

By Michael J. Keegan



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This edition of *The Business of Government* magazine has as its background a period rife with significant challenges that go to the core of effective public management. Faced with seemingly intractable issues such as an ever growing federal deficit, economic uncertainty, unemployment, and aging infrastructure, it appears that the old adage “doing more with less” has taken on a whole new reality. Addressing the challenges arising from this new reality brings with it opportunities—to try different approaches, borrow new strategies, forgo old ways of doing things, and leverage seemingly incongruous practices to ameliorate otherwise vexing problems. Within these pages, we have assembled a varied group of leaders, innovators, practitioners, and thinkers, who in their own way offer models to follow, provide insights that can infuse theory to practice, and pave the way to shaping the business of government.

Forum on Strategies for More Effective Government

The Forum in this edition tackles many of the pressing issues facing governments at all levels, but most particularly the federal government’s estimated annual structural budget deficit of \$500–700 billion. The first contribution to this forum seeks to dispel belief in business as usual—outlining specific strategies government can take to cut costs and improve performance. It posits that the federal government must adopt an aggressive spending reduction program that includes reforming entitlements, eliminating low-priority programs, and adopting commercial best practices in operations. It presents successful cost-saving strategies that the federal government can use to achieve similar results. The second contribution focuses on improving the cost, quality, and performance of financial management operations and systems. It outlines 10 principles on how to best deploy financial management systems in alignment with the Office of Management and Budget’s goals and policies. These principles are derived from lessons learned from multiple financial management system deployments throughout the public sector. The contributions in this forum offer practical, actionable recommendations and insights that, if pursued strategically, could help government leaders get things done and manage the public trust more effectively.

Conversation with Leaders

We feature conversations with government leaders from a wide range of disciplines, who share their extended reflections on the work they do and the service they perform. Whether it is pursuing disruptive innovation in space exploration, saving lives, finding sustainable ways to operate, or delivering a precious resource, the conversations in this edition have much to offer about leadership, government, and public service. Pursuing cutting edge technology is more important today than ever before, as NASA develops missions of increasing complexity to understand the Earth, our solar system, and the universe. We had the pleasure to speak with Dr. Bobby Braun, Chief Technologist at NASA, about his efforts to reinvigorate NASA’s space technology program. Since its inception in the summer of 1949, the Air Force Medical Service (AFMS) has sought to provide service members and their families with first-rate healthcare and benefits anywhere and at any time. We spoke with Lieutenant General Bruce Green, M.D., surgeon general of the U.S. Air Force, on *The Business of Government Hour* about the evolution of the Air Force’s aeromedical and expeditionary medical support, and his efforts at improving its life saving capabilities. In 2009, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) collected, sorted, and delivered



more than 177 billion pieces of mail. Finding more sustainable ways to process this mail and lower the Postal Service's carbon footprint continues to be a central goal at USPS. Sam Pulcrano, VP of Sustainability at USPS, talked with us about his leadership in forging sustainable operations and being good environmental stewards. As we continue to engage government executives outside the beltway, we talked with Cas Holloway, commissioner of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, about how the City ensures its water system is viable for the next 100 years.

Profiles in Leadership

Over the last six months, we've interviewed a number of government leaders who are changing the way government does business. As CIO at FAA, Dave Bowen leads IT coordination and efforts to make his agency's next generation air traffic system a reality. Vice Admiral Jack Dorsett outlines the Navy's efforts to make information dominance a main battery in its 21st century arsenal. At GSA, Dr. David McClure leads an office playing a key role in making the aspiration of open government real. Richard Spires, CIO at DHS, underscores that information technology is a foundational and critical element to the success of his organization and is as important as any function in assuring mission effectiveness today.



Insights on Person-Centered Human Service Delivery

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 human service delivery with insights from Clarence Carter, Director of the District of Columbia's Department of Human Services, on his efforts to put those in need at the center. Carter is a vocal proponent of putting people first and foremost at every point in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of human service delivery.

Viewpoints

We offer compelling viewpoints on a variety of topics. John Kamensky discusses the pros and cons of regulatory partnerships between government regulators and the industries they regulate. Several recent high profile cases have put into question the benefits of such partnerships. Dan Chenok explores why innovation matters and how entrepreneurial managers who work in and with government can find ways to initiate and leverage innovation in order to achieve important results. Dr. Costas Panagopoulos provides some early insights on how the U.S. Census Bureau has adopted cloud computing in support of its mission.



This edition closes with excerpts and overviews of our most recent Center reports that focus on topics of interest ranging from the proper use of private-public partnerships, to the benefits of earned value management, and the promises and challenges of forging collaborative relationships within and outside of government. We invite you to learn more about how the Center connects research to practice. If you have yet to read these reports, we encourage you to do so by going to businessofgovernment.org and becoming a friend of the Center.

We do our best in this edition to explore and delve into this new and different terrain, the shifting contours and dangerous detours that define this moment in time. We hope you enjoy the perspectives, insights, recommendations, and profiles in leadership presented in the Fall/Winter 2010 edition of *The Business of Government* that reveal the business of government is not business as usual.

Please let us know what you think by contacting me at michael.j.keegan@us.ibm.com. I look forward to hearing from you. ■