How do you envision the future of work in state and local government?
State and local government is going to see a major shift going forward around the whole idea of remote work. We’ll see much greater flexibility in how many days someone is in the office. Historically, that wasn’t ever really on the table. But the pandemic gave organizations a lens into the fact that some employees can be very effective — sometimes even more effective, depending on the role — working remotely a few days a week, or even all the time.

How will that change the relationship between managers and employees?
Agencies have really had to evolve the dynamic between employers and employees. One thing that stands out to me is remote employee onboarding. The disruptions of the past year really exposed holes in the process or inefficiencies that drove organizations to look at the entire hiring process from top to bottom. Organizations are asking questions like, how are we handling the onboarding process for those new hires? How do we handle the seasonality of some workers — like for special events, or summer workers for parks and rec departments — versus ongoing turnover related to retirement? And how can we do that in a more efficient manner?

How can technology aid the remote onboarding process?
Of course, there’s things like remote ID verification, I-9s and W-4s. But it goes way beyond just the forms process. The right technology gives organizations the ability to say, “Can we verify eligibility to work? Can we also verify identity of a user who’s submitting an application? And how do we handle all that from an infrastructure standpoint?”

Beyond just emailing paperwork, how do state and local government organizations ensure that everything that needs to be completed during the hiring and onboarding process is completed correctly? It’s imperative to focus on hiring the best people. To achieve this, it’s always better to include personalized human interactions as part of the process to make sure the best talent is hired. People aren’t being displaced with technology; instead the process is enhanced.

And greater flexibility around remote work is also a big benefit that agencies can offer to employees. The government loses a lot of high-quality talent to the private sector. These are ways to become more competitive. This absolutely will give them the ability to retain high-performers and backfill those positions being vacated by retiring baby boomers.

How should agencies be laying the groundwork for these changes now?
Agencies are really going to have to analyze their HR policies. They need to ask themselves, are there things we’ve learned over the past year that are, one, more efficient and, two, that support better health and safety for our employees? They then should create tangible plans to ensure they are creating better experiences for candidates and employees alike.

How do these changes in the future of work impact public organizations?
A lot of places are now looking at hiring people from outside the geographical boundaries they used to have set for themselves. This has given agencies the ability to tap into an entire talent pool that they conceivably didn’t realize existed before.