that the right people are its most important asset. To find these people, the state posts all job vacancies for 10 days on the Web. Job seekers may submit their applications via the Web, fax, mail or in person, at which time they can meet with an employment counselor on a walk-in basis.

In 1999, 31,827 people met with employee counselors to discuss initial employment or upward mobility/career path opportunities. The applicant flow has doubled from an average of 60,000 to 134,000 a year since the state began advertising on its Web site.

### Resources

The National Association of State Personnel Executives promotes the exchange of information among personnel executives and is an affiliate of The Council of State Governments. Visit on the CSG Web site, [www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org), and click on affiliates, or the NASPE Web site, [www.naspe.net](http://www.naspe.net).

The Government Performance Project Web site is [www.maxwell.syr.edu/gpp/](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/gpp/).