Improving Lives through Data: Putting Evidence to Work in Public Programs
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To Advance the Public Interest

From the day Andrew Owen’s ’17 parents let him push the button in a voting booth, he’s worked hard to stay attuned to what matters to citizens. As a deputy treasurer, Andrew strives to meet the public’s needs and involve them in decision making. Those values led him to Regent University. With a challenging curriculum, expert faculty and multidisciplinary approach, Regent prepared him for public leadership. “Regent teaches you not to be a bureaucrat, but to serve those around you.” We’ll prepare you, too.

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The federal government collects huge amounts of administrative data: the number of college students graduating with debt; the number of unemployed workers who find jobs; the number of children receiving school lunches. Yet this data does not tell the story of what is happening in people’s lives as a result of the programs in which they may participate.

We do not know if veterans earn more because of the training they received in the military, or if food stamps improve health outcomes. Data exists to tell these stories and researchers would love to analyze them! But, data detailing slices of an individual’s interactions with government resides in different agencies that have different rules about sharing personal information. And, the stories cannot unfold unless the data is shared and the dots connected so the collective effects of government programs on an individual can be analyzed.

The Challenge. The challenge for researchers is to find ways to convert administrative data from multiple sources—including IRS tax data, veterans’ health data, state level wage data and college education data (all of which include an individual’s personal information)—into statistical data without revealing an individual’s or organization’s identity.

Technically, this can be done, but there are a number of barriers to doing so. Some are intentional, others not. They include cultural, political, legal and technical factors, plus a lack of incentives to make the effort to overcome them. Being able to analyze these kinds of data would be highly useful to making better evidence-informed policy, budget and management decisions.

To address these challenges, a bipartisan coalition of legislators in Congress—including House Speaker Paul Ryan—created a statutory Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking in 2016. Composed of 15 members, the commission was charged with studying “how to increase the availability and use of data in order to build evidence about government programs, while protecting privacy and confidentiality.” It released its final report and recommendations, *The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking*, in early September, available at www.cep.gov.

The Recommendations. The commission’s recommendations address three sets of challenges: improving access to data, strengthening privacy protections of the data and increasing agency capacity to analyze the data.

Improving access to data. Since current federal laws and policies are not optimized to support the use of data or maximize privacy, the Commission offers two paths. The first: Revise a range of laws to allow the use of administrative data exclusively for statistical purposes, and to resolve inconsistencies and barriers in existing law for better use of data. The second: Streamline the process by which researchers access data.

To do this, the commission opted to not propose the creation of a central data warehouse. Instead, it proposed the creation of a “national secure data service” where data is combined, linked and anonymized for use in a specific analysis, then destroyed. The service would be an independent agency housed within the U.S. Department of Commerce.
Strengthening privacy protections. Currently, privacy protections are provided via an ad hoc approach, program by program. The commission recommends a broader, more consistent treatment of personal and business data via a series of risk assessments that include the following:

- Conducting and disclosing comprehensive risk assessments for publicly released confidential data that has been stripped of its identity.
- Improving privacy protections with better technology and greater coordination.
- Strengthening OMB’s existing guidance on maintaining public trust by codifying Statistical Policy Directive 1.

Increasing analytic capacities in the government. The commission recommends designating a chief evaluation officer in each agency. These officers would help align their agencies’ capacity for conducting statistical analyses, evaluation and policy research within and across departments, and tailor administrative processes to make analytic efforts less costly for government to execute.

Next Steps. The commission, by law, disbanded on September 30, but its staff have moved to the Bipartisan Policy Commission to provide ongoing support and advocacy for implementing the recommendations. Meanwhile, members are actively promoting adoption of the recommendations. In a recent forum, Ted McCann, a key staffer for Speaker Ryan, said legislation would be introduced addressing all three areas. The idea is to start with the less controversial items, such as designation of the chief evaluation officers. It was envisioned that a bill to implement one-third of those recommendations requiring legislative action would be introduced this Fall.

The commission’s efforts have garnered bipartisan support, though there are bipartisan skeptics, too. A late September congressional hearing on the report generated some heat from both parties, according to a story in Government Executive. The article noted continued on page 5
“Evidence should play an important role in key decisions made by government officials.”

This precept from the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking applies directly to loan and loan guarantee programs. Federal credit helps millions of people buy homes—often their first—fund their educations and own their own farms. Communities benefit from federal loans for infrastructure and disaster recovery. Businesses—often small ones—can establish themselves and grow thanks to federal loan guarantees. Yet credit can create harm if programs cause too many borrowers to default when they cannot carry their debt burdens. Evidence-based policy can help to improve the balance of borrower benefits and harm.

Federal direct loans and loan guarantees have doubled in volume, from $1.5 trillion in 2007 to $3.6 trillion in 2016, or more than $10,000 for every man, woman and child in the United States. The federal government extends this credit through more than 100 different programs administered by some 20 different agencies.

Many credit programs face a conundrum: On the one hand, federal credit provides access for people who otherwise might not be able to afford the cost of a home or education or start a small business. On the other, unlike grants—which are most appropriate for disadvantaged people—loans must be repaid. This creates tension in federal credit programs between providing access of disadvantaged borrowers to such benefits as education and homeownership, and facing the reality that loans, by their very nature, should be paid back.

Evidence-based analysis can help resolve this issue. It shows that federal student loans benefit many borrowers, but there is a downside: the U.S. Department of Education projects that the lifetime default rate for unsubsidized undergraduate student loans will be 27 percent. More than one out of four students cannot handle the debt that the department provides them.

These borrowers often are disadvantaged individuals who seek vocational training from low quality schools and drop out after receiving loans for the education. By law, borrowers generally may not go bankrupt on student loans, which leads to such outcomes as the Treasury attaching Social Security payments of 173,000 defaulted student loan borrowers, by then elderly, in 2015. Similar problems exist for disadvantaged borrowers in the FHA single-family loan program. Perhaps one in five borrowers with a FICO credit score below 620 defaults on his or her loan.

A particularly powerful evidence-based approach is to first determine the riskiest borrower of a loan that a federal program provides and then evaluate the benefits and costs of loans to that class of borrower.

Take a housing loan from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Federal Housing Authority or Rural Housing Service. Benefits accrue to successful borrowers who obtain a home and can pay off their mortgage loans. These include stability, continued access to the same local school system and access...
to local employment. For borrowers who default, researchers have documented health effects, economic hardship and food insecurity. If the home suffers a foreclosure, there can be significant adverse effects on other home values, neighborhood crime and increased defaults and foreclosures in the area.

Once evidence sheds light on this program, it can assess the overall harm to defaulting borrowers and their communities, compared to the benefits to borrowers who can pay their mortgages on time. If there is an imbalance, the program can adjust its credit standards. For instance, if the proportion of defaulters is too high, the program agency can screen out borrowers who have the strongest likelihood of defaulting. Once data is available, the agency can publish it, show the trade-offs for borrowers of different levels of risk and build consensus around an acceptable level of default that balances benefits and harm. The data also can help borrowers decide whether or how much debt they want to take on.

Although borrower defaults provide a useful proxy for assessing costs to program borrowers, other evidence about outcomes—projected family health, education and income of borrowers of differing credit worthiness who take out federal loans—can provide even more clarity for policymakers. For student loans, evidence could include projected incomes of students who incur indebtedness to attend different educational institutions, if it can be made available. To generate and apply information may require strengthening agency capacity to conduct program evaluations. Cross-agency collaboration, between credit programs and the Census Bureau for example, also can add to the quality of evidence.

The Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking called for “a comprehensive strategy for tackling the greatest problems facing evidence building today—data access is limited, privacy-protecting practices are inadequate and the capacity to generate the evidence needed to support policy decisions is insufficient.”

Some credit agencies are better positioned than others to implement evidence-based approaches. The greatest obstacle appears to be the student loan program. Schools that fear being associated with poor borrower results have obtained enactment of a law that largely precludes the Department of Education from generating student-level information about outcomes. By contrast, other federal credit programs seem well poised to implement evidence-based policies. Applying evidence-based analysis to federal home loan, small business and other leading programs can provide strong examples of successful policymaking that then can spread to other credit programs.


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BETTER EVIDENCE-BASED STORIES

continued from page 3

that a Republican congressman asked, “We already have chief program officers, so why create new positions?” A Democratic congressman attacked a series of Trump administration actions, noting an “apparent dismissal of evidence” and policies “completely unrelated to the facts.”

Other recommendations can be implemented administratively, but they require concerted leadership—likely from the Office of Management and Budget—to bring together different communities that have a role in data governance and are outside the 13 principal statistical agencies. They include chief information officers, performance improvement officers, privacy officers and chief information security officers. The commission’s charge focused on statistical data, but there will be the need to address broader data governance issues to be successful.

To be sure, there was a great deal of bipartisanship demonstrated in the passage of the law creating the commission and among the members themselves in drafting the report. That said, we will have to wait and see whether implementation of the recommendations can weather the political and bureaucratic headwinds.

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Surviving the Transition: Federal Cross-Agency Collaboration

The transition to the Trump administration brought a feeling of chaos in some corners. But, a hidden success received a quiet endorsement in August when the president signed an executive order streamlining federal permitting and licensing requirements for major infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges and waterways. The order designated the streamlining initiative as a “cross-agency priority goal,” the administration’s first such designation.

Congress mandated cross-agency priority (CAP) goals in 2010. The law requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to designate a handful of priority mission-related and mission-support areas, covering a four-year period, plus a goal leader and requirement for quarterly progress reports. The four-year goal cycle matches the president’s four-year term of office. The Obama administration created a set of 15 goals at the beginning of its second term, but the incoming administration suspended further meetings and reporting on them. It was unclear until August whether it would support this approach to cross-agency issues.

The CAP Goals Process Works. A new report by the IBM Center for The Business of Government, Cross-Agency Collaboration: A Case Study of Cross-Agency Priority Goals, assesses the implementation of the first four-year round of CAP goals, which ended September 30. It concluded, “(t)his approach does result in tangible outcomes.”

The report examines the implementation of the 15 CAP goals during FYs 2014-2017. Eight goals focused on mission-support-related goals, such as improving IT delivery; the other seven on mission-related goals, such as improving veterans’ mental health.

The actions associated with each CAP goal have resulted in increased performance and results in several areas that sometimes had demonstrated little to no progress. For example, past efforts to coordinate permitting and review processes between agencies lagged until the initiative was designated as a goal.

In addition to these demonstrated results, OMB has created a foundation for managing initiatives more broadly. It has institutionalized policies, processes, governance structures and capacities to manage cross-agency initiatives on a governmentwide basis.

Have CAP Goals made a difference? The wide range of initiatives undertaken makes it difficult to offer a general characterization of the impact of the 15 CAP goals. There is no single scorecard. However, a review of publicly available status reports and discussions with governmentwide and project-level CAP goal staff indicate demonstrable progress across the board. Assessing progress and outcomes differs between the mission-support and mission-focused goals.

For the former, progress typically can be assessed in terms of achieving greater standardization, consolidation of services and cost savings. For example, the Shared Services goal has developed standardized transition guidance for agencies to move such common administrative functions as human resources management to a shared platform; agencies are beginning to make the transition.

For mission-focused goals, progress and outcomes are more diffuse, but measurable in some cases. For example, the Climate Change goal—which stimulates federal renewable electrical energy usage—demonstrated measurable decreases in greenhouse gases and increases in cost savings by federal agencies.

How can the CAP Goal process be improved? The overall implementation of the CAP goals has been effective. There is no evidence supporting the need to undertake a major rethink, but there are opportunities to fine-tune processes and build on the current foundation. Several areas for potential governmentwide improvement include the following:

- **Bolder Goal Setting.** Consider bigger, bolder goals that capture the imagination of leaders and the public. To date, one of the key criteria for selecting CAP goals has focused on areas where progress has been slow or floundering and where additional resources and attention would increase performance.

- **Designated Leadership of Mission-Focused CAP Goals.** Designate an overall executive champion of mission-focused goals. Currently, OMB and
Federal, state and local governments have increasingly used evidence-based decisionmaking to make better policy choices. It reduces wasteful spending, expands innovative programs and strengthens accountability through collecting and reporting data on program operations and outcomes. Federal funding has increased, as well. For example, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Labor have directed approximately $5.5 billion to seven initiatives that support proven projects.

Likewise, state policymakers increasingly use legislation as a vehicle to encourage investment in programs proven effective. Results First Initiative researchers identified more than 42 states that passed 100 laws from 2004-2014 supporting the use of evidence-based programs and practices. State leaders also are using cost-benefit analysis to inform their policy and spending decisions. The initiative found that states assessing the costs and benefits of programs and policy options increased 48 percent between 2008 and 2011; further, 29 states reported using cost-benefit studies to inform policy or budget decisions. Since 2011, 16 states and four California counties have partnered with the initiative to apply a customized, innovative cost-benefit approach to policy and budget decisionmaking.

Released in November 2014, the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative report included five key components with multiple steps that enable governments to make better evidence-based decisions.

1. **Program Assessment: Systematically review available evidence on public program effectiveness.**
   - Develop an inventory of funded programs.
   - Categorize programs by their evidence of effectiveness.
   - Identify programs’ potential return on investment.

2. **Budget Development: Incorporate evidence of program effectiveness into budget and policy decisions.**
   - Give funding priority to those delivering high return on investment of public funds.
   - Integrate program performance information into the budget development process.
   - Present information to policymakers in user-friendly formats to facilitate decisionmaking.
   - Include relevant studies in budget hearings and committee meetings.
   - Establish incentives for implementing evidence-based programs and practices.
   - Build performance requirements into grants and contracts.

3. **Outcome Monitoring: Regularly measure and report outcome data on program results.**
   - Develop meaningful outcome measures for programs, agencies and the community.
   - Conduct regular audits of systems for collecting and reporting performance data.
   - Regularly report performance data to policymakers.

4. **Targeted Evaluation: Conduct rigorous evaluations of new and untested programs to ensure continued funding.**
   - Leverage available resources to conduct evaluations.
   - Target evaluations to high-priority programs.
   - Make better use of administrative data to enhance program evaluations.
   - Require evaluations as a condition for continued funding for new initiatives.
   - Develop a centralized repository for program evaluations.
More still needs to be done. As Jennifer Brooks points out in a 2016 article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, more traction for evidence-based decisionmaking has failed for three reasons: First, wasting time debating whether randomized control trials are the optimal approach. Second, overselling the availability of evidence-based practices and underestimating what it takes to scale them. Third, failing to ask what problems decisionmakers are trying to solve.

That said, progress toward evidence-based policymaking has increased. In March 2016, Congress approved and sent to President Obama the bipartisan Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act, cosponsored by Senator Patty Murray and House Speaker Paul Ryan. The legislation created a 15-member Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking with the responsibility of determining the optimal use of administrative data and tax expenditures; recommending how data infrastructure, database security and statistical protocols should be modified; and recommending the best way to incorporate outcome measurements, institutionalize randomized controlled trials and incorporate rigorous impact analysis into program design.

The legislation called on seven federal agencies to advise and consult with the commission: The Bureau of the Census, Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Education, Department of Justice, Office of Management and Budget, Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As discussed elsewhere in this issue, the commission released a September 2017 report that begins to shed light on these efforts.

States leading the way in evidence-based policymaking include Washington, Utah, Minnesota, Connecticut and Oregon, according to a 2017 Pew-MacArthur report. Eleven states established levels of evidence-based policymaking by pursuing more actions than most others but not as frequently or in as advanced a manner as the five leading ones. Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia demonstrated modest engagement in this work but lagged by taking action less frequently and in less advanced ways. Seven trailed behind, taking very few evidence-based policymaking actions.

There is much more to come on this subject.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:
Data Makes a Difference

While I was director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) during the Clinton administration, the agency collected and maintained massive amounts of data about the federal workforce. (It still does.) A team of insightful and dedicated employees maintained the database and believed the data was more than a series of numbers. Through their thoughtful analysis, I was able to see endless narratives about the federal workers. I met with the team regularly to discuss its observations. Nothing was off the table; we evaluated and assessed every trend, statistical aberration and pattern for policy, regulatory and legal implications.

Due to the trends they noticed, we made real and tangible differences in work-life balance issues. The data helped us learn that federal employees (and later the broader private sector workforce) needed to use annual leave to care for ailing family members or take them to doctors’ appointments. Because my team looked at the numbers, we helped workers use annual time to care for children—or parents—so they could save vacation time for real time off they desperately needed.

Data also helped us know that people not only wanted mental health care included in their insurance coverage; they would use it if offered—and it would not harm the government’s budget to do so. Because the numbers told us the story, we negotiated with insurance providers to better care for our employees’ mental health—and they are now better able to care for our citizens.

To this day, people approach me in airports and restaurants and thank me for OPM’s policy decisions that changed their lives. This is very rewarding for me. But, what if our data had not told us the full story and we made poor decisions because of it?

Such is the nature of data. Bad data tells us the wrong stories; good data in bad hands tells us false ones. In contrast, good data in good hands helps us make invaluable decisions that benefit people and make their lives easier.

Data plays a very important role for ASPA—and for your membership. During our recent mid-year leadership meetings, the National Council and I were treated to critical information about the wide range of data that staff collect and use to fine-tune your membership benefits and communications program. Just a few of the most interesting points:

- the number of webinars you attend, and the ratings you rate them. Good news: You think the webinars are great!
- the time you are most likely to be on the ASPA website (aspanet.org). Tuesday nights, in case you were wondering...
- the number of members accessing our webinar archives. The number is growing for this newly improved service.
- the social media on which we find you the most. Twitter!
- your workplace. Government, academia or both: It is about the same across all three!

This is just the beginning of the data being amassed. Yet there are broader questions: What do I, as 2017-2018 president, and our staff do with this data? Why does it matter? Like OPM’s data, it is only useful and important if we can use this information to serve you—to provide you with the best member benefits possible and make sure you know those benefits exist.

Just as I knew at OPM that federal employees needed flexibility in how they used their sick leave, ASPA knows you need career resources to keep you at the top of your profession. We constantly look for ways to provide them.

Do you need more e-learning? Better access to the archives? Do you find Chapter networking time most valuable, or do you prefer formal presentations? Are you going to be at the Annual Conference? If not, where can we meet face-to-face and help you connect with us and each other?

Data can tell us all of this and more. Data matters, for both decisionmaking and resource management. It matters so we can make sure ASPA’s precious staff hours are spent in the best possible ways to give you the best possible membership experience.

How? Here are a few examples:

- You are (almost) never going to get an email on a weekend, because we know you are spending...
What We Know and Don’t Know

Ethical competence is a complicated subject about which we do not know enough. We do know that it is critical to professional practice in every field. Competence in practice is central to critical professions like accounting, law, social work, medicine and dentistry. Yet without an ethical component, competent practice rings hollow. How do we know if we are ethically competent? How do we become so? Answering these questions is more difficult than it appears.

The paths to ethical competence are varied but known: education, peer review, professional associations and self examination, to name a few. There is no single path to travel. So, how do we know when we have reached our elusive destination? There is no prescribed timeframe or bright line to cross. In a backhanded manner, the acid test of experience is the only way we can be certain that we are ethically competent. Here, the answer may only be revealed when we fail to be ethical. Here are a few ways this may happen.

Civility Ethics

We have read, seen or witnessed much commentary about the breakdown of civility in America, presumably the result of several powerful forces: political partisanship and winning at any cost, the sometimes whimsical and uncivil influence of the new world of social media and a perceived globalization backlash. Some believe we are witnessing the emergence of a social order unlike any other with moral individualism, rampant social distrust of custom and institutions and a cynicism bordering on narcissism—the what’s in it for me? mentality.

The sky is falling, says Chicken Little. Is the end near? Most likely not. But, has the breakdown in civility sent tremors through our institutions of governance and distracted or dispirited public managers responsible for the essential work of governance? We just do not know—yet—the real fallout and its extent from the disintegration of civility ethics.

Internal and External Influences

There has been an outpouring of dialogue, writing and research on unethical behavior. Perhaps more attention should be paid to the question, “Why are people ethical?”

Our intellectual predecessors grappled with this question philosophically and devised answers widely known as virtue ethics, utilitarianism and deontology. Some assert we are ethical because we know the rules for good behavior and the consequences when we break them. Others assert the pursuit and acquisition of virtues make a person ethical. Still others claim the inculcation of such principles as “treat all with respect” are essential.

Given these approaches, can we say that ethics resides within the individual as a conscience that finds expression in right behavior? Or, does it reside outside the individual as a social force or set of rules? Perhaps the answer is that ethics is values and behaviors both within and external to the individual. But—and here is the big question—to what extent do public managers actually draw on these frameworks when ethically challenged? We do not know.

Person/Organization Ethics

The environment of professional work is riddled with questions about the person-organization dynamics of ethical behavior. Can an ethically inclined individual remain so in an ethically challenged work environment? Can an unethical person become something different in an organization whose leaders exemplify ethical values and behavior? The conventional wisdom is that ethical leadership does suffuse a workplace and, while it may not convert an unethical person into a different one, it may deter unethical behavior.

Is the conventional wisdom right? We just do not know. To be sure, ethical leadership is a two-way street where leaders and followers engage one another. But, what is the nature of the engagement? Is it scandal or crisis driven? There are plenty of cases in which a top manager with high ethical standards is humbled by the wrongdoing of subordinates. Or, is it much more subtle? We need to know what we do not know.

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Big Data or Big Burden?: Some Pros and Cons of Evidence-Based Decisionmaking
By Stephanie Dolamore and Angela Kline

There are increasing efforts among funders to award grants based on robust data collection and reporting requirements. The objective is to promote a culture of evidence-based decisionmaking, an idea well grounded in the field and practice of public administration as it advances public service values like neutrality and effectiveness. Yet there are very real downsides to this approach. Limitations imposed by funders on small and community-led organizations may be crippling given the technical and human capital needed to sustain such demands. As a result, these organizations can lose out on substantial funding opportunities.

It is problematic when these approaches, which seek to enhance neutrality in the decisionmaking process, can create unintended bias and inequity. To democratize this process, we recommend broadening the conception of data-driven initiatives to include all types of data, plus participatory models of decisionmaking. This means finding ways to value the relationships between community members and qualitative data, including storytelling, in grantmaking systems.

A Long History
For more than a century, scholars have weighed in on the complex nature of decisionmaking, highlighting how values permeate and shape the very nature of public administration. Scholars have borrowed and modeled evidence-based decisionmaking from medicine, social work and education, among other areas. However, these fields have shifted emphasis from traditional evidence-based practice to modern adaptations that consider complexity and unmeasurable factors in frameworks like evidence-informed practice (EIP) and shared decisionmaking.

It is appropriate for public administration to broaden the scholarship in keeping with the trends of evidence-based research. There is a small and emerging body of research focused on inclusive alternatives to evidence-based decisionmaking. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) supports an inclusive grantmaking process and models for implementation. It highlights the strengths of shifting power as increasing programmatic sustainability, diversity at all levels of the organization and democratizing resources.

An Example from Baltimore
Public servants in Baltimore City, like many cities in the United States, face the challenge of addressing decades of inequity in policies, public spaces and institutional processes. The Center for Social Inclusion and the Opportunity Collaborative have funded research on Baltimore’s position as one of the most highly segregated cities in the nation, with black neighborhoods having infrequent access to affordable, healthy foods and black residents disproportionately represented in unemployment figures. The cascade effect of these and other barriers to equality drew national attention in 2015 following the death of Freddie Gray. Many in the Baltimore community responded with days of protest and met police in full riot gear and later the National Guard.

Public servants’ work demands efforts to consider the impact of structural inequality. This is true in all areas of public work, including grantmaking. But, we know from our personal experience and research that the funding systems of many large organizations have yet to increase the equity of funding initiatives. This means that grantmaking processes...
are technically cumbersome, requiring specialized capacity within the organization that limits who can apply. It also means that funding decisions do not include equal voice among the public (or representative community organizations) in the decisions made. Meaningful progress for advancing equity will not occur until grant makers, and large organizations that work hand-in-hand with funders, address the inherent deficiencies of traditional funding structures and processes.

What to Do
Using a social equity lens, it becomes obvious that evidence-based decisionmaking cannot support unbiased actions, despite what the literature may say. In practice, we see that drawing a hard line on what is valued in an evidence-based environment often perpetuates the structural inequalities that have plagued the United States for generations. However, more inclusive alternatives exist that promote the transparency and neutrality that scholars and practitioners desire.

We recommend broadening the conception of data-driven initiatives to include participatory models of decisionmaking. This means finding ways to value the relationships among community members in grantmaking systems. According to the NCRP’s approach, these include analyzing compensation, educating an organization’s board and leadership on political issues and committing to having difficult conversations.

We also recommend allowing for all types of data to be included as evidence in decisionmaking. Storytelling and narratives from practitioners and the community are evidence that should count in funding decisions. Without the ability to incorporate such data into grantmaking systems, how can we expect the innovative ideas of grassroots and community-led organizations to create the change society needs at scale? We recognize these recommendations are hard and few have charted this path to date. But, this is a small and important step in advancing equity in the public sector.

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DATA MAKES A DIFFERENCE
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time with your family and should not be distracted by our information.

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- You are going to see more webinar archive announcements because we know the more you see them, the more you use the archives and get the education you need.

- You are going to see more programs for those new to public administration because you need the most help getting started.

- You are going to keep seeing the PAR content because the journal is one of the most important and well used resources we produce.

ASPA can even help you find and use data for your professional decisionmaking. Through PAR articles, webinars, conference panels, PA TIMES content and more, we can help you get access to big data so you can be more effective for your organization and public service at large.

Just as we did during my time at OPM, where we used data to identify areas to change people’s lives, ASPA’s use of data should result in a transformative opportunity for you to launch and maintain your career in the public service. It is only through those experiences that together we can fulfill ASPA’s mission of advancing excellence in the public service.

As you see, data really can make a difference.

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How the Baldrige Framework Supports Customer-Focused Excellence

By Christine Schaefer

This Fall, the Improvement and Compliance Service (ICS) within the Office of Finance and Planning of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) hosted an event called Engagement Day. The target audience included NCA managers, analysts and new employees. On the morning's agenda were overviews of ICS' internal business plan, skills matrix and performance scorecard. Next was an overview of the Baldrige Excellence Framework and its core concepts. In the afternoon, participants could practice using process improvement tools.

The activities reflect extensive use of the framework within this subunit of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to promote evidence-based best practices in internal management. The Washington, DC-based NCA has embraced the framework as the basis for regular self-assessments of national cemeteries and NCA staff and for periodic reviews conducted during ICS-led site visits. The framework provides the foundation for a standardized process to assess the performance and organizational health of NCA cemeteries, districts and central office components.

The Baldrige Excellence Framework

The Baldrige Excellence Framework, which includes criteria for performance excellence, is an organizational assessment tool. It promotes leadership and management practices that nationally recognized role model organizations have validated through their high performance. The criteria comprise comprehensive questions in seven categories of organizational performance. Regularly revised by the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the resource is used annually to evaluate applicants for the nation’s highest and only presidential award for U.S. organizations that demonstrate excellence: the Baldrige Award. Perhaps more important, thousands of organizations, of every size and sector, use the framework to conduct self assessments aimed at improving their performance, promoting innovation and supporting long-term success.

The prestigious award and the small federal program administering it were established in 1987 following the death of Malcolm Baldrige. An innovator in business and a genuine cowboy, Baldrige was serving as the nation’s secretary of commerce when he died in a rodeo accident.

The first version of the Baldrige framework was developed in the late 1980s both to identify national role models and their best practices and to help U.S. businesses assess their performance to compete successfully in the global economy. Incorporating a systems perspective, the framework promotes integration of leadership, strategic planning, operations and other key processes and continuous improvement and innovation within organizations. (More information on the framework is available at www.nist.gov/baldrige/.)

Over three decades, Congress has twice passed legislation enabling expansion of Baldrige Award eligibility to U.S. organizations beyond for-profit businesses: first to health care and education organizations and then to nonprofits, including government organizations at federal, state and local levels.

Since 2007, four government organizations have demonstrated the relevance and performance-related benefits of using the framework and earning Baldrige Awards. Two of those organizations are subunits of federal government organizations, the U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center and VA Cooperative Studies Program Clinical Research Pharmacy Coordinating Center.

Evaluator and Ambassador of Excellence

ICS Director Eric Malloy arrived to the Office of Finance and Planning in 2010. He has been applying his extensive knowledge of the Baldrige framework and assessment process to enhance NCA’s methods of evaluating compliance and performance in its component organizations. Malloy is a seasoned Baldrige examiner with alumni status. Alumni

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Doing Evidence Right

By Shelley Metzenbaum and Steven Kelman

We should not use program evaluations primarily to define programs as “effective” or “ineffective,” but to help find ways to improve.

Many “what works clearinghouses” and efforts to facilitate the search for evidence-based programs eligible for government funding suffer from oversimplified findings. They use average results to designate programs as effective, promising, ineffective or inconclusive. Yet a program or practice often is neither fully “effective” nor “ineffective;” paying attention to variations in performance is important. When that is the case (which it is most of the time), it is essential to consider more closely for whom, where and when the treatment worked or not, especially when government spending is restricted to evidence-based practices.

One reason a program may not be “effective” or “ineffective” is because, as renowned statistician Dick Light pointed out many years ago, a “program” may have tens or even hundreds of different design features, some of which may be effective and others ineffective. If we simply call something “job training” without attending to its many component parts and their potential permutations and combinations, conclusions about program effectiveness may well be meaningless. To learn something, we need to understand which design features are or are not associated with success.

A second reason is that some programs may show beneficial effects for only a subset of the population. A program might be ineffective for most people but effective for a few. Paying attention to the one person who benefitted from an otherwise failed drug trial led to the discovery of a class of patients who responded well to an “ineffective” drug, The New York Times explained in a June 2017 story about pembrolizumab, now marketed as Keytruda.

“The drug is the happy result of a failed RCT. A nearly identical drug was given to 33 colon cancer patients, and just one showed any response—but his cancer vanished altogether,” according to the article. Because at least one doctor took the time to follow up on the patient for whom the otherwise ineffective treatment worked to detect characteristics that might explain his improvement, the doctor found others with tumors whom the drug might help, ran a trial on a sample of those and developed a drug likely to help 60,000 people annually in the United States alone.

Conversely, a program may be effective for the majority of people, organizations, places or situations but not for everyone. As Anthony Bryk pointed out, Reading Recovery, the first grade literacy program, is effective for most children but not for a substantial number. By trying to decipher the characteristics of the children for whom a program does not work, policymakers can decide whether those not helped should be a priority and, if so, follow up with additional testing to find practices that do work for them.
An evaluation should be seen as a waystation on a journey to performance improvement, not the last stop. That programs often are not merely "effective" or "ineffective" raises a crucial feature of doing evidence right. Evaluations normally try to determine whether a program worked and should be replicated, but typically do not discuss how the program can be improved. Too often, evaluation results are the end point of the journey, followed only by a decision to fund or defund. We believe that a crucial part of doing evidence right is to see most evaluations, particularly for important programs, as a waystation along a journey to performance improvement. More often, evaluations should adopt an iterative learning approach to evidence-based government—not stopping the program if the RCT results are favorable for most, but rather beginning there and tweaking the program's ingredients and practices to find ways to improve over time. Even when a proven set of practices is known, government should continue to test adjustments, measure frequently and find ways to enhance performance on multiple dimensions, not just on outcomes but on other dimensions of performance like people's experience with government and unwanted side effects.

This way of thinking moves the evaluation-oriented tradition of evidence-based government closer to the tradition of performance measurement and management, where one measures performance on objectives, detects shortcomings and tries alternatives to current practice to see if they work better, rather than simply deciding to stop the program because it is ineffective.

To take an iterative, learning approach towards evidence-based government, we must move beyond using evidence only from randomized controlled trials. In the performance measurement and management tradition, one typically uses data to inform goal-setting and then tests alternative ways to deal with a problem using methods considerably less rigorous than an RCT. For example, you can use convenience samples more readily available to real-life organizations and with considerably smaller sample sizes. These methods have the virtue of providing fast feedback. Further, if the alternative to the less rigorous approach in the performance measurement tradition is not an RCT but no testing at all, we should be careful not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Evidence from analyzing performance measures is a good way to start the performance improvement journey without a full-blown RCT. Analytics applied to performance and other data to find trends, variations in patterns across different subsets and positive and negative outliers, anomalies and relationships is a valuable non-RCT source of evidence. This analysis helps detect problems needing attention, find promising practices worth trying to replicate, inform priorities, detect root causes to try to influence and refine program design based on analytics. We have become increasingly aware of how the private sector analyzes "big data" to understand individuals' purchasing patterns, leading to increases in sales due to targeted marketing. Parts of government have begun analyzing big data to look for anomalous patterns that might point to fraud. There also is increased discussion and experience with predictive analytics in government, analyzing past trends to predict the results of various interventions and using other statistical methods to draw conclusions about those approaches to a problem worth focusing on.

Useful evidence comes in different shapes and sizes. Evidence-based advocates typically treat RCTs as the "gold standard" of evidence. They typically are relatively large, costly, lengthy and, as a consequence, rare. If we want to expand the scope of evidence-based government—and not the least if we want to adopt an iterative, learning approach that sees evaluations as a waystation in a journey of continuous improvement—we need to use not only performance analytics but also other forms of evidence that are quicker and less expensive to gather.

Many programs are learning to employ "rapid-cycle evaluations," essentially small-scale, quickly executed, iterative RCTs that test the impact of discrete changes in policy, management or practice, rather than evaluate an entire program to point ways to improve. This approach may be on the rise due to growing familiarity with agile IT and web design practices, such as A/B testing which uses random assignment principles to examine the impact of alternative web design features. Another form of a small-scale RCT: "Nudge" interventions to test alternative ways to achieve a variety of objectives, such as reducing hiring bias, increasing taxpayer compliance or boosting school attendance rates.

In addition to RCTs and performance analytics, role playing exercises like FEMA's tabletop exercises are another useful source of evidence, predicting how people are likely to act in different situations and problems that are likely to arise when responding to actual events while providing those involved the opportunity to practice, learn from experience and sort out future roles.
Defunding what does not work does not always make sense.
It is appealing and sometimes justified to defund programs that do not work. This is a strong reason to use evidence, especially to counteract political forces encouraging a failing status quo. Yet we should understand that if a government program does not work, the problem the program was intended to address likely still exists. If the problem itself is serious, we should be cautious about prematurely removing funding from programs that do not work before going through a performance improvement journey to try to locate new approaches, or evidence about positive outliers, that might produce improvement.

Evidence-based government is a good thing, and clearly better than the alternative. But, we should try to do evidence right to achieve the most learning and on-the-ground benefits with the fewest costs.

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examiners have served for at least six years as trained volunteers on the cross-sector teams that conduct assessments of award applicants’ performance against the criteria for performance excellence. Like every Baldrige examiner, he receives annual training prior to launch of the national award process each Summer.

When I talked to Malloy about his organization’s use of the Baldrige framework, he explained how it is embedded in ICS’ structure and key programs focused on improvement, compliance, internal controls and risk management. One is the Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI), a formal program led by ICS staff that deploys teams of trained reviewers from across NCA to review NCA cemeteries and service level offices.

Launched in 2004, OAI was redesigned last year, with Malloy leading the effort. The framework portion of the program is based on a facilitated discussion approach. Like Baldrige examiner teams, OAI review teams are composed of individuals from outside the sites they evaluate, trained by Malloy and his staff.

Last month, Malloy and other evaluation leads were involved in reviewing a main NCA cemetery with seven satellite cemeteries over the course of a week. The complex will receive a final report describing strengths and opportunities for improvement in its performance. Every year, Malloy’s office reviews all such assessments to identify national themes and foster continuous improvement.

Malloy reported that many of NCA’s operational measures align with the key drivers of customer satisfaction. These are cemetery appearance, customer service and access to information. Aligning customer needs and operational measures helps focus the workforce on providing excellent service to veterans and their families. As a result, NCA’s customer satisfaction scores are consistently high. On the American Customer Satisfaction Index, NCA has the highest score of any organization, public or private. Its most recent score was 96 percent.

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Performance Accountability, Evidence and Improvement: Bipartisan Reflections and Recommendations to the Next Administration

Shelley Metzenbaum and Robert J. Shea

PA TIMES is featuring memos published as part of Memos to National Leaders, a joint project of ASPA, the National Academy of Public Administration and George Mason University’s Schar School of Policy and Government. The memos, prepared to coincide with the new presidential administration in 2017, are designed to trigger broader innovation in policy formulation and execution across government. For more information, go to www.memostoleaders.org.

In the last few decades, we have learned a lot about what works and what does not in the quest to improve government performance. We have learned not only from the experience of the U.S. federal government, but also from that of state and local governments, the private sector and foreign governments. Based on those lessons and our experience as two former associate directors at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) responsible for federal performance measurement and management policy—one during the Obama administration and one during the George W. Bush administration—we offer a roadmap for the next administration. Rather than starting anew, we suggest building on the solid foundation that exists. At the same time, we urge avoidance of past missteps.

Overview
Government can and should benefit people’s lives. About this, we hope there is little debate. The questions are: Does it? Does government advance the beneficial impacts it pursues and does it do so with minimal unwanted side effects? Beyond that, does it do so in ways that are not only effective but also efficient, fair, understandable, reasonably predictable, courteous, honest and trusted? Moreover, does it apply the lessons of experience to find ways to improve?

Every government organization should strive to be effective and to continually improve on multiple dimensions. Government should employ practices that, when used wisely, have worked remarkably well:

1. Set outcomes-focused goals.

2. Collect and analyze performance information, both quantitative and qualitative.

3. Use data-rich reviews to identify what is working well and what needs attention, and decide strategy, action and knowledge gaps to fill.

4. Complement routinely collected data with independent, rigorous evaluations and other studies.

5. Use effective communication strategies for a wide variety of purposes aimed at a wide variety of stakeholders.

Common sense, backed by a robust body of evidence, calls for widespread government adoption of these performance improvement and evidence-based management practices. Failure to use these
five practices leads to aimless operations. It leaves government and its partners carrying out activities they hope will work without knowing whether they do. Moreover, it lacks the means to inform and encourage continual improvement once effective practices are identified.

Consider the alternative: government unclear about what it wants to accomplish; lacking objective means to gauge progress; failing to look for increasingly effective practices and emerging problems; introducing new programs, practices and technologies without assessing whether they work better than past ones; and failing to communicate government priorities, strategies, progress, problems and trade-offs in easy-to-find, easy-to-understand ways.

Experience and research show that unless government pairs these five practices with effective accountability and motivational mechanisms, it can easily lead to a culture of compliance, fear or even falsification. Government leaders (in both the executive and legislative branches) often call for linking measures and rewards or penalties (monetary or otherwise), often despite experience suggesting exercising great caution before embracing explicit (sometimes implicit) pay-for-performance regimes (for individuals or for organizations). Ill-structured incentive systems backfire, triggering such dysfunctional responses as measurement manipulation; adoption of timid targets that impede discovery and undermine trust; fear of testing and assessing new practices lest they fail; implosion of measurement systems and a compliance culture where the "scaffolding" of the performance and evidence-informed management framework impedes rather than encourages innovation and adaptation. Government can avoid many of these problems when it embraces a sixth practice along with the first five: well-structured incentives.

Our bottom line recommendation: Aggressively accelerate wide adoption of a performance and evidence-informed management agenda across and at every level of government. We specifically recommend:

- Keep it simple to support use, communication and improvement of performance.

Experience and Lessons Learned
Goal setting and measurement are hardly controversial. Many parts of government do it remarkably well, especially when Congress authorizes, requires and funds measurement and analysis in policy-specific laws. Too many parts of government, however, do not.

To spur greater adoption of effective performance management practices, the federal government adopted the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993. GPRA required federal agencies to set goals, measure and report progress, and conduct and use evaluations. Agencies were required to publish strategic plans, annual performance plans and annual performance reports. Strategic plans were expected to include information about strategies being used, resources needed to accomplish the strategies, key factors external to an agency that could significantly affect achieving goals, evaluations used to set goals and objectives and a schedule of future evaluations.

As the Clinton administration entered its second term, most federal agencies had begun producing five-year strategic plans, annual performance plans and annual performance reports. Few, however, used goals to communicate priorities, coordinate across organizations or tap the inspirational value of a specific, challenging goal. While most agencies included measures in their annual performance reports, few analyzed the data to find ways to improve. Nor did many use evaluation findings to set or revise goals as the law required, commission other studies to inform priority-setting and treatment design, or lay out a schedule for future evaluations and other studies.

The Bush administration attempted to drive greater use of performance information—goals, measurement and evaluations—in decisionmaking. In addition to focusing agency leadership on a regular review of a limited set of management objectives and trying to integrate performance with personnel management, the Bush management agenda incorporated a tool to produce program performance information with the intent that it be used in budget decisionmaking. Called the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), agency officials and OMB budget examiners used the tool to assess whether government programs were working. They assessed the quality of program design and outcome changes. The results—both the Bush administration scorecard tracking adoption of mandated management practices as well as the PART ratings and the evidence on which they were based—were made available on the first government-wide website facilitating access to federal agency
performance information, ExpectMore.gov. Site visitors could sort PART reviews by agency and program type, enabling programs of similar types to benchmark and learn from each other. The Bush administration also issued an executive order requiring every agency to name a senior executive as its performance improvement officer (PIO). PIOs were charged with coordinating the agency’s performance management activities and served on the Performance Improvement Council (PIC).

PART asked many of the right questions, but disagreements invariably arose. Programs were sometimes scored poorly for problems beyond an agency’s control. Alternatively, no mechanism existed to motivate high scoring programs to continue to improve. Sometimes, emphasis was improperly placed on individual programs when program objectives required cross-program attention. Also, a five-year review cycle for all but low rated programs did not exactly motivate action. Perhaps the biggest problem was that agencies paid more attention to getting a good score or meeting a higher percentage of targets than to making meaningful performance improvements.

In short, while progress was made, a strong compliance culture persisted. Agencies’ attention was directed to whether their programs were rated as successful or unsuccessful and to getting to green on the management scorecards, while a proliferation of goals and measurement in many agencies often rendered them meaningless. PIOs assumed most of the responsibility for satisfying the letter of the law, which exacerbated the problem, while program managers too often failed to engage and viewed measurement and evaluation as irritating burdens rather than helpful tools.

The Obama administration sought to address shortcomings in the Clinton and Bush initiatives, increasing attention to using performance information to find ways to improve on multiple dimensions, including effectiveness and efficiency. It also sought to communicate goals, trends, strategies and planned actions to the public and other parts of government in ways that made them easier to find and understand, that supported collaboration and learning across organizational boundaries, and that motivated continual improvement.

Congress codified many of the best elements of Bush and Obama performance management practices in the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010. In addition to codifying the position of PIO and the role of the PIC, the act required several new practices. Agencies were required to set a small number of ambitious priority goals they would try to accomplish within two years. These goals do not replace the fuller set of departments’ and agencies’ longer term strategic goals and annual performance objectives; rather, they complement them and underscore the need for priority setting and immediate and continuing action. In addition, the law instructs the OMB director, coordinating across government, to set a small number of cross-agency priority goals, some mission focused and some for significant management issues.

Simultaneously, OMB directed agencies to increase the volume of high quality evaluations, both retrospective and prospective, to ferret out whether measured changes in outcomes would likely have been different in the absence of government action or if future adjustments to program design would likely accomplish more with the same or a lower budget.

In addition to changing some practices, the law introduced slight shifts in timing to bring the goals, measurements and evaluations to life. The timing for setting strategic goals and objectives was aligned to Presidential elections, giving new administrations a chance to set new priorities.

Another significant change is the designation of deputy secretaries (or their equivalent) as chief operating officers (COOs), charged with running progress reviews on agency priority goals at least every quarter. These reviews are intended to stimulate analysis and discussion of performance information and other evidence to gauge progress, inform priorities and action design, and encourage discovery of increasingly effective, cost-effective actions. A number of deputy secretaries expanded the scope of these quarterly reviews beyond Cabinet-level priority goals to discuss and brainstorm progress on component and cross-component goals, as well. PIOs are given expanded roles and responsibilities, including supporting the COO in preparation for and follow up on the data-rich quarterly progress and annual strategic reviews.

Goal leaders accountable for managing progress on each priority goal, including cross-agency goals, are publicly identified on a new central performance reporting website, Performance.gov. They are required to report progress on priority goals on the site quarterly and explain not only how well they are doing but also what adjustments are being made to previously announced planned actions, whether because of problems or higher-than-expected rates of progress.

The Modernization Act, and the Obama administration in implementing it, also increased emphasis on building the capacity of and using the PIC, PIC sub-groups and evaluation offices to function as continuous learning and improvement networks. OMB and the PIC designed and provided
training on evolving practices, reaching across government to help agencies with effective goal setting, strategic reviews and evaluation methods. A behavioral insights office helped parts of government design, test, assess and adjust iterative, measured trials to find increasingly effective, cost-effective government practices. To build capacity and more fully engage people in program offices and other parts of agencies, the Obama administration created two additional learning-and-improvement networks during its second term: the Leaders Delivery Network and the White House Leadership Development Fellows. In FY2016, Congress authorized appropriated funds to be reallocated from across government to support work on cross-agency priority goals.

The Obama administration adjusted accountability expectations to recognize that, by definition, stretch targets that stimulate innovation cannot all be met. Testing, assessing and adjusting to discover better practices necessarily will involve failed trials. To address this, the administration encouraged applying accountability expectations attributed to William Bratton, the New York City police commissioner who established CompStat, the frequent data-rich meetings to find better ways to reduce crime in New York City. “No one got in trouble if the crime rate went up,” Bratton’s right-hand man, Jack Maple, explained. “Trouble arose only if the commanders didn’t know why the numbers were up or didn’t have a plan to address the problems.”

To reinforce the notion that accountability was not about meeting targets but instead about making progress at a good pace—based on available knowledge—and to inform goal setting, strategy selection, agency action and budget decisions, agencies were required to conduct annual strategic reviews of progress related to every agency strategic objective. These reviews included the subsequent OMB review, identifying for the public and Congress which objectives show noteworthy progress, which objectives face significant challenge, and, furthermore, what the agency plans to do about it. Agencies report their strategies, progress, problems and adjustment plans for every agency strategic objective annually on Performance.gov.

How well are these changes working? According to a survey conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in late 2012 and early 2013, great progress has been made using agency and cross-agency priority goals, especially in agencies that embraced established principles of well-run, data-rich reviews.

Performance Trends for Selected Priority Goals and Strategic Objectives

Improve patient safety. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) chose improving patient safety as a priority goal to reduce the problem that over 1 million health care-associated infections (HAI) were occurring every year, affecting one in 25 hospitalized patients and costing tens of thousands of lives while adding large costs to the health care system. It identified catheter-associated urinary tract infections as among the most common and preventable HAI. With leadership by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, HHS launched the Partnership for Patients to recruit 1,000 hospitals and 1,600 hospital units across the United States willing to test a comprehensive unit-based safety program. Preliminary results are good. Fourteen months after more than 700 participating organizations initiated recommended safety practices, the rates fell 13.5 percent, with a 23.4 percent relative reduction in non-ICUs and a 5.9 percent reduction in ICUs.

Reduce patent processing times. Patents advance economic prosperity so processing them in a quality and timely manner directly affects the nation’s economic health. To reduce the patent backlog, the U.S. Department of Commerce made patent timeliness and quality a priority goal. The Patent and Trade Organization has reduced the patent application backlog from a high of more than 764,000 in January 2009 to just over 558,000 in October 2015, a 27 percent reduction. Time for first action on an application (first-action pendency) decreased by 8.8 months and total pendency, the time from filing until an application is either issued as a patent or abandoned, fell by eight months between the end of FY2009 and the end of October 2015. From an all-time high near 112,000 in February 2013, the backlog of requests for continued examination dropped 68.2 percent. These improvements occurred despite unexpected growth in the number of filings, projected to be about one percent but actually exceeding five.

Improve the accuracy and timeliness of veterans’ disability benefit claims. The Department of Veterans Affairs aims to provide disability benefits to eligible veterans in a timely, accurate and compassionate manner. From a peak backlog in March 2013 of more than 610,000 backlogged claims, the claims backlog (defined as claims pending above 125 days) declined to under 72,000, an 88.3 percent drop. Total claims inventory dropped 58.9 percent from the peak of 883,930 in July 2012 to 363,034 in September 2015, with claim-based accuracy at 89 percent and issue-based accuracy at 96 percent.
Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by increasing federal agency energy efficiency and renewable energy consumption. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent from a 2008 baseline, a cross-agency priority goal was set to increase federal government electricity consumption from renewable sources to 30 percent by 2025 and improve energy efficiency at federal facilities, including $4 billion in energy performance contracts awarded by the end of 2016. By the end of FY2015, direct GHG emissions declined 17.6 percent and estimated indirect GHG emissions decreased 17.5 percent from a FY2008 baseline; and renewable electricity reached a level of 8.3 percent of total electricity use; As of June 2016, agencies had awarded performance contracts valued at $3.171 billion with agency identified projects totaling $6.39 billion.

Progress was made on other goals. Agricultural exports and federal technology transfer climbed. More than 100,000 miles of broadband were installed in low served areas, serving more than 700,000 new households and businesses; 4.4 million rural borrowers/subscribers received new or improved electric services; and 2.2 million more rural residents have access to clean drinking water and better waste water disposal, some for the first time. Homelessness is down from 2010: 36 percent for veterans, 22 percent for individuals, and 19 percent for families. Progress on a few priority goals has been more challenging—for example, reducing foodborne Salmonella illnesses.

At the same time, a compliance attitude and mindless measurement clearly persist in many places. GAO’s 2013 survey found that federal managers not working on priority goals did not report an increase in their use of performance information to make decisions. This inattention may be due, in part, to the absence of constructive external drivers similar to the pressure of competition that keeps most private companies continually looking for better ways to do business. Few in Congress or the media, for example, pay attention to agency goals, strategies and progress. However, whether the annual strategic reviews that began in 2015 increase the span and depth of agency interest in and use of performance information beyond priority goals has not yet been assessed.

Where to from Here?

Goal-setting, progress measurement and using data and evidence to figure out how to do better! It sounds like motherhood and apple pie. Yet these practices are easier said than done. Hard decisions about what the goals should be—inform by data, values, politics and competing objectives—must be made. Skill must be exercised to frame goals in resonant, relevant, motivating and actionable ways.

Developing meaningful, practical and affordable measurements that capture not only progress on objectives but also warn of unwanted side effects can be hard, not to mention objective evaluation. When goals are poorly framed or ambiguous, when measurements do not make sense or when evaluations are poorly designed or naively applied, enormous frustration arises. Without good performance information, government runs a high risk of acting without knowing what its actions accomplish or having the means to objectively learn how to do better.

Our bottom line recommendation: Aggressively accelerate wide adoption of an outcomes-emphasizing, data-informed, evidence-based management agenda across and at every level of government. The worst thing the next administration could do is start from scratch. To make even more progress and address known gaps, we offer the following five recommendations:

1. Push more aggressively for adoption of the current outcomes-focused performance improvement framework across government.

   • Continue and expand uptake of the six practices listed at the beginning of this memo across every aspect of government and with stakeholders. Expand Cabinet-level quarterly reviews on priority goals to include discussion of progress on component and cross-component goals and require major components across the federal government—agencies, bureaus, large field offices—to begin using these six practices.

   • Better integrate efforts across program managers, performance improvement offices, program evaluators, strategic planners, futures forecasters, budget shops, grant and contract managers, data scientists and IT offices to set goals, measure relevant indicators and find ways to improve.

   • Continue agency and OMB annual strategic reviews to accelerate progress on all strategic objectives.

   • Increase use of rigorous, independent and relevant evaluations and other studies to improve the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of government programs and practices. Encourage more rapid testing, assessing and adjusting using sufficiently rigorous evaluation methods to allow practice to evolve as experience is gained and to adapt to different circumstances.

   • Build a continuous learning and improvement culture in federal grant programs, with the
federal government working with state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, other partners and stakeholders. Allow this cross-sector culture to discover and adopt increasingly effective, cost-effective and fair practices, supported by ready access to easily understood data, multi-stakeholder collaborations and well-structured incentives.

- Establish a performance management knowledge exchange network that enables the federal government, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, partners and stakeholders to adopt most effective outcomes-focused performance and evidence-based management practices to address shared problems and pursue opportunities.

2. Expand and enhance the collection, analysis, visualization and dissemination of performance information to make it more useful to more people.

- Improve the accessibility, transparency and usefulness of Performance.gov as a learning, benchmarking, coordination, motivational, improvement and accountability tool. Post data in structured formats and make it easier to find relevant data and evaluations, as well as promising practices worth testing in other locations that, if successful, warrant promoting for broader adoption.

- Make it easier to discern performance trends with “spark lines” and visualization tools, especially with social indicators (currently posted in the Analytical Perspectives of the President’s Budget) and agency and cross-agency goals. Create links to relevant data sets, evaluations and studies. Create and share “learning agendas” for agencies and operating units indicating plans for evaluations, studies and data improvement.

- Enable sorting across goals by program type (e.g., credit, competitive grants, benefit processing, regulatory), geographic area and demographic characteristics to facilitate cross-agency learning and collaboration, tapping evolving digital technologies.

- Test, assess and adjust to find better ways to communicate results and strengthen accountability, inform decisionmaking, stimulate discovery and encourage innovation. Test the use of online crowd-sourcing and feedback via Performance.gov and other platforms to get constructive feedback on goals, measures, evidence and strategies. Test the use of Performance.gov and complementary online platforms to identify and support collaboration with others working to advance the same goals and learn from others’ experience. Test to find ways to present and share the information that aids individual and delivery partner decisions in a timely manner.

- Strengthen the credibility of federal performance information and the ability to learn from experience by showing trend lines for longer periods on Performance.gov, and by re-posting and linking to archived information, including earlier rounds of priority goals and information from ExpectMore.gov (with PART scores for 1,000 programs).

- Tap mobile and other technologies that make it less costly and more feasible to collect, analyze, disseminate and visualize information to make data and information (e.g., photographs) more useful to more people across the policy-making and delivery chain.

3. Strengthen capacity and understanding.

- Appoint agency deputies/COOs and other political appointees with a strong capacity and commitment to use data and other evidence to improve performance.

- Give PIOs adequate resources to support deputies/COOs and increase resources to enable the PIC to provide more support to agencies; where PIOs have other duties, ensure there is a strong deputy PIO and team devoted to analyzing data and evidence and structuring reviews and other conversations driving continual improvement.

- Strengthen capacity to conduct studies that inform priority setting and program design, including futures analysis, scenario testing, role-playing, epidemiology-like incident analyses, simulations and surveys. Build appreciation that strategic planning is not just about continuing current approaches, but looking for and analyzing alternatives. Integrate and strengthen government capacity to tap the vast array of analytic tools (e.g., outlier and anomaly identification, pattern and relationship detection, quality control) that can be used to inform priorities, design agency practices and identify causal factors government may be able to influence.

- Ensure every department has a robust evaluation and data analytics capacity that works with agency leadership and program offices to implement a strategic, rigorous retrospective and prospective evaluation program. Ensure that evaluation and analytics
teams work with the PIO team to conduct successful quarterly performance and annual strategic reviews and to conduct ad hoc “deep dives” to find root causes of performance shortfalls or choose among competing problems and opportunities.

- Regularly get feedback and develop and test ideas to improve outcomes, cost-effectiveness, fairness and understanding from those on agency front lines and working in delivery partners.
- Especially in light of the transparency requirements under the DATA Act, work with IT, contract and grant offices to structure data systems and reporting requirements that will enable analytics to be more useful to a wider variety of people, including the central office, the field, delivery partners and researchers. Incorporate user-centered design principles into agency programs, practices and information management.
- Build or support continuous learning networks across the delivery chain that share and

**Eight Questions to Drive Performance Improvement**

1. **What problem are we trying to solve?**
   - Why and how important is this problem or opportunity compared to others we could pursue?

2. **What strategies and tactics should we use and why?**
   - What have others or we done in the past and how well did it work? What is the relevant past performance, past evaluations, peer performance?
   - What are the key drivers/causal factors we can influence? What cultural constraints do we need to consider?

3. **How will we know if we are making progress and making it fast enough?**
   - What are we measuring regularly and is it meaningful, measurable and moveable? Do we use that information and how does it help us make better decisions? Are there other measures we should be collecting and any we could drop?
   - Who is analyzing the data, who gets the analysis and what are we learning? Is it complete and accurate enough to be reliable? Can we identify the strongest performers and the weakest so we can learn from the former and help the latter?

4. **What other information do we have that should inform our priorities and program design? What information should we start to gather?**
   - What additional data or studies are needed? What does our data and evaluation plan look like? Does it need updating?
   - What does it cost to implement our programs and achieve our goals? If we do not know, how can we better estimate the cost? What new approaches can we test to reduce costs without compromising impact?

5. **Do we have the right people in the discussions about the data and other evidence to find ways to improve?**

6. **How are we helping the field and our delivery partners use data and evaluations to find ways to improve?**

7. **What training is needed and for whom? Where should our priorities be?**

8. **How do we motivate people to want to look for and find ways to improve and hold them accountable for doing that, not fearful or just compliant with planning, evaluation and reporting requirements?**
analyze data to find and apply lessons learned and collaborate on iterative testing and assessment to find better practices.

- Expand knowledge of performance/evidence-based management practices by offering officials and others in the delivery chain relevant courses and learning materials.

4. Develop, test and adopt effective accountability mechanisms.

- Embrace and promote the Bratton accountability principle, while making sure to measure and manage not only primary objectives but also unwanted side effects. Communicate the expectation that failed trials and missed stretch targets are expected, not a problem, provided the trials are well-designed, targets ambitious and progress quickly assessed and adjusted. Publicize guidance language that conveys the message across government, preferably with a similar message coming from Congress.

- Continually test, assess, adjust and adopt such increasingly effective motivational mechanisms as peer benchmarking, transparency, constructive feedback, contests, challenges and well-structured incentives that encourage continuous improvement. Identify ineffective practices. Broadly communicate and encourage uptake of evidence about effective and ineffective motivational mechanisms.

- Appoint leaders to the OMB who are committed to driving the development, adoption, and implementation of cross-agency priority goals; identify a lead person in each of the White House policy councils and the White House Chief of Staff’s office to work on agency and cross-agency priority goals. Test designating each OMB Resource Management Office Program associate director as a goal leader responsible for managing progress on a mission-focused cross-agency priority goal.

- Collaborate with Congress more closely at every stage of the performance management process to facilitate debate about the performance of programs and successful adoption of the performance management framework. Urge agencies to collaborate with congressional authorizing and appropriation committees and incorporate feedback on agency goals and objectives, strategies, why they were chosen, progress and challenges.

- Create a culture that encourages employees to raise problems or pain points experienced by those interacting with the government, without fear of punishment.

5. Keep it simple to support use, communication and improvement of performance.

- Implement ideas with understood tools, not as a framework checklist. We offer eight sets of questions and urge new appointees and career officials to use them in approaching their work to accelerate adoption of the six practices and improve government’s performance. (See previous page.)

In the last several decades, we have learned a lot about what works and what does not in the quest to improve government performance. Not only do we have the experiences of the federal government, but also of state and local governments, the private sector and foreign governments. These insights offer a roadmap for a new administration to ensure we build on the lessons of the past rather than start anew. If our new leaders, both appointees and career, take our advice, it will accelerate adoption of outcomes, improving, data-informed, evidence-based management practices across every level of government and in multiple dimensions. Results on the ground should improve, too.

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Optimized Community Policing through Locational Analytics

By Roger Chin and Jake Campbell

In an increasingly data-centric society, analytics integration has become common in public organizations. As agencies learn to integrate data into their operations, they must have a clear strategy to maximize their efforts; data collection alone does not adhere to analytical best practices. Data must be acquired and integrated into a system of continuous process improvement in which the data analysis shapes decisionmaking and provides a basis for reevaluating existing policy. Yet organizations often face pitfalls when collecting data without analysis, or when the analysis does not influence and guide organizational strategies and policies. A coherent analytical operation can maximize effectiveness and improve the way organizations achieve target outcomes. Geographic information systems (GIS) and the value associated with their integration provide a path forward.

General Shifts in Policing
The concept of “traditional policing” has evolved in recent decades. Previously, officers conducted foot patrols and fielded service calls from street-side call boxes. Now, they use cars equipped with 300 horsepower and advanced computers. They are perceived as much more than enforcers of the law, but as social workers, therapists, mediators, community leaders, role models and public relations specialists. These increasing obligations amid declining budgets constantly challenge officials to find innovative solutions. Indeed, some crime prevention programs, though designed to enhance safety, have drawn adverse public reaction. One way to deter crimes is through proactive tactics in high risk areas, rather than training officers to merely react to illegal activities.

Locational Analytics for Modern Policing
The use of spatial and temporal data in crime analysis has set a new standard for law enforcement agencies. GIS hardware and software support the collection and analysis of quantitative, qualitative and spatial data for location integrated analytics. When used in a continuous process improvement system, GIS can help agencies reach targeted outcomes and maximize effectiveness. To better understand this comprehensive, iterative approach, we apply the model to community policing. This system can help law enforcement analytics alleviate contention between officers and the communities they serve, deter crime and improve accountability and transparency.

Combined with quantitative and qualitative data, locational analytics allows modern policing to help the public report problems and officers to respond. Law enforcement agencies that actively collect crime data must take similar approaches toward community satisfaction surveys. GIS can map the locational origins and distribution of quantitative crime data and incorporate qualitative citizen feedback on police services. The resulting assessment can inform decisionmaking to determine high crime and low favorability neighborhoods where public satisfaction with police services needs improvement. The assessment can influence resource allocation, allow officers to be a proactive presence in high crime areas and help to deter crime.

The continuous process improvement model can map community policing efforts, and analysis of new data can create an ongoing cycle of crime reduction and increased cordial relations with the public by redirecting efforts and retargeting communities. Locational analytics can determine the optimal locations for outreach events—churches, schools, community centers or other sites—that coincide with high crime areas where officers already seek a proactive presence. Ideally, their presence may help deter crime by demonstrating that a particular area is not without enforcement, while simultaneously improving relations, engaging the public and demonstrating that specific neighborhoods are not neglected.
When an organization chooses to become data driven, it must realign its workforce, corporate culture and interpretation of its mission in support of the change. Employees must learn new databases and time management skills, and eventually generate data-based results. They also must reorient their beliefs about their work product and learn to see the organization’s mission differently.

Transformational managers must choose whether to dictate these changes to workers or involve them in the data program design. Top-down approaches may be more efficient under time pressures and more realistic in high-turnover workforces. Yet they could backfire if they send staff for the exits. Bottom-up approaches can generate buy-in from talented employees as the process simultaneously builds their leadership, innovation and ownership for their work product.

Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) implemented two data-driven quality assurance (QA) programs for social services to low-income populations—a top-down approach in 2013 and a bottom-up one in 2016. A nonprofit housing developer, SAHA provides affordable homes with social services to 2,600 senior residents and 900 low-income families. It employs 30 resource and referral specialists—“service coordinators”—who find community resources to support seniors aging in place and families with retaining housing and meeting employment and educational goals.

The Top-Down Experience
SAHA management designed and unveiled a quality assurance (QA) program for senior service coordination in 2013. New department-wide standards required staff timeliness in completing the activities of daily living (ADL) assessment and monitoring participation in building activities. Managers began to use the data to focus greater effort on seniors experiencing aging-related changes. SAHA believed many seniors avoided or refused support due to mental health, memory, linguistic or cultural challenges, but actually could benefit from that support the most. QA data quantified the regular, relationship building contacts that service coordinators made with reluctant and isolated seniors.

Anticipating turnover risk, SAHA provided a six-month retraining and adjustment period for staff to understand the program’s rationale and standards and to prioritize regular data entry in their schedules. Management hosted group and individual retraining sessions and provided QA reports for information only as real-world practice. Following this period, staff received quarterly QA reports and every employee, including the department director, had a data goal for his or her annual performance evaluation. Service coordinators had data goals at the building level, managers had them for the team under their supervision and the director had a department-wide benchmark.

Service coordinators began to dedicate time to entering data daily, but the data also delivered measurable efficiencies in their work. Staff knew which seniors required the most attention due to hospitalizations, unresolved referrals, frailty or time since the last contact. The QA program increased service engagement from 90.6 percent in 2012 to 99.5 percent of residents in 2017; median resident contacts per month increased by 32 percent.

Through this period, SAHA retained nearly all 30 staff, with only two departures related to the data program. Some staff showed morale concerns and frustration with management’s attempt to control the program, but overall department satisfaction on the employee survey remained high.
The QA project simultaneously brought more hard-to-reach residents into services and increased the frequency that all residents used the program.

The Bottom-Up Experience
Three years later, SAHA took a bottom-up approach to QA for family services. SAHA's data management culture and skill had transformed since the 2013 implementation and management decided to broaden involvement to generate buy-in and improve the program. A working group of 10 direct service staff agreed on family program goals and used them to build a QA program design. Staff tested the guidelines quarterly and reconvened over their performance reports for feedback and revision. No formal performance evaluation ensued; periodic report cards were for staff information only.

The bottom-up approach was well suited to family services as staff need more discretion and flexibility for providing families a wider range of programs and referrals compared to senior communities. Some heads of households need income and employment support; others only want referrals to youth programs, savings tools, recreation, health services or scholarship opportunities. Many families prefer targeted, less frequent contact because they work multiple jobs and provide care to multiple generations.

The bottom-up program is too recent to evaluate turnover impacts and success, but SAHA already detects positive staff morale. Without a high-pressure data accountability regime, service coordinators report new understanding and enjoyment of data and quicker resolution of errors and inconsistencies through peer support. Staff believe more strongly in their purpose and outreach strategies, increasing their efficacy in gaining client participation. Staff now drive innovation around youth programming, expanding their activity offerings and recruiting greater volunteer support at their buildings.

Employee stewardship happens when employees take ownership of their work product and make excellence their goal, rather than perform to top-down management objectives. SAHA’s bottom-up approach recruited direct service staff in organizational transformation, while transforming the staff into stewards of data-driven change.

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The community policing example demonstrates an ideal application of locational analytics and its functions within a system of continuous process improvement. Rather than view their adoption as a hindrance or costly endeavor, administrators should consider the long-term benefits of improved strategic planning and resource allocation. In addition to improving accountability and transparency, locational analytics can support optimized strategies to increase officer productivity, raise morale, enhance safety, refine patrol patterns and improve community satisfaction.

Challenges to Overcome
Like all professions, modern policing must adapt to changing times and learn from experiences. Locational analytics must be executed so data analysis and policy review function as part of an ongoing cycle of strategic planning and assessment. The continuous process improvement procedure is not without challenges and is not a panacea for every problem that every law enforcement and public sector agency faces. GIS tools only work if the organization adopting them acknowledges the benefits to be gained. If a department focuses too much on rewarding officers for the number of arrests made, officers may be less inclined to use GIS insights to support community outreach efforts. Additionally, long-term implementation of GIS may help to curb costs, but agencies may face funding constraints, making it difficult to implement technology and hire analysts who can use and interpret the outputs. Yet in overcoming these challenges, locational analytics can help bring community policing and organizational operations into the 21st century.

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A Cross-Sector Review of Evidence-Based Decisionmaking

By J. Justin Woods and Meghan Morris Deyoe

Evidence-based decisionmaking uses rigorous data collection processes to inform policy development and program evaluation. Originally rooted in medical research, such proponents as the Laura and John Arnold Foundation advocate for extending it to most areas of social policy. The goal is relatively simple: Accelerate policymakers’ understanding of what does and does not work so successful policies can be replicated and ineffective ones modified or eliminated. Recent initiatives in government and educational settings—including Excelsior College, a nonprofit online college serving many adult learners in the government, military and medical fields—demonstrate the broad applicability of evidence-based decisionmaking.

Initiatives like the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking are not limited to the federal government arena. They assist government policymakers and managers at all levels of government. At the local level, the International City/County Management Association’s (ICMA) Center for Performance Management provides tools and models for municipal managers to collect data and evaluate progress toward communities’ goals, outlined through strategic planning processes. Its tools include survey instruments, recommended indicators and benchmarking with similar communities. The National League of Cities also advocates for municipal, state and federal policies evaluated through “evidence-based frameworks.” At the state level, the National Governors Association notes in several management briefs, that “what gets measured gets done,” and that to “be effective, governors must ensure their department and agency heads focus on evidence- and data-driven management.”

Outside government, higher education increasingly uses evidence-based decisionmaking in a wide array of areas, including overall institutional effectiveness, student affairs, institutional research, academic program review and learning outcomes assessment. The demand for accountability in higher education from the government and accrediting bodies calls for the use of data to make decisions surrounding institutional assessment and continuous improvement. Several groups, including the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, Association of American Colleges and Universities and American Association for Higher Education, are national proponents of using evidence-based decisionmaking to improve access and quality of higher education. A key component stems from outcomes assessment.

Here at Excelsior College’s School of Public Service (SPS), we use school-wide outcomes assessments by collecting multiple sources of data to obtain evidence of program outcome achievement, academic rigor and academic currency. Data is collected from curriculum reviews, financial analyses, program outcome assessments, student and faculty course evaluations and student success factors like completion rates, graduate satisfaction and employment rates. The data is triangulated to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the school, and drilled down to the program and course level to determine areas of strength and those needing improvement. Decisions related to school-wide or programmatic improvements in course design, instruction and curriculum are made based on the results from the data and from evidence-based best practices in higher education research. Consistent with national outcomes assessment initiatives, SPS uses direct and indirect measures to assess student learning in programmatic outcomes assessments. For example, it reviewed student performance data and a capstone course curriculum. Based on the data, it revised assignments and rubrics to improve and align program outcomes, achieving greater validity in assessing student attainment of program outcomes. Additionally, SPS collected evidence on the value of formative assessments, which guides our curriculum development, and decided to add course-embedded

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How does the Metropolitan Louisville Chapter engage with civil servants? Do you have a specific focus for your outreach—types of city managers or others whom you engage?

Our state has an active city/county managers association. The Chapter supports this organization by sponsoring a student with an interest in local government management to attend its conferences. In 2016, Kentucky managers and their counterparts in neighboring Tennessee held a conference; the Chapter sponsored two students to attend. We also have joint meetings and workshops with organizations of state employees. In 2013, for example, we held a budget workshop with the Kentucky Society of Certified Public Managers. Our keynote speaker was John Hicks, deputy state budget director and an ASPA member. The objective of our involvement with local and state employee organizations is to give students and members the chance to network and gain exposure to career paths they may not have previously considered.

Every Spring, we collect nominations from cities across Kentucky for our Chapter Distinguished Public Service Practitioner Award. Officers then evaluate the nominations and select the recipient. During Public Service Recognition Week, we present the award and usually make a small donation to a charity of the recipient's choice in his or her name. If appropriate, we then forward that recipient's packet to SECoPA for consideration for the regional award.

Directing Western Kentucky University's Center for Local Governments (CLG), do you see an intersection between your work and evidence-based decisionmaking at the local level?

Evidence-based decisionmaking is an important element of governance and I see a direct connection between it and the work I do for the CLG. The CLG provides training and conducts applied research projects. Often, we contract with municipalities to research an issue about which they may have a concern. We might conduct a survey and present the results to the governing body so they can make informed decisions based on empirical evidence. In that role, we use the data we collect and analyze to advise on community issues and help local governments find ways to take action. We advocate for informed policy choices to resolve issues. Examples are external salary and benefit comparison studies, pay-for-performance research and customer service surveys for a variety of municipal departments.

What was your first interaction with the Metropolitan Louisville Chapter and how did you become its president?

In 2009, I was asked by Leonard Bright, Chapter president at the time, to serve on the planning committee for that year’s SECoPA. The experience allowed me to get to know some of the other members from across the state and involve some of my graduate students who were researching the conference presentation process. It also enabled my students and me to network and make connections with others.

I have served as Chapter president since 2011. My longevity in the position provides the Chapter with continuity for handling its administrative and financial reporting responsibilities. Over the years, we have found that student members are enthused about serving the Chapter while in school, but often move on to other places as they begin their careers.

Talk about your Chapter’s recent activities and the level of engagement among its members.

Although our Chapter is small, we represent the entire state of Kentucky. So, we try to have four meetings each year. One is a planning meeting for the upcoming year and the other three include guest speakers or networking events.

In Fall 2017, we held a Chapter recruitment and networking event. Our guest speaker was Scott Wolfe, a Chapter officer, who spoke about his career path and current position as a staff auditor for the State of Tennessee. Scott Wolfe, Terryn Varney, Chad Phillips, Abdul Samad and Kennedy Prather are our Chapter officers and board members. The group encompasses state employees, nonprofits and higher education; each brings a different perspective to the Chapter leadership and reflects its overall makeup.
What do you want ASPA members in the Louisville area to know about your Chapter?
Our Chapter serves the entire state. Kentucky used to have two Chapters—one representing the Metro Louisville area and one the rest. We welcome anyone from any area of Kentucky to become involved and participate in our activities. We wholeheartedly welcome their ideas and input and I encourage them to reach out and contact me at Victoria.gordon@wku.edu.

What is your the most important benefit that you receive from ASPA?
Personally, the most important benefit is the connection with other people who have the same passion for public service that I do—those who see public service as a calling. I have made wonderful connections through the research I have presented at ASPA conferences and by serving on panels with others who do research in areas in which I am interested. And, of course, the relationships formed with other Chapter members is personally rewarding, as I watch young people advance in their public sector careers.

On a professional level, a conversation at a 2010 ASPA conference led me to write a book, *Maternity Leave: Policy and Practice*. My discussion with another attendee, including her story about not taking maternity leave because it might be “judged harshly” by her male colleagues, was appalling to me. This interaction set me on a path to conduct research into universities’ maternity leave policies. These were invaluable experiences.

What led you to public administration as a research area? Why local governments?
My background includes serving as a city clerk, county-wide housing department director and city administrator. As a former local government manager, my research interests continue to relate to issues important to local government management. They are regional community and economic development, local government finance and human resource management. These three areas are ones for which I had responsibility as a government employee, so I approach them from an experienced practitioner perspective. They also complement my regular teaching assignments. It is important to me to utilize my research in the classroom and make students know that I pursue research that has practical application to making a meaningful contribution to the field.

How do your research areas intersect with your work with the Metropolitan Louisville Chapter?
At the 2015 ASPA conference, I was interviewed by Julie Steenson and Kate Bender from the city manager’s office in Kansas City, Mo. They were looking to initiate policy changes regarding maternity and paternity leave for their employees. They found me both because of my research and as a Chapter officer. We were able to use the opportunity of attending the conference to meet personally so they could ask questions that would help them in their work. I am happy that they were successful in improving their policies for their city’s employees.

Victoria Gordon is professor in the Department of Political Science, MPA program, and serves as director of the Center for Local Governments at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green. She earned her Doctor of Public Administration from the University of Illinois—Springfield. Gordon’s research interests include municipal finance, regional economic development and human resources management. She can be reached at Victoria.gordon@wku.edu.

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assessments in each program to allow for more focused assessment of whether students attain their program outcomes prior to their capstones.

Evidence-based decisionmaking is more than a passing fad. There is growing recognition that managers, administrators and policymakers need reliable data on which to base management and policy decisions. When evidence-based decisionmaking is used in partnership with a strategic planning process, decision makers can make informed choices about the strategic direction of their organizations. This is an important part of both the SPS curriculum and operations at Excelsior College.

J. Justin Woods is faculty program director of the Master of Public Administration and Legal Studies programs in the School of Public Service at Excelsior College. He spent the first 15 years of his career as a municipal planning director and consultant, managing many performance management and strategic planning initiatives.

Meghan Morris Deyoe is executive director of assessment and program evaluation in the Schools of Health Sciences and Public Service at Excelsior College. She has researched and worked on evidence-based decisionmaking through grant and academic program evaluation and assessment for nine years.
The Future of Public Service: Advancing the Civil Society through Partnership Government

By Marc Holzer, Brenda Bond and Brandon Roberts

One hundred and thirty years ago, Woodrow Wilson published a seminal public administration article entitled, “The Study of Administration.” In combination with works by Max Weber and Frederick Winslow Taylor, Wilson redefined how our field was perceived and understood beyond its political science origins. Their work, as well as those that followed, emphasized a discipline grounded not only in the study of implementing policy, but also the necessary preparation of those following a call to serve.

It is this pursuit that has endured, a call that has become integral to society, not only in the United States, but abroad in societies with older histories. The ancient Athenian Oath still underscores values of service; it states, “We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many. We will revere and obey the City’s laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public’s sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.”

Themes of citizenship continue to pervade texts throughout history, but they have broadened to touch on compassion, purpose, ethics and quality of life. These themes have fueled this call in terms of serving and studying public administration.

The field has evolved, as have public service and government, since Wilson’s article. This evolution has brought about new ideas, challenges and paradoxes in the terms of positively impacting people’s lives. The practice and study of public administration continually incorporates new trends and policies to advance discussion and implementation of performance and public values. On May 31, 2018, Suffolk University’s Institute for Public Service, in partnership with ASPA, continues this progression by bringing together diverse stakeholders to explore the next frontier of public service: partnership government.

“The Future of Public Service: Advancing the Civil Society through Partnership Government” will focus on a broad vision of public service grounded in the principles of the civil society, the common good, service to others and social equity. Participants will explore the need for public service organizations and others to recognize and embrace the interdependence necessary to succeed as partners in an era of fundamental challenges to the role of government itself. This national symposium will offer the opportunity to broaden the meaning of “public service” to include not only government, but nonprofit, philanthropic, voluntary, business, media and legal communities, public sector unions and interdisciplinary partners in the arts and humanities.

Suffolk University’s public service faculty will lead a dialogue on the implications of recently initiated federal actions, as well as those at the local, state and regional levels. The conference will expand awareness of this “new frontier,” shaping the conversation and its direction in terms of research, practice, policymaking and collaboration, bringing together the professional and academic worlds to discuss partnership government and emerging trends, best practices and paradigms connected to the health of the civil society, social equity and interdependence of stakeholders. We invite practitioner and research presentations on the creation, implementation and/or experiences with partnership government, especially in areas driving growth in partnership government; collaboration and engagement beyond silos and sectors of organizations and the economy; and best practices and their impact on communities, engagement and public values.

We anticipate tracks in the following areas, but not limited to:

- transparency
- creating public value through philanthropy
- citizen empowerment and engagement
- public-private partnerships

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This year’s Midwest Public Affairs Conference (MPAC) was a special affair, a triple-billed event run concurrently with the Teaching Public Administration Conference and Social Equity Leadership Conference. I offer my sincere appreciation to the faculty and staff of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service at the University of Nebraska—Omaha for serving as excellent hosts. Thanks also to Alex Heckman and Ethel Williams, the conference chairs of our partner organizations; their coordination was vital to crafting this year’s successful program.

MPAC 2017 began on May 31 with early arrivals being treated to a catered reception at the Omaha DoubleTree hotel. On Thursday morning, buses shuttled participants to the University of Nebraska—Omaha campus, where Dean John Bartle and the conference presidents welcomed attendees prior to the morning sessions, which included the third annual local governance symposium, organized by MPAC Vice President Doug Ihrke (University of Wisconsin—Madison).

Thursday’s lunch and plenary session began with our annual awards program. This year’s winners included Nurgil Aitalieva, who received the Best Paper Award for the second time in three years; Xian Gao, who received the Best Student Paper Award; and Mary Hamilton, who our host committee selected for the second Community iMPACt Award for her distinguished career of service to Nebraska. Rosemary O’Leary enthralled the crowd by discussing her research on guerrilla government. Her engaging and entertaining keynote address recalled examples of administrators acting outside the traditional bounds of discretion to prevent actions that harmed the public interest.

The afternoon sessions provided diverse presentations on such subjects as municipal economics, civic engagement and organizational behavior. We welcomed a wonderful new addition to this year’s program: a meeting of Academic Women in Public Administration, whose sessions we plan to make a permanent fixture going forward. Afterward, attendees were shuttled to the Brickway Brewery and Distillery, which served as the launch point for the evening’s social gatherings.

Friday’s morning program included sessions on nonprofit affairs and public finance. Our lunch address was delivered by Terry Gerton, president and CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration. The conclusion of the afternoon sessions brought attendees back to the DoubleTree hotel for a closing reception, featuring a performance by the UNO Jazz Band.

Our affiliate publication, the Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs has had a banner year, increasing its publishing frequency to three issues per year. For the first time, we reviewed more than 100 manuscripts within a calendar year. The outlet has an active social media presence on Facebook and Twitter (@jpnaffairs), and its research is indexed in prominent databases. I appreciate the hard work that the journal’s editors and reviewers perform; they expend tremendous effort to ensure the outlet’s mission of delivering high quality “pracademic” research in an open-access format.

2017 is a transitional year for MPAC. Many original board members have served diligently for the past three or four years; we seek to continue our pattern of organizational growth as they rotate off. If you are interested in being a part of MPAC’s leadership, either as a trustee or advisory board member, please contact me at swklein@uic.edu for details. I would be happy to discuss the organization and demands of the positions.

MPAC 2018 will take place June 6-8, 2018 at the University of Illinois at Chicago, hosted by its College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. The theme is less of a central question and more of an exposition as the program centers around technology, with demonstrations of civic technology, data analytics and network science. We promise innovative content around which you can engage. Our call for proposals, logistics and accommodations details are available at midwestpac.org.

We remain active on our social media channels, particularly Twitter (@mpaconference), and are happy to repost your announcements if tagged. We are pleased to be an ASPA-affiliated conference and hope you will be a part of our efforts to engage members throughout the Midwest.

Stephen Kleinschmit is clinical assistant professor in the College of Urban Planning and Public Administration at University of Illinois—Chicago. He is the founder and president of MPAC. He can be reached at swklein@uic.edu.
Members in the News

Berman Receives PSPA Award of Distinction
The Philippine Society for Public Administration has awarded its Award of Distinction in Public Administration and Governance to Evan Berman. Alex Brillantes, the society’s immediate past president and former commissioner of higher education of the Philippines, announced the honor during the association’s annual conference in Manila. The award recognizes accomplishments in advancing the study and practice of public administration and good governance, not only in the Philippines but in the region. Berman, lauded as a “beacon of scholarship and recipient of the Fred Riggs Lifetime Award in International and Comparative Public Administration,” delivered a conference keynote address on “Innovations in Public Sector Reforms in Asia.”

Rosenbaum Honored for Strengthening Local Governance
During its 12th Congress, the Ibero-American Union of Municipalists (UIM) awarded the Enrique Rodríguez Municipalist Award, its highest honor, to ASPA Past President Allan Rosenbaum in recognition of his more than 25 years of work in building and strengthening local governments and promoting good governance throughout Latin America. Rosenbaum is the first North American to be honored by the UIM, a Spanish government-supported non-governmental organization. The award was presented by UIM President Sergio Uñac and General Secretary Federico Castillo Blanco in a special ceremony in Manizales, Colombia.

The award recognizes the work of individuals who have distinguished themselves by their lifetime efforts in the fields of municipalism, government decentralization, modernization of administration and public management, promotion of local development and strengthening of local governments. Rosenbaum has worked on these matters in almost every country of the hemisphere, either in conjunction with national or local governments or in leading projects supported by organizations like the World Bank and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Cox Honored for Efforts to Prepare Students for Government Careers
The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has awarded Raymond W. Cox its Stephen B. Sweeny Academic Award for making a significant contribution to the formal education of students pursuing careers in local government. The award was established in the name of the longtime director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Institute of Government.

Cox, a professor in the Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies at the University of Akron, brings to the classroom 40 years of teaching, research and practical experience. A consultant to local, state and federal agencies, and an adviser to state and local elected officials, Cox has authored more than 70 academic and professional publications, including five books. He also has written a dozen reports for government agencies.

Suffolk University Welcomes Holzer
ASPA Past President Marc Holzer has joined the Institute for Public Service at Suffolk University’s Sawyer Business School as visiting scholar. Most recently, Holzer was founding dean of the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University—Newark. In June, the Rutgers Board of Governors awarded him a prestigious university professorship in recognition of distinguished contributions to the university and to the field of public affairs and administration.

“We are thrilled to have Marc joining us this year. He is a distinguished and respected scholar who is committed to the discipline, to policy and practice. Our students, alumni and community partners will have the chance to meet with Marc, and we look forward to working on a number of research and practice efforts in the coming year,” said Brenda J. Bond, associate professor and chair of the Institute for Public Service.

At the institute, Holzer will collaborate with faculty on projects and publications focused on broader public service perspectives, as well as capacity building for performance measurement and improvement in the public and nonprofit sectors.
Klingner Receives Honorary Doctorate
ASPA Past President Don Klingner, distinguished professor at University of Colorado Colorado Springs, was awarded an honorary doctorate degree by the Institute Academy for Politico-Administrative Sciences and Future Studies this Fall in Toluca, Mexico. Klingner received the degree in recognition of more than 20 years of collaborative work with faculty members at numerous Mexican universities and the public administration institutes of the State of Mexico and the State of Quintana Roo.

In Memoriam: Kelvin Esiasa
Kelvin Esiasa, founding chairman and president of the Zambia Society for Public Administration, passed away on Nov. 27, 2017. A longtime ASPA member, Founders’ Fellow and stalwart supporter of Society activities, he was 35 years old.

As ASPA Past President Harvey White noted, Esiasa was known as “Mr. Public Administration” to colleagues, friends and stakeholders in that country and well beyond. White attended the recent funeral and burial services.

“I treasured Kelvin’s ability to see possibilities in every situation, as well as the personal relationship we had developed over the past five years,” White recalled. “He was a man of vision and tireless advocacy. I am truly grateful I was able to attend his funeral and participate in it.”

Those remembering Esiasa speak of his selflessness and determination, and his ability to unite people around the globe. With 13 years’ experience in education, marketing and public administration, he most recently served as assistant registrar at the Zambia Center for Accountancy Studies, in addition to his role as independent researcher, newspaper columnist, policy analyst, and business and education consultant. He was a board member of the Consortium for International Management, Policy and Development (CIMPAD), with which ASPA has partnered.

“Kelvin was a most esteemed member of ASPA and worked tirelessly to advance public service internationally,” remembers ASPA Immediate Past President Susan Gooden. “He was selected as an ASPA Founders’ Fellow in 2016, a competitive and highly respected recognition of his accomplishments. As president, I was honored to bestow upon him a presidential citation earlier this year for all of the support he provided to our organization. As a devoted member of ASPA and the founder of our counterpart in Zambia, Kelvin was a thought leader in the future of public administration internationally.”

Esiasa was especially well known and regarded for his leadership in CIMPAD, which advances knowledge in public administration, policy and management in African countries and the diaspora. As a board member, he used his skills and talents to link African and American public service professionals and advance public service progress across the continent.

“I have gotten to know Kelvin most closely through our service on the CIMPAD board,” ASPA Past President Steve Condry said. “He was a dedicated advocate for public service, a man of vision and ideals who worked tirelessly to bring that vision to life. His death has taken from us a young public administrator whose amazing future we can now only imagine. He will be missed tremendously.”

Correction:
The article, “Living Legends and Full Agency: Implications of Repealing the Combat Exclusion Policy,” published in PA TIMES’ Summer edition, incorrectly listed the percentage of women in the military force. The article quoted that in 1948, when the Women Armed Services Integration Act was passed, women could make up no more than 25 percent. It should have stated two percent. Also, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, mislabeled as a council, was created in 2009, not 2011.
John G. Stone III

Janice Lachance
President
American Society for Public Administration
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036

Dear President Lachance: September 23, 2017

I have glanced through, and begun reading articles in the Summer 2017 issue of ASPA’s PA Times. What an outstanding publication!

Its paper, printing, design, content organization, selection of articles, editing and content are all superior in quality.

I have been a member of ASPA since 1964, and have never seen an ASPA publication that approaches the quality of this PA Times.

Congratulations and gratitude to all who are responsible. You exemplify the values that ASPA stands for.

Sincerely,
• innovations in governance
• technology’s impact on public service

ASPA members and colleagues are invited to join us at Suffolk University, in partnership with ASPA, to build this dialogue on partnership government.

For more information on the Public Service Symposium, please contact Brandon Roberts, research assistant at Suffolk University’s Institute for Public Service, at broberts@su.suffolk.edu.

Brandon Roberts is research assistant and project manager for the Institute for Public Service at Suffolk University and Rutgers University—Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration. He has worked and interned with the Institute for Public Service, O’Neill and Associates, the Office of U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey and the U.S. State Department in Canberra, Australia. He can be reached at broberts@su.suffolk.edu.

Brenda Bond is associate professor and chair of the Institute for Public Service at Suffolk University. She studies the structures, processes and mechanisms that support the adoption and implementation of innovation and evidence-based practices. She can be reached at bbond@suffolk.edu.

Marc Holzer is distinguished professor at the Institute for Public Service at Suffolk University. Holzer is a prominent international leader in the field of public administration with areas of expertise focusing on public service, public performance and public management. He has been recognized by ASPA for his scholarship and his leadership in public administration, and is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. He can be reached at marcholzer1@gmail.com.

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