



SEVEN SMART STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE POLICY SUCCESS

The success of the new administration will rise or fall based on its ability to get things done. History has demonstrated that strong management can lead to political and policy success while mistakes can derail important initiatives, undermine the president's standing and erode public trust. To make government work, the next president should concentrate on recruiting and retaining smart, committed people to public service, equipping them to produce results that matter for citizens and having a management roadmap to help agencies carry out the president's policies. Here are seven areas of focus that will make a real difference.



Assume big problems require agencies to work together and then make it happen

None of today's critical challenges, from food safety to cybersecurity, can be solved by any single agency acting alone. Our government needs to operate as one organization, not as separate fiefdoms with overlapping jurisdiction and duplicative programs. The new administration should act quickly to identify the results it most wants to achieve, including the president's priorities, and build the cross-agency teams required to make the promises real. It has a running start through the Office of Management and Budget. This important organization at the center of government, when used effectively, can lay the foundation for policy success, coordinate across agencies and drive progress on the president's management agenda.



Pick great leaders, prepare them to succeed and hold them accountable

Good ideas need great people to implement them, with strong leaders to lead the way. Select political appointees with demonstrated success running large organizations, match them with the federal jobs that require managerial competence, equip them to operate in the unique federal environment and ensure they work closely with career executives to press forward with the administration's goals. All federal leaders, whether political appointees or career civil servants, should have performance plans that define success, measure progress toward goals and encourage accountability. Career executives play an important role connecting the administration's priorities with the workforce, and the president should meet with these leaders during the first three months in office, and periodically thereafter, to share these priorities and link the management agenda to their responsibilities.



Fix federal hiring, recruit millennials and support the workforce

The government faces complex demands requiring a specialized workforce, but the ability to attract top talent is handicapped by a broken hiring system. Agencies need to hire faster and better, requiring smarter recruitment practices and an overhaul of the obstacle-laden hiring process to bring skilled talent to public service. On average, it takes at least three times longer for federal agencies to hire employees than it does in the private sector. Creative solutions also are desperately needed to refresh a federal workforce in which only 6 percent of employees are under age 30 compared with 24 percent in the private sector. Once in government, employees need support and training. Less than half of federal employees report they are satisfied with the training they receive for their job, more than 14 points below the private sector.



Improve employee engagement and recognize good work

Top-performing organizations have highly engaged employees who are connected to their missions and customers. Set clear expectations that senior leaders will held accountable for improving employee satisfaction and commitment that will exceed private sector, and for creating a culture of recognition that includes awards and public acknowledgement of employees who excel. The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® rankings, based on an annual federal survey, are a valuable tool to gauge employee commitment and satisfaction on workplace issues, serve as an early warning sign of trouble and pinpoint areas in need of improvement.



Treat every American as the federal government's #1 customer

Citizens have seen tremendous customer service improvements such as online banking and retail shopping in many aspects of their lives, but government has struggled to keep pace. Indeed, the federal government ranks last behind nine major industries measured by the American Customer Satisfaction Index and is at its lowest point in nine years. Improvements require making citizens' needs the driving force behind the design and delivery of services. The administration should require agencies to collect and use customer data and feedback more effectively, track performance and compare the customer experience across agencies. Technology is a critical tool in making this possible.



Use data to improve decision-making and results

Top-performing organizations continuously find new ways to use data to produce better results. The great opportunity facing the next administration is to create an information-age government for the information age. The government has made important strides, including using data to run its program to reduce homelessness among veterans, and to improve patient safety by reducing preventable medical errors at the nation's hospitals. The new administration should expand use of evidence and data to analyze and improve how government is performing, and address barriers to using data more effectively.



Harness the power of innovation

Innovative organizations are comfortable taking smart risks by capitalizing on success and learning from failure. To create a culture of innovation, the new administration should encourage, not punish, prudent risk-taking and experimentation. Currently, less than four out of 10 career employees feel creativity and innovation are rewarded in their workplace. There is a broad agenda for action: bringing in talent from outside government for short-term rotations to spur new thinking; identifying successful ideas already happening in agencies and making sure they are spread across government; using crowdsourcing techniques and challenges; and creating incentives for employees to simplify core business processes and redesign customer service systems.

Visit the Partnership for Public Service website for detailed reports on many of these topics, including a management agenda for the new administration, civil service reform, enterprise government, the Senior Executive Service and improving citizen services. For information on employee engagement, visit the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® website.