Government Transformation: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Two years ago, the IBM Center for The Business of Government put together a research agenda that still guides much of our work, in which we collaborated with government, academic, and nonprofit leaders to identify key areas of need for the public sector to transform. This agenda focuses on six trends driving change in government that address many of the pressing challenges government executives face in their efforts to transform government operations and enhance services:

1. Performance
2. Risk
3. Innovation
4. Mission support
5. Efficiency
6. Leadership

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Since we launched this agenda, many IBM reports from leading researchers have examined these issues from varying perspectives. I've highlighted a handful of key lessons learned from this research that have made a real impact on government:

- In the IBM Center report, *A Manager's Guide to Assessing the Impact of Government Social Media Interactions,* Ines Mergel outlines how agencies can measure **performance** in their use of social media across multiple platforms to increase the value that they gain from these channels.

- Governments at all levels can learn how to address **risks** to their financial status through innovations in service delivery and workforce activities as detailed by Max Neiman and Jeremy Goldberg in the IBM Center report, *Managing Budgets During Fiscal Stress: Lessons for Local Government Officials.*

- **Innovation** offices at all levels of government can make a sustained and positive contribution to overall agency mission performance according to Rachel Burstein and Alissa Black, authors of the IBM Center report, *A Guide for Making Innovation Offices Work.*

- Data can be used to inform decision making by agencies in a way that results in better **support for missions** that those agencies carry out on behalf of citizens, as explained in the IBM Center and Partnership for Public Service collaborative series Data to Decisions.

- To learn how agile software development can drive significant **efficiencies** and greater quality in agency IT projects, I invite you to read the IBM Center report, *A Guide to Critical Success Factors in Agile Delivery.*

- **Leaders** can manage in a world increasingly shaped by collaborative networks by learning from what has come before and from a broad and deep literature review pulled together in *Inter-Organizational Networks: A Review of the Literature to Inform Practice,* by Brinton Milward, et.al.

Looking forward, the IBM Center is beginning to assess the next set of research priorities. Our assessment will take into account the multiple forces that will impact governments

around the globe over the next decade, including changing demographics, globalization, and the expanded impact of technology. In addition to these factors, continued economic and budgetary constraints will place limits on the federal government's ability to respond without a significant re-examination of its own activities and operations. Such an examination could reflect lessons learned from how many businesses address swiftly changing forces, focusing on a few long-range priorities that can provide a path toward positive change.

Efficiency and effectiveness ultimately enable government to work with and promote private sector actions that support nationally important goals. Indeed, the nation faces important choices over the next decade, in areas that include education, health care, economic growth, sustainability, and national security.

Identifying ways to achieve key mission results in these or other areas is only the first step toward achieving sustained transformation in the public sector. For agencies to move forward, they must develop and implement reforms that promote sound practices in and across agencies, as well as the right set of incentives and opportunities for collaboration with citizens and businesses that work with and are served by government.

The IBM Center looks forward to continued dialogue with our government partners, colleagues in academia, and all stakeholders on how best to address these challenges through research to inform effectiveness. ◘