The Future Is Not What It Used To Be:

Part of the reason that recovery is not a clear-cut re-filling of once-occupied positions is that the need for certain workers is changing as well, primarily due to technology, as well as the rapid adaptation of agencies and the public to virtual service delivery.

In addition, the goalposts have moved. It is not simply a matter of getting back to “normal” but recognizing that the new normal may not require the same workforce. What had once been predicted to be a state workforce 4 percent larger ten years down the road is now predicted to be 2 percent smaller.

Local government employment projections have not changed as drastically, but have declined slightly from the 4.5 percent growth predicted in 2016 to 4.2 percent predicted from 2019-2029.

Positions with Significant Predicted Change:

Some state and local government industries are projected to experience employment change at differing rates - with hospitals predicted to increase employment by 4-6 percent, K-12 education and state college employment predicted to increase by 1-2 percent, and local junior college employment projected to decline by 12.9 percent.

Projected 10-Year Change in State Government Employment

Projected 10-Year Change in Local Government Employment

State and Local Government Employment 2019-2029: Hospitals, Education and Utilities

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. See also SLGE’s workforce survey, K-12 survey, or related research on COVID-19’s impacts on all state and local workers, K-12 educators, or African-American employees. These challenges are not being addressed solely by one jurisdiction, research group, or association. To coordinate a response, SLGE convened a stakeholders meeting in October 2020 with a total of 18 national organizations - including those focused on city/county management, state/local elected leadership, finance, retirement, public works, human resources, next generation recruitment, and other fields. Among the key priorities this working group is continuing to discuss are: identifying new pathways for building the workforce of the future, fostering diversity and inclusion in the workforce, collaborating around essential research, and communicating the fiscal impacts of COVID-19 on states and localities as employers.