



## CASE STUDY

# Skills Testing Helps Prince George's County Screen Large Applicant Pools

eSkill's platform allows the Maryland county's talent acquisition team to deploy custom tests for high-volume roles, including administrative aide and 911 dispatcher positions.

*"Having these tests — whether it's the admin aide, the call taker or or the latent print examination — allows us to reduce the candidate pool...not just because they're going to score individuals for the very basics, but [because] they also allow us to determine whether candidates are truly interested."*

*Shauna Corbin,  
Talent Acquisition Lead*

Prince George's County — located in Maryland, bordering Washington DC on the east — is the second-most populous county in Maryland, just behind neighboring Montgomery County, with a population of just under one million at 967,201.

With such a large population, the county depends on a well-structured and smoothly functioning collection of government agencies — Prince George's County's executive branch.

Prince George's County Government is a large, complex public-sector organization comprising over 30 executive branch departments and agencies, including the county's police force, public works and transportation departments. Their law enforcement agency alone is the fourth-largest in Maryland.

Altogether, Prince George's County Government employs about 6,500 individuals across its departments.

Speaking of employing thousands of individuals, at the helm of hiring are Leslie Garrett, Manager of Talent Acquisition, Cheryl Jones-McCottry, Senior Talent Acquisition Analyst, and Shauna Corbin, Talent Acquisition Lead, for the Office of Human Resources Management for Prince George's County Government.



# THE CHALLENGE

With federal-level and state-level government layoffs reaching new highs, the number of individuals pursuing county-level roles has also skyrocketed. And with Prince George's County sitting right outside of DC, their county government has seen a great proportion of this massive influx of applicants.

"We've seen exponential growth in candidate applications. I think when I came on almost two years ago, 200 was a lot for a position. I think Cheryl had 737 one day last week," says Leslie.

"We can get upwards of 700 applications for one position," agrees Cheryl.

With record numbers of applications coming through their systems, the team must be both thorough yet efficient in scanning candidates to make sure the right talent stands out. But how does the team balance high volume roles with a thorough assessment of each candidate?

Well, they get a little help: the team deploys pre-hire tests through the eSkill platform.

The team primarily tests for five roles — administrative aides, account clerks, 911 dispatchers and call takers, and latent fingerprint examiners.

"When you ask, Why these particular roles? It's because these roles have a very high volume of candidates applying," says Shauna. For some positions, like administrative aide positions, these exams are deployed almost weekly.

"And so having these tests — whether it's the admin aide, the call taker or or the latent print examination," Shauna continues, "allows us to reduce the candidate pool, not just because they're going to score individuals for the very basics, but it also allows us to determine whether candidates are truly interested. Some candidates will opt out and decide not to even take the test, and those are not the people that we want," says Shauna.

Implementing skills testing does double-duty — it filters out candidates who don't have the skills required for the role, and it makes unmotivated or less-than-interested candidates more likely to self-select out of the hiring process.



*"We can get upwards of 700 applications for one position."*

*Cheryl Jones-McCottry,  
Senior Talent Acquisition Analyst*

# THE SOLUTION

When Leslie came aboard, the company was already using eSkill. But she remembers a time a while ago when she applied to a dispatcher role — and had to take a physical exam, on paper.

“Fun fact: many years ago I thought about being a call taker,” says Leslie. “And I remember coming on site and taking the exam and then going home and waiting what seemed like a few weeks for the results, and now the team can get that information in real time.”

The team also adds that using the eSkill platform helps cut down on logistical problems and costs — parking, for example, or in-person proctoring expenses — and is additionally more convenient for candidates.

“Whenever you're having an on-site test, you're monopolizing a number of people's time,” says Shauna. “We're at the mercy of reserving a space [and] you have to make sure that you have enough parking that's available. In many cases, they're at public safety facilities which don't necessarily have the easiest parking. And then you're also at the mercy of the candidates all being available at the same time, and all candidates have different lifestyles and responsibilities.”

In comparison to the logistical nightmare of in-person testing, online exams are a breeze, because “when you have [testing] online, and you have it essentially on-demand, then you don't have to monopolize the time, the space, the dedicated [testing time], which a number of qualified people may be missing. We're allowing all qualified candidates to be able to test as they choose in the comfort of their home,” says Shauna.

And the cherry on top, according to the team, is the eSkill platform's integration with NEOGOV.

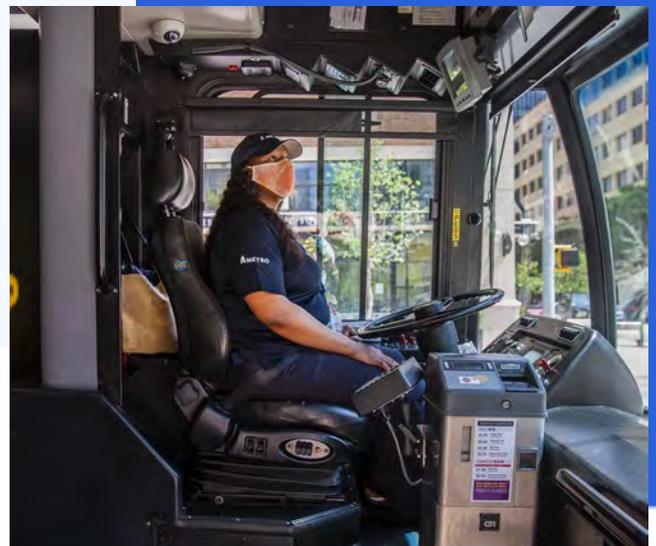
“We love that it's integrated with NEOGOV,” says Leslie.

Because eSkill integrates directly with the HR platform, the talent acquisition team can send, receive, and grade tests natively within NEOGOV.

“There are no extra steps for us. It's embedded in our emails. It's just a seamless process for us,” Leslie continues.

*“We love that [eSkill] is integrated with NEOGOV.”*

*Leslie Garrett,  
Manager of Talent Acquisition*



# THE IMPLEMENTATION

When the team receives a new batch of candidates, they then narrow the candidates down through testing. But they still take care to review each candidate individually.

“Once we review the candidates and we deem that the individual meets the minimum qualifications, then we send them an invitation to take the exam. We give them seven days, and once it's completed, then we refer all of those that pass the exam to the hiring agency for further consideration,” explains Cheryl.

The team set the passing score for the pre-hire exams at 70% — all candidates who score higher have their applications sent, along with their scores, to the appropriate executive agency. The scores are an additional way for the receiving agencies to measure who they'd like to bring in for the interview.

“They're already going to look at the application and the resume. But if you can see that these people excel in certain areas that are applicable to the position, that gives that candidate a bit of a boost as well,” says Leslie.

And of course, each application goes through the hands of the hiring team one-by-one.

“Even though our system does some auto-scoring, we still have to validate that if they say they have a degree in XYZ, that they actually do — because people think, if I put that in the application, the system will pass me. So we actually look at each candidate,” says Leslie.

They additionally take the time to respond to candidates who inquire about their scores — keeping the human in human resources.

“We respond to those candidates who ask about their scores, why they failed, why they passed,” says Leslie.

## Going digital with highly customized tests

The team mentions customization as essential to their hiring process.

While the team uses some customization for their administrative aide tests and account clerk exams, they've also digitized a highly specific paper exam — the latent fingerprint examination — with the help of their eSkill assessment expert.

Previously, candidates would come on-site and physically look at fingerprint samples, comparing prints to determine if they belonged to the same individual — and write notes explaining their reasoning, “handwriting what was different, whether they were the same prints, or if it was inconclusive. I mean — it was paper,” Leslie emphasizes.

Shauna reiterates the logistical problems with in-person examinations. “I mean, you're looking at salaries, you're looking at if you have a specialist on site, you're looking at if there's a parking cost associated, travel costs for the candidates.”

Needless to say, the process was cumbersome and resource-intensive.

But the team initially had doubts that the traditionally paper-and-pencil exam could be digitized.

The team thought, “there's no way we're going to be able to do this in eSkill. This is not multiple choice. This is not your typical virtual exam,” says Leslie.

However, their eSkill assessment expert, Domi, helped them throughout the process.

“With our eSkill representative Domi, it was just amazing and she held our hands and took us step-by-step. Any questions we had, she was there to give us answers and demonstrations — over and over if we needed them,” says Cheryl. “It was important to her to make sure that it was the exam that we wanted and needed. The receiving agency — the police department — was very happy with it and the whole process.”

“Now it's just amazing that an individual can go on their own time and sit, be comfortable, and complete the exam,” says Cheryl.

### Accessibility accommodations

The team's eSkill assessment expert, Domi, was also able to help the team make a more inclusive version of an exam for accessibility purposes.

“When a candidate reached out to me once about a special accommodation,” Leslie explains, “I dropped it in a note to Domi and minutes later, she responded with, Absolutely, we do that. Our system is set up in a way for X, Y, and Z. She also walked us through the process of creating an additional exam with extended time as needed.”

“Every scenario that we've presented, planned or unplanned, we've been able to find a solution that works. And so we share that across the 30+ agencies that we support,” Leslie says.

*“Every scenario that we've presented, planned or unplanned, we've been able to find a solution that works [with eSkill].”*

*Leslie Garrett,  
Manager of Talent Acquisition*

## PROCTORING

The team has also added some anti-cheat features into their tests — including ID verification several times throughout exams to prevent proxy test-taking.

“We do an ID verification several times throughout the exam with an audio and video component. We didn't always. But it came to our attention that we should, because something happened, and I know that candidates are concerned about it, because I get emails every day for Shauna and Cheryl in the OHRM recruitment box,” says Leslie.

While the team is still experimenting with proctoring add-ons, they're satisfied with the results so far.

# THE RESULTS

The Office of Human Resources Management at Prince George's County has whittled down candidate pools by at least 30% through the use of eSkill, the team estimates.

To other hiring managers considering implementing digital skills testing, Leslie offers some words of advice: "I'd definitely tell them to do their due diligence and check you out. Have a talk and anything that you think you want, put it on the table. Don't just go with basic [platforms or offerings] – shoot for the sky."

"Without eSkill, we'd have to go back to in-house manual testing. That's not an option," Leslie adds.

With eSkill, the talent acquisition team at Prince George's County has been able to save significantly on resources – including time, in-person testing costs, and the opportunity cost of missing out on strong candidates.

*"At least 30% of the candidates fall off, I would say, either through failing the exam or not taking it at all."*

*Leslie Garrett,  
Manager of Talent Acquisition*

Their satisfaction with eSkill has led to more agencies wanting to add on exams.

"I've seen enhancements in eSkill, so much to the point where we've got other agencies wanting to add more exams on," says Leslie.

As eSkill continues to grow within the organization and Prince George's County's excellent human resources team continues to bring in stellar candidates for government positions, the result is a stronger, more agile government workforce that can better serve the nearly one million residents who call Prince George's County home.

