

By Michael J. Keegan



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This edition of *The Business of Government* magazine provides a glimpse into the many challenges, risks, and opportunities facing today's government executives. More importantly, it introduces a select group of government leaders who offer their insights, outline successes, and tell us how they, in their own unique way, are making a difference in an era of fiscal austerity. Today's conditions require government executives to go beyond simply doing more with less—to find smarter ways of doing business, using resources more efficiently, and investing them more wisely. The dramatic nature of this historical moment cannot be overstated. It is fully revealed by the depth of the vicissitudes being faced. How government leaders respond matters and the conditions require more than vague changes. It is to be understood that today's actions affect future choices and lost opportunities result in ubiquitous costs. In the end, it is not necessarily retrieving something ideal from the past, but discovering a new path forward in the present. The issue also continues and expands on the core mission of the IBM Center, which is to connect public management research to practice. Whether it's getting big things done in government, enhancing national competitiveness, revitalizing public service, reforming the federal IT budget, or evaluating citizen participation and using wikis in government, we bring together thoughtful perspectives from some of the leading practitioners and academics in the field.

Forum on Enhancing National Competitiveness

In the March 2012 *Harvard Business Review* article, "The Looming Challenge to U.S. Competitiveness," Michael Porter and Jan Rivik point out that the U.S. faces a deeper, more fundamental challenge than recovering from a recession of unusual depth and duration—that is, its ability to be competitive globally. "To restore its competitiveness, America needs a long-term strategy," counsel Potter and Rivik. With the recent release of *Governing to Win: Enhancing National Competitiveness Through New Policy and Operating Approaches*, Chuck Prow has compiled some 13 insightful essays by leading thinkers and practitioners that can contribute to laying out that long-term strategy. "Given today's fiscal realities," Prow explains, "the nation must explore alternative policy approaches and ways for government to do business." He notes that the alternatives outlined in his new book can catalyze national competitiveness in an environment where major new investments will be difficult. This forum excerpts selected essays from the book that explore the insights forming the larger vision of the work. These essays paint outlines of both opportunities and challenges that the present period provides to government executives.



Perspectives on Getting Big Things Done in Government

Two professional associations, the American Society for Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration, have joined to sponsor a series of forums addressing the management challenges likely to face whomever is sworn in as president in January 2013. One of these forums examined the leadership challenges associated with getting big things done on the order of the Manhattan Project, Interstate Highway System, and the race to the moon, and explored lessons from past experiences. The panel comprised three observers/participants in the implementation of large-scale federal initiatives—Professor Timothy Conlan, Dwight Ink, and Professor Harry Lambright. They share their perspectives and offer lessons that can assist future government leaders charting a path toward the future.





Conversations with Leaders

With each magazine, we feature conversations with government executives who are making a difference. They share their in-depth reflections on the work they do and the efforts they lead. In this edition, **Gene Dodaro**, comptroller general of the United States and leader of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, discusses GAO's efforts to not only help position the government to better manage risks that could compromise the nation's security, health, and solvency, but also to identify opportunities for managing government resources wisely for a more sustainable future. **Michael Astrue**, commissioner, U.S. Social Security Administration, seeks to enhance SSA's ability to meet its mission, eliminating claim backlogs, improving services, and demonstrating the nexus between adequate funding and the ability to deliver real and measurable progress. **Erin Conaton**, undersecretary, U.S. Air Force, discusses the strategic vision for today's Air Force, managing in an era of fiscal constraint, and improving its operations and becoming more efficient and agile. **Admiral Robert Papp**, commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, outlines his efforts to steady the service while ensuring it is ready for today and prepared for tomorrow. **Letitia Long**, director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, closes this edition of our conversations, outlining how NGA is putting the power of geospatial intelligence into the hands of its users.



Profiles in Leadership

Over the last six months, we've interviewed a host of government executives. In this issue, we introduce you to three leaders who are changing the way government does business. They joined me on *The Business of Government Hour* to discuss critical issues facing their agencies. **Malcolm Jackson**, chief information officer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, focuses on his effort to leverage information technology to enhance mission effectiveness. **Michael Kane**, chief human capital officer, U.S. Department of Energy, outlines his efforts to tackle human capital challenges facing his department. **Steven Kempf**, commissioner, Federal Acquisition Service (within the U.S. General Services Administration), details his leading of an agency that provides centralized acquisition solutions to federal agency customers.

Insights

In this edition of *Insights*, we present two distinct discussions that provide insight into tackling the challenge of homelessness and revitalizing public service. **Seth Diamond**, commissioner, New York City Department of Homeless Services, provides insights into leading the city's response to the challenge of homelessness. **Max Stier**, president and CEO, Partnership for Public Service, offers insights into his organization's mission to revitalize public service.



To close this edition, we offer overviews of our most recent Center reports. 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 hope you enjoy what is offered in this edition of *The Business of Government* magazine. Please let us know what you think by contacting me at michael.j.keegan@us.ibm.com. I look forward to hearing from you. ■