NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION®

Enhancing Public Governance: An Agenda for 2021 and Beyond

Academy Election 2020 Project
Working Group:
Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, accountable, and transparent organizations. Chartered by Congress to provide nonpartisan expert advice, the Academy's unique feature is its over 950 Fellows—including former cabinet officers, Members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as prominent scholars, business executives, and career public administrators. The Academy helps the federal government address its critical management challenges through in-depth studies and analyses, advisory services and technical assistance, congressional testimony, forums and conferences, and online stakeholder engagement. Under contracts with government agencies, some of which are directed by Congress, as well as grants from private foundations, the Academy provides insights on key public management issues, as well as advisory services to government agencies.

ABOUT THE ELECTION 2020 PROJECT

The Academy formed a series of Working Groups of its Fellows to address Grand Challenges in Public Administration. These Groups were charged with producing one or more papers to advise the Administration in 2021 (whether reelected or newly elected) on the key near-time actions that should be taken to begin addressing Grand Challenges. This is a paper of the Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement Working Group. It includes these Fellows' recommendations for new opportunities to use greater collaborative governance in the United States. The Working Group will release a second paper on public engagement.

ENHANCING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE: AN AGENDA FOR 2021 AND BEYOND

A REPORT OF AN ACADEMY WORKING GROUP

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ELECTION 2020 WORKING GROUP:
DEVELOP NEW APPROACHES TO PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND
ENGAGEMENT

Working Group Members
John Kamensky, Chair
Lisa Blomgren Amsler
John Bryson
Anne Khademian
Carolyn Lukensmeyer
F. Stevens Redburn
Michelle Sager
Antoinette Samuel
Kathy Stack

THE CHALLENGE

The public's trust in government has been declining for decades. Restoring Americans' trust in democratic government will be a long-term effort. This paper, and a companion piece, offer an agenda to help change the way we govern and engage as citizens. We see this as foundational to longer-term efforts to restore trust in government that has been frayed by performance failures and can, at times, itself become a barrier to effective governance.

In addition to the long-term trend of declining trust in government, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted near-term weaknesses in our governance structure to work collaboratively across agencies, levels of government, and sectors of society. The literature shows that collaboration is founded, in part, on trust.[1] The pandemic's exposure of this weakness gives us further reason to try to reimagine the way the federal government and its partners can jointly address large-scale challenges.

One way to restore public trust would be to develop new, more effective governance approaches to the biggest and most complex problems facing our country and society. Recognizing the need to strengthen public governance and civic engagement, the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) identified "Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement" as one of its 12 Grand Challenges in Public Administration.

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[1] Chris Ansell and Alison Gash (2008). "Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice," Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 543-571. Retrieved at: .doi:10.1093/jopart/mum032

The Academy formed this Working Group to:

- Describe the current state of public governance and civic engagement activities in government, especially at the federal level, with examples of models, practices, and authorities in use;
- Define a vision and agenda for how government can be more collaborative in nature and catalyze greater public voice in democracy; and
- Propose specific actions to achieve this vision, beginning in 2021, that would include both short term, tactical steps and a longer-term roadmap for achieving results.

The Working Group believes that developing effective models of collaborative governance would make the country stronger and more resilient as a democracy. The challenge is to develop and test new models for how the federal government and its partners can effectively tackle complex societal problems that cut across the usual boundaries of jurisdiction and responsibility. This will require collaboration to define and deliver solutions tailored to the nature of each problem and diverse local conditions in a constantly changing environment.

DEVELOPING NEW MODELS FOR COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

In the 21st Century, no significant public problem fits entirely within one government agency, or even one level of government. Our federal system presupposes that all levels and branches of government have an important role to play in the democratic process. The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are just two of the many governance challenges that ignore jurisdictional and program boundaries. The pandemic also highlights the need to develop strategies and design programs that are more robust, resilient, and adaptable in the face of inevitable shocks and uncertainty.

For a long time, governments have devised new programs to address social problems as these are recognized as needing a public solution: if the problem is to get to the moon and back, then design and deliver a moon landing program; if many people are hungry, then support food banks, provide food stamps, or offer school lunches. You might call this an engineering model: diagnose the problem and the best way to solve it, then fund and staff an agency and subsidize providers to deliver a solution – and eventually multiple solutions. The result has been an accretion of programs that address specific problems.

The engineering model seems to be approaching a limit to its success: a problem may be a symptom of other problems; the same problem may have multiple or different causes; and its etiology may vary from one community or population to another or over time. Problems often overlap or interact. There are some problems that we might term

'hairy' because they are both complex and intractable. There are some places and people beset by multiple problems that may defy a single solution or require solutions that are tailored to a particular community, or family circumstance, or individuals with unique histories. In these cases, the traditional programmatic / engineering model may not work very well.

This paper argues that the proper policy response to a complex, boundary crossing problem is not to impose a uniform pre-engineered intervention. Nor can it be to simply hand out block grants and ask state and local governments to figure it out. Instead, the federal government can play a role similar to that of orchestra conductor, helping to coordinate and harmonize the elements of an evidence-based national strategy flexible enough to adapt to local conditions.

Redefining Roles, Building Capacity

Success in tackling complex, boundary spanning problems requires that federal, state, and local governments, with their private and nonprofit sector partners, work effectively together. Yet we have not prioritized the building of collaborative capabilities to develop and implement effective policies and programs across levels of government and sectors of society.

Media reports in spring and early summer 2020 of how different states and localities are managing reopening in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic is a clear demonstration of how fragmented and sometimes fractious inter-governmental arrangements impede action. Ongoing responses to the pandemic are also testing the ability of governments to adapt by continuously changing the way programs are designed and administered, so that governments can respond effectively to future threats and deliver intended results under varied local conditions.

Leaders from all levels of government and across sectors need to develop new collaborative mechanisms to mobilize and address issues—including emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction after the pandemic—that cut across jurisdictional and programmatic boundaries.

As an example, new governance models for the delivery of human services will require redefined roles for the federal government and others that reflect their respective roles and responsibilities:

- At the federal level, an effective strategy to address a particular social need or problem requires coordinating the relevant portfolio of services/programs targeted to individuals or families most likely to benefit. In most cases, the federal government is in a position to define national purposes and principles, goals, and targets in measurable terms, identify and support evidence-driven and otherwise promising strategies, and reshape its efforts to incentivize and support coordinated solutions at the local or regional level.
- In most cases, state and local governments and nonprofit organizations that deliver direct services should take primary responsibility for

integrating planning and services in a manner most appropriate for their local populations and conditions.

- The federal government can facilitate the blending and braiding of federal funds and data with other sources of funding and data in ways that enable strategies that are tailored to local circumstances.
- The federal government—or a neutral third party—can maintain a shared learning agenda of research questions that need to be answered to improve performance, use it to guide researchers in developing a body of evidence relevant to performance improvement, and create data tools that enable communities to benchmark their progress against that of their peers.
- In many instances, effective delivery approaches will be those that allow co-creation or co-production of services by service recipients.

Much evidence suggests that successful human service delivery strategies provide recipients with more ability to readily access and integrate services matching their individual and family needs. Experience suggests that designing and delivering integrated human services requires giving intermediary organizations administrative flexibilities, such as the ability to combine multiple resource streams.

Success also requires approaches that empower recipients to co-produce or co-create solutions. If recipients are to experience services as appropriate and effective for them, governments must shift their emphasis:

- From compliance to results;
- From standardized to individualized and family-oriented service delivery; and

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- From mostly top-down planning and coordination to a bottoms-up integrated service delivery that engages recipients.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW

In recent decades, governments have developed collaborative governance models that enable them to temporarily work across boundaries when addressing time-bound or place-based challenges such wildfires, natural disasters, and threats to public health. Most notable is the National Incident Management System overseen by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.[2]

Despite these success stories, progress has been slow in developing more enduring collaborative governance models that require establishing administrative structures for systemic challenges that require sustained and coordinated human services strategies. Efforts to develop and implement coordinated responses to reduce homelessness, to treat and limit opioid addiction, or to reduce child abuse can be studied to begin identifying promising models for coordinated delivery. The somewhat inconsistent and uncoordinated responses of different governments to the ongoing pandemic illustrate both the need for and challenge of designing and implementing effective collaborate governance responses.

Several federal agencies are pioneering collaborative, integrated service delivery systems around target populations that may serve as models for others. Our Working Group has focused its attention primarily

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[2] Federal Emergency Management Agency, "National Incident Management System," Retrieved at: https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system

on several societal problems that demand collaborative approaches to shared, integrated delivery of services to specific target populations.

To be effective and equitable, these services should be organized around the varied needs of specific communities, individuals, and families—not a one-size-fits-all approach. Collaborative governance arrangements need to be responsive to changing conditions and capable of quickly learning from experience. Developing an understanding of these varied needs, and gaining the legitimacy to act on them, means directly engaging those affected. This engagement element is addressed in more depth in an accompanying white paper.[3]

Existing Opportunities for Greater Collaborative Governance

What follows are five existing opportunities that, if approached systematically, could provide a base of experience on which to build new models of effective collaborative governance:

- *Opportunity 1: Testing Opportunities to Integrate Health and Social Services.* The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the differences between how the U.S.'s fragmented health care and social services approach differs from the more collaborative and integrated systems in Europe that have suppressed the spread and staged the transition to a

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[3] National Academy of Public Administration Working Group (2020). "Engaging the American Public to Restore Trust in Our Democracy: An Agenda for 2021 and Beyond."

"new normal."[4] Adapting lessons from the European approach may be a useful near-term initiative, but there are longer-term opportunities to pilot and scale collaborative models to improve overall health, as well. Experts have found that approximately 80 percent of health is related to such social determinants as stable housing, reliable transportation, access to healthy food or other living conditions—not actual medical problems. Yet, there is no integrated public strategy or approach in place to address these interrelated issues. States and localities, however, have begun piloting models of integrated delivery of human services organized around the needs of individuals and families. These models blend dollars, data, and the delivery of services for social, health, workforce, and/or health. These models should be evaluated and, where appropriate, scaled.

- ***Opportunity 2: Supporting Veterans who have returned to their communities***. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) operates a vast healthcare and benefits system within a broader ecosystem of 40,000 other federal, state, local and nonprofit groups serving veterans. Cross-federal and cross-sectoral collaborations are needed.[5]

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[4] Holly Jarman, Sarah Rozenblum and Scott Greer (2020). "What US States Can Learn from COVID-19 Transition Planning in Europe (May 11). Retrieved at: https://ihpi.umich.edu/news/commentary-what-us-states-can-learn-covid-19-transition-planning-europe

[5] Zachary Huitink, Nicholas Armstrong, Matthew Hidek and Nathaniel Birnbaum (2018). *Improving the Delivery of Services and Care for Veterans: A Case Study of Enterprise Government,* IBM Center for The Business of Government. Retrieved at: http://businessofgovernment.org/report/improving-delivery-services-and-care-veterans

- *Opportunity 3: Preventing and ending homelessness*. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness has led the development of the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness.[6] In response to the federal strategy and funding priorities, local providers have formed continuums of care to share data and coordinate rehousing with services appropriate to the needs of each person served. As homelessness grows, services delivery demands more robust coordination at all governing levels.

- *Opportunity 4: Relieving opioid addictions*. Solutions must involve changes in the way prescription opioid drugs are prescribed and distributed, requiring collaboration with physicians and drug companies. States and localities will need to lead in fashioning strategies to improve delivery and treatment, but the federal government should support evidence-driven strategies and research-based innovations to continuously improve current efforts with enhanced collaboration. This would include supportive programs such as disability benefits, job training, housing, and education.

- *Opportunity 5: Protecting vulnerable children*. The recently passed Families First Prevention Services Act would shift federal child welfare spending away from what is often the worst- case scenario (removing children from their homes to keep them safe) and toward better options (evidence-based programs to strengthen families and

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[6] U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, "Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. Retrieved at: https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Home-Together-Federal-Strategic-Plan-to-Prevent-and-End-Homelessness.pdf

protect children). The next challenge is integrating various human services and building evidence of what works to help do this at scale. One model may be the 12 states that have created a "children's cabinet" to better integrate services for at-risk children.[7]

Based on our review of these experiences, we have identified some common administrative barriers to construction of effective boundary crossing governance collaborative models:

- Budget and auditing rules that inhibit integrating federal program funds to create coordinated service delivery and common infrastructure;
- Privacy laws banning or impeding data sharing between programs;
- Lack of a common identity management system for individuals;
- Lack of a shared and effective way across agencies and their partners to structure, integrate and monitor large-scale, long-term strategies, and supplement or extend expertise to manage complex strategies; and
- Lack of a government-wide learning agenda and point of responsibility for assessing and refining models for effective collaborative governance.

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[7] See, for example, Virginia's "Children's Cabinet: Annual Report: 2018-2019," https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/childrens-cabinet/Childrens-Cabinet-Annual-Report-2019.pdf

Overcoming these and other barriers will require sustained leadership at all government levels. At the federal level, no senior policy official is now responsible for understanding these barriers and helping states and communities overcome them. Nor is there a single federal agency or official responsible for establishing a learning agenda and building evidence to identify the most promising collaborative models.

Unless strong evidence already exists about the models or strategies most likely to deliver higher performance, program implementation should be flexible enough to allow for as much thoughtful design, structured experimentation, rapid prototyping, and ongoing learning as possible.

Critical Current Practices and Authorities

Creating new collaborative governance models is possible now, with existing administrative practices and legal authorities, in selected policy areas. These could be expanded and scaled in many policy areas such as those represented by the five areas of opportunity described above.

The federal Cross-Agency Priority Goal to improve customer experiences addresses 25 specific federal services—such as student aid applications, airport security checks, and visits to national parks.[8] These could be expanded to include services delivered to individuals and families at the state and local level, where integrated delivery would

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[8] U.S. Office of Management and Budget, "Improving Customer Experiences with Federal Services," Performance.gov website. Retrieved at:
https://www.performance.gov/CAP/cx/

dramatically improve the customer experience. Also, the recently passed Families First Prevention Services Act begins to scale the use of evidence-based preventative practices that involve multiple systems in serving the needs of vulnerable children.[9]

A number of recent legislative authorities provide potentially more granular accountability for federal funding. This in turn could lead to Congress and other overseers being willing to allow greater cross-agency and intergovernmental collaboration. Ideally, this would include braiding and blending of funds, data, and programs around the needs of individuals and families. The potential for greater collaboration stems from the fact that these laws will allow insight and greater accountability at a granular level, closer to real-time, with federal dollars, so federal leaders should have less concern about fraud and waste. In addition, there will be greater analytical capacity, data, and evidence about what works with specific programs at the frontline level. These laws include:

- The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act
- The Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act)
- The Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency Act (GREAT Act)
- The Taxpayer Right-to-Know Act *(pending, but likely passage)*

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[9] Patrick Lester (2020) *Scaling Evidence-Based Programs in Child Welfare,* IBM Center for The Business of Government, retrieved at: http://businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Scaling%20Evidence%20Based%20Programs%20in%20Child%20Welfare.pdf

In May 2020, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) also began reviewing comments on proposed changes to the Uniform Guidance for grants administration that would allow awarding agencies and low-risk, high-performing grantees to streamline compliance reporting and shift to outcome-focused reporting. The changes could potentially facilitate braiding and blending of funds around the needs of individuals and families and creation of common data and administrative infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS
A Vision and Agenda for Creating Effective Collaborative Governance Models

Addressing the challenge of developing and testing new collaborative governance models to tackle the largest, boundary crossing societal problems requires a long-term vision and agenda for action.

For the long term, we recommend that the federal government test models for a more collaborative governance approach to the delivery of human services centered on individuals and families rather than the agencies or levels of government that provide the services.

The federal government should define national strategies to design and implement customer- and client-centric approaches to selected problems. These strategies would make services and solutions for individuals and families, not agencies, the central focus. It should also support long-term societal research and development to evaluate specific delivery models.

For the near term, beginning in 2021, the federal government should convene state and local governments and their delivery partners to define and continuously refine a roadmap for joint action in the human service areas of opportunity described above or other areas aligned with Presidential priorities. The deep shock to society now being experienced as a result of the pandemic may require prioritization of additional policy or programmatic areas where a collaborative services approach could be applied.

The federal government should take the following actions to support a national strategy for collaborative governance:

1. **OMB should direct specified agencies to commit in their strategic planning to a Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goal to improve the delivery and effectiveness of services to individuals and families through collaboration across multiple human service areas.** Lead agencies would use national strategy maps to create personalized services for each area of opportunity.[10] National strategies have been developed and used successfully in past administrations, primarily to guide national approaches in national security cybersecurity,

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[10] Strategy maps are a well-established tool for effective strategy management. They elevate the discussion from the merits, funding and impact of individual programs and organizations to the system of intentional changes (the strategic objectives) that are most important for achieving significant and sustainable progress on complex social challenges. This approach helps to prompt teamwork and catalyze innovation around how the strategic objectives can best be accomplished. For an example, see: https://vimeo.com/398352113/72ee431c34

counterterrorism, and pandemic responses, but could be used in human service areas as well.[11]

2. **Lead agencies or cross-agency teams for each area of opportunity should design and pilot a community care coordination delivery model that best supports flexible and agile service delivery under varied local conditions.** Such person- and family-centered approaches require information technology platforms that can be used by many different programs and agencies to coordinate the plans, care and data of the individuals being served.

3. **The Administration should establish a mechanism that enables state and local government and other community experts to participate in designing and planning collaborative approaches.** Representing these perspectives is one way to ensure that the proposed strategy is flexible enough to work for a diverse set of communities.

4. **OMB should employ portfolio budgeting, using strategic objectives as the unit of analysis, to guide resource allocation decisions and inform regulatory and administrative reforms to support the strategy.** The budget process would replace the focus on funding individual programs with a portfolio approach that applies resources to support a shared strategy based on the best available evidence of expected returns on investment. Based on the portfolio

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[11] General Accounting Office (2003). "Combatting Terrorism: Observation on National Strategies Related to Terrorism," GAO-03-519T (March 3). Retrieved at: https://www.gao.gov/assets/110/109685.pdf

analysis, OMB could identify barriers to integration and improvement that could be addressed through coordinated regulatory and administrative reforms affecting multiple programs.

5. **OMB and other central agencies should work together to establish shared knowledge platforms and clearinghouses.** This information platform would be based on a master strategy map template that could be continuously refined as stakeholders gain new insights and help avoid a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach.

6. **OMB and the White House should establish a working group to develop a national plan, with state and local partners, for federal actions to enable all levels of government to strengthen data, analytics, and evaluation capacity**. This group would work to integrate funding, legislative and regulatory proposals into the annual President's Budget and the regulatory agenda, in coordination with OMB, and deploy the resources and expertise of philanthropy, academia, private sector tech firms, and non-profits, as permitted by law.[12]

7. **OMB and lead agencies for each area of opportunity should proactively pursue the use of existing program waivers to allow state and local governments to braid and blend funds to create**

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[12] Kathy Stack (2020). "Harnessing Data Analytics to Improve the Lives of Individuals and Families: A National Strategy," Discussion Draft (July 12). Retrieved at: https://www.dayoneproject.org/post/harnessing-data-analytics-to-improve-the-lives-of-individuals-and-families-a-national-data-strategy

person-centered service delivery models. There are existing models at the federal and state levels for creatively using federal waivers and data sharing agreements. Cross-agency or lead agency teams should be formed around areas of opportunity to strategically facilitate their use.[13] As they demonstrate success, Congress should provide statutory authority for more programs to allow waivers.

CONCLUSION

Engaging government agencies, their partners, their customers or clients, and others requires designing and implementing collaborative strategies that reflect the perspectives of those most affected and apply resources where evidence suggests they will be most effective in achieving priority objectives. Constructing effective collaborative governance approaches, starting with a limited base of relevant experience, is not the task of a single Administration. It will require sustained collaboration among the federal government and its partners in an environment that promotes innovation and learning, gradually building a base of knowledge about what works and bonds of mutual trust among the partners that will help define a new collaborative approach to governance. We recommend this effort because we are convinced a more collaborative governance

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[13] Stuart Butler, Timothy Higashi and Marcela Cabello, Budgeting to Promote Social Objectives -- A Primer on Braiding and Blending, Brookings Institution (April 2020). Retrieved at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BraidingAndBlending20200403.pdf

model will help address the many complex challenges that the nation will face in the years to come.

Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement: Working Group

John Kamensky, Working Group Chair
Senior Fellow, IBM Center for The Business of Government. Former Deputy Director, National Partnership for Reinventing Government; Special Assistant to the Deputy Director of Management, U.S. Office of Management and Budget; Assistant Director, U.S. Government Accountability Office; Staff, Texas Constitutional Convention; Staff, Texas House of Representatives.

Lisa Blomgren Amsler
Distinguished Professor and Keller-Runden Professor at Indiana University's Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Bloomington, IN. She is also the Saltman Senior Scholar at the William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. A recipient of the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution Award for Outstanding Scholarly Work (2014) and the Dwight Waldo award from the American Society for Public Administration (2019), her research addresses collaborative governance, public engagement, public law, dispute system design, and dispute resolution. Her 2005 article on new governance practices (co-authored with Tina Nabatchi and Rosemary O'Leary) was named one of the "75 most influential articles" of the past 75 years by *Public Administration Review*.

John Bryson
McKnight Presidential Professor of Planning and Public Affairs, Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. Former positions with the Humphrey School: Associate Dean; Director, Master of Public Affairs Program; Director, Master of Planning Program; Director, Reflective Leadership Center; Collegiate Program Leader, University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Anne Khademian
Presidential Fellow, Office of the President, Virginia Tech. Former Director, School of Public and International Affairs; Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Visiting Associate Professor, Center for Public Administration and Policy, Alexandria Center, Virginia Tech; Visiting Senior Fellow, Robert A. Fox Leadership Program, University of Pennsylvania; Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Political Science School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Former Positions with the University of Wisconsin: Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, La Follette Institute of Public Affairs; Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, La Follette Institute of Public Affairs. Former Research Fellow, Governmental Studies, The Brookings Institution.

Carolyn Lukensmeyer
Executive Director, National Institute for Civil Discourse. Former Founder and President, America Speaks; Consultant, Office of the President's Chief of Staff, The White House; Deputy Director, National Performance Review, Office of the Vice President; Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Lukensmeyer Associates, Inc.; Chief of Staff to Governor (Ohio) Richard Celeste.

F. Stevens Redburn
Professorial Lecturer in Public Policy and Public Administration, The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, The George Washington University. Former Study Director, National Academy of Sciences; H. John Heinz III College of Public Policy & Management, Carnegie Mellon University Australia; Project Director and Consultant, National Academy of Public Administration; Chief, Housing Branch, U.S. Office of Management and Budget; Economist, Special Studies, U.S. Office of Management and Budget; Program Analyst, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Director, Center for Urban Studies, Youngstown State University.

Michelle Sager
Michelle Sager is a Director in GAO's Strategic Issues team. She oversees a range of crosscutting governance issues spanning multiple federal agencies as well as state and local governments. Her work includes evidence-based policy, DATA Act implementation, state and local fiscal issues, grants management, and intergovernmental collaboration. Michelle first joined GAO in 1998. Her work at GAO has included budget, regulatory, international trade, and postsecondary education issues as well as experience consulting with teams on qualitative and quantitative research methods. Michelle left GAO in 2016 to accept a position as Director of the Economic Opportunity Division in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. She returned to GAO in 2018. Her prior experience also includes positions as an adjunct faculty member and legislative staff positions in the Missouri House of Representatives as well as the U.S. House of Representatives. Michelle holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy and M.A. in International Commerce and Policy from George Mason University in addition to a B.A. in Communications and Political Science from Truman State University.

Antoinette Samuel
Deputy Executive Director, National League of Cities. Former Executive Director, American Society for Public Administration; Chief Executive Officer, International Employee Assistance Professionals Association; Executive Director, National Association of Black Journalists; Center Director, Education and Information Resources, National League of Cities; Division Director, Prince George's County Government; Division Director, City of Houston.

Kathy Stack
CEO, KB Stack Consulting, Former Vice President of Evidence-Based Innovation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation. Former positions with U.S. Office of Management and Budget: Deputy Associate Director for Education and Human Resources; Chief, Education Branch; Assistant to the Deputy Associate Director, Education, Income Maintenance and Labor Division; Examiner, Education Branch. Former positions with U.S. Department of Education: Advisor on Transition, Office of Student Financial Assistance; Analyst.

Staff

Joseph P. Mitchell, III
Director of Strategic Initiatives and International Programs, National Academy of Public Administration; Member, National Science Foundation Business and Operations Advisory Committee; Associate Director, Office of Shared Services and Performance Improvement, General Services Administration; Director of Academy Programs, National Academy of Public Administration; Project Director, Senior Analyst, and Research Associate, National Academy of Public Administration.

James Higgins
Research Associate for Grand Challenges in Public Administration, National Academy of Public Administration; Researcher, Cohen Group; Extern, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

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