

By Michael J. Keegan



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Each edition of *The Business of Government* magazine seeks to highlight the latest trends and best practices for improving government effectiveness. We do this by introducing you to the efforts of key government executives, the work of public management practitioners, and the insights of leading academics; and the differing ways they tackle many of the pressing public management issues facing us today. We are in the midst of an exciting, engaging, yet trying period marked by uncertainty, significant challenges, undeniable opportunities, and indelible aspirations. It is about sharing knowledge and expertise gained from the research we fund and the conversations we commence. We hope to spark the imagination of government leaders to look beyond their day-to-day urgencies and reflect on the serious problems and critical challenges they face today into tomorrow.

Problems are interconnected, environments are turbulent, and the future is indeterminate. To echo Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner*, what is called for under these conditions are not only analytic techniques, but also the active skill of designing a desirable future and inventing ways of bringing it about. As we focus on the administration's next four years, it becomes clear that those who have come before can provide wisdom that acts as a reference point as well as a point of departure—a snapshot in time that may offer insights into what has worked and how we can learn from others' experiences.

Conversations with Leaders

We feature conversations with dedicated public servant leaders from a wide variety of disciplines who share their extended reflections on the work they do and the efforts they lead. Advances in biomedical research seek to enhance health and length of life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) plays a central role in making this happen. U.S. life expectancy has increased dramatically over the past century. Not only are people living longer, they are living healthier lives. However, as **Dr. Francis Collins**, Director of NIH, notes, science is not a 100-yard dash. It's a marathon; a marathon run by a relay team that includes researchers, patients, industry experts, lawmakers, and the public. Dr. Collins outlines how basic research prompted a revolution in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases and what NIH is doing to advance biomedical research.



Since its inception, the country's credit union system has expanded and grown to serve over 93 million Americans. The severe economic crisis impacted all facets of the financial sector, including credit unions. In fact, over two and a half years ago, the credit union system teetered on the brink of collapse. **Debbie Matz**, Chairman of the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) tells us how her agency has worked to stabilize the system, ensure its safety and soundness, and pursue a regulatory regime responsive to the ever-changing landscape of this country's credit union system.



It is critical to the safety and security of this country that federal, state, local, private-sector, and international partners improve their sharing of information about terrorism, homeland security, and weapons of mass destruction. When examining the full scope of information sharing and protection, many widespread and complex challenges must be addressed and solved by multiple agencies and organizations working together. **Kshemendra Paul**, Program Manager of the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) discusses his efforts in this area, tells us how information sharing is maturing across the ISE, and identifies the biggest challenges facing the ISE.

Good government; that is, government fiscally responsible to its people, has in its charge making operations more responsive, efficient, and accountable—getting rid of waste and saving money. In an era of tight budgets, this charge has taken on significance beyond the fundamentals to encompass the government-wide improvement of financial management. **Danny Werfel**, Controller, Office of Federal Financial Management within OMB, highlights the top federal financial management priorities and what the federal government is doing to eliminate improper payments, reduce waste, and realize government-wide cost savings.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs may be the second-largest federal agency, but it runs the largest medical system in the United States, providing care to six million veterans and their families who depend on it. This is no small feat, considering the demands placed on the system. To meet these demands head-on involves leveraging innovation and advances in technology. **Dr. Peter L. Levin**, Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Chief Technology Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, explains how VA is identifying new technologies and promoting innovation, the success of the Blue Button Initiative, and how VA is using open source technology to meet its mission.

Profiles in Leadership

I've interviewed a variety of government executives who manifest the leadership and commitment needed to meet their varied missions. In this edition, we introduce you to three leaders who are changing the way government does business. **Richard Boly**, Director, Office of eDiplomacy, Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) at the U.S. Department of State, leads the office charged with making eDiplomacy the way to collaborate within the department, most specifically by developing and managing a range of social media and collaborative platforms that provide staff access to knowledge resources, expertise, idea generation, and a secure collaborative environment across physical and organization boundaries. **Kathy Conrad**, Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies, U.S. General Services Administration, explains the dual mission of her office, which has positioned itself as the government-wide leader in identifying and fostering the adoption of innovative new technologies and open government. **Bernard Melekian**, Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, completes our profiles by detailing his efforts to advance public safety through community policing. His mission is to help local law enforcement make the communities it serves safer, and COPS does it by providing grants, technical assistance, best practices, and for Melekian, being "that voice for law enforcement inside the beltway."



Insights on Science, Service, and Stewardship

We also had an opportunity to speak with many public servants who are pursuing innovative approaches to achieving their missions and serving citizens. In this edition of Insights, we focus on how the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) relies on

information and technology to carry out its mission—to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts—with insights from **Joe Klimavicz**, Chief Information Officer and Director, High Performance Computing and Communication at NOAA. He outlines his agency's information technology strategy, how it's modernizing its technology infrastructure and ensuring that its IT investments align with its overall mission, and how NOAA is providing a balanced stewardship between information and technology.

Forum on Governing in the Next Four Years

A presidential election year provides an opportunity to step back and consider major issues and management challenges facing government executives. The Center has devoted significant attention to this topic since its inception. Most recently, in 2008–2009 the Center launched its **Presidential Transition Initiative**, which provided how-to resources in helping government executives succeed. This year we will build on that tradition with the inauguration of our **Governing in the Next Four Years** initiative.



This forum introduces this initiative and highlights the key areas of interest we'll be exploring. We will focus on issues where public sector leaders can learn from successes across all levels of government, industry practices, and our research community in order to develop effective solutions to complex public management issues. Key areas of interest explored by the contributors in this forum include:

- *Mission Support: Managing a Balancing Act*, by John Kamensky, discusses ways that leaders of federal programs can improve outcomes by capitalizing on approaches and tools developed in the "CXO" communities (Chief Information, Financial, Acquisition, and Human Capital Officers).
- *Joined-Up Management: A Next Step in Cross-Agency Collaboration*, by Dan Chenok, explores a new model of managing activities from a cross-program view, leveraging resources to more effectively serve a citizen or business.
- *Participation in an Age of Social Media*, by Gadi Ben-Yehuda, examines the role social media will play in citizen participation.
- *The Next Four Years: Intelligence Community Reform Refining, not Rebooting*, by Frank Strickland and Chris Whitlock, asks whether the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 got it right and if a sweeping reorganization of the intelligence community is required to "fix the problem."
- Chuck Prow closes the forum with a brief preview of an upcoming book, *Fast Gov*, on creating a "fast government"—accelerating how agencies do their work to dramatically reduce the amount of time needed to deliver services.



Along with a variety of related Center resources, insights from this series will be available online at www.businessofgovernment.org/content/governing-next-four-years, which we will keep up to date as events unfold over the next several months.

With each edition of *The Business of Government* magazine, we do our best to continue and expand on the conversation that seeks as its end improving public management. It is another opportunity to inform, but most importantly, to invite you to use the IBM Center for The Business of Government as your resource—a how-to resource for improving government effectiveness at the federal, state, and local levels. ■