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BEST PLACES TO WORK:
More than Just a List

By Mallory Barg Bulman

As the financial crisis unfolded during the early years of the Obama administration, employees at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) were under tremendous stress. The former were dealing with major bank failures across the nation; the latter were coping with a securities industry meltdown and trying to implement complicated new financial regulations.

During this period, the FDIC’s Best Places to Work in the Federal Government employee engagement scores improved as agency leadership paid close attention to workforce concerns and culture. In contrast, SEC scores plummeted, with the U.S. Government Accountability Office subsequently describing an agency with low morale, employee distrust of management and an environment that hindered the staff from fulfilling its mission.

The Best Places to Work data turned out to be a wakeup call for the SEC, which embarked on a sustained program backed by its top leaders to improve communication with employees and managers, provide greater recognition of employee contributions and institute new leadership development training opportunities.

The result has been profound. The SEC increased its employee engagement score from 56.0 out of 100 in 2012 to 80.9 in 2017, with improvements in morale and on a wide range of workplace measures, from employee views of leaders to a belief that their skills match the agency mission.

The SEC example illustrates the role that the Best Places to Work data, based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, can play in alerting agency leaders to signs of trouble, pinpointing a range of workplace issues that need attention and holding leaders accountable for their organizations’ management and health.

The Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte release the Best Places to Work data and rankings every year, believing that highly engaged employees are likely to be satisfied with their jobs and motivated to achieve agency goals, leading to greater efficiency, more innovation and better results. In short, employee engagement is a necessary ingredient to developing high performing organizations and attracting top talent.

Over the years, we have learned that key to a high level of job satisfaction and commitment are effective leadership and a sustained effort to communicate with employees, listen to their concerns and address thorny workplace issues. This is not a one-time event, but a continuous, long-term process—as one federal official put it, a marathon.

We also have learned that it helps enormously if the president sets the tone by holding Cabinet secretaries accountable for creating productive workplace cultures. Absent that leadership, slippage in government performance can easily occur.

At a 2016 awards ceremony honoring agencies with high Best Places to Work scores or significant improvement, then-Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack described receiving a call in early 2009 from White House Cabinet Secretary Chris Lu, telling him that USDA was doing poorly in the Best Places to Work rankings.

“Chris said the president was concerned about that and wanted to know what we were going to do about that,” said Vilsack. “That made an impression on me, so we began a process that has taken a while to culturally transform our department.”

USDA’s strategic plan subsequently included the goal that the agency would rank in the Best Places to Work Top 10 by 2018, followed by steps to work with employees to enhance workplace culture. In 2016, USDA ranked ninth in the large agency category; in 2017, it moved up to seventh place. The same was true for the Labor Department, which traditionally had a very low ranking among large agencies. Many employees had low morale and were generally disengaged, partially the result of a lack of leadership development and training.

In late 2012, the department began devoting resources and attention to developing the leadership capacity of its new Senior Executive Service members. This was followed by a multi-year effort to

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As this graphic shows:

- Improved employee engagement drives improved organizational performance.
- Improved government performance, especially delivering responsive service, boosts the public’s satisfaction with government.
- When members of the public are satisfied, they will trust government.
- When government employees believe the people they serve trust government, these public servants are likely to have a higher level of engagement.

This virtuous cycle illustrates why improving engagement is not just a touchy-feely activity or exclusively the domain of the human resources department. Instead, it is about improving performance, service and trust in government.

Five Steps to Improve Engagement… Starting with Measurement

To improve engagement, we first must measure it. This means collecting data, ideally through regular employee surveys, to create a baseline and identify the areas on which to focus. Supplementing the surveys should be other data sources like pulse surveys, turnover statistics, exit and stay interviews, focus groups and performance evaluations. The five steps below are a quick guide to the process of measuring and improving engagement.

1. **Plan the survey.** Planning decisions include deciding what questions to ask—such as develop a survey or use an existing one—who to survey, and when and how to administer it. Plans also should cover how the survey results will be analyzed and reported, including benchmarking results against comparable organizations. As important, planning should include determining the process to decide how the organization will act on the survey data. It is too late to wait until the results are in.

2. **Conduct the survey.** A jurisdiction or agency can develop the engagement survey internally or use one of many available ones. Similarly, it can administer the survey or hire a contractor. Most organizations conduct surveys online, but some provide a hard copy for employees who cannot—or will not—complete it online. To maximize response rates, employees must understand their responses will be confidential.
Workforce Management

3. Report and analyze the results. Many surveys generate an engagement index, a composite score summarizing the overall level of engagement in the organization. Reporting should include question-by-question results to identify areas of strength to be maintained, plus areas to improve. Reporting survey results at the lowest possible levels—such as work units and locations—will promote action and accountability. Analysis also can include benchmarking with public and private sector organizations and revealing the “drivers” of engagement—that is, the most important influences on employees’ engagement.

4. Take action to improve employee engagement. Unfortunately, this is the step where too many organizations fail. As a result, engagement may decline as employees who completed the survey become frustrated and disillusioned. The surveying organization should develop an action plan (or plans, specific to individual work units) to respond to the employee-identified issues. And, then follow through to implement the plan. This does not mean focus on low scoring areas. Most surveys also reveal areas about which employees feel good. In other words, figure out what the organization is doing well, and keep doing it.

5. Sustain engagement. The long-term goal should be to create a culture of employee engagement, making it part of the organization’s DNA. This means addressing specific issues raised in the survey and measuring engagement regularly. Periodic surveys make the entire organization—leaders, managers, supervisors and front-line employees—accountable for creating a culture of engagement. Sustaining it means analyzing the connection between improved engagement and improved organizational performance.

This employee engagement strategy is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The steps are sufficiently broad to allow individual public sector organizations to tailor it to their own needs. Each jurisdiction and agency must adapt the model to its mission, values, strategy, culture and capabilities.

There is no silver bullet to ensure that government can meet today’s talent management challenges. Instead, silver buckshot is needed, an integrated and comprehensive strategy to attract and retain talent. Measuring and improving employee engagement should be key to this strategy.

Robert Lavigna is director of the CPS HR Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement, dedicated to helping public sector and nonprofit organizations measure and improve employee engagement. Prior to this position, he was assistant vice chancellor and director of human resources for the University of Wisconsin, vice president for research at the Partnership for Public Service and director of the Wisconsin civil service system. He can be reached at rlavigna@cpshr.us.

MORE THAN JUST A LIST

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improve leadership at all levels. Since this initiative began, the Labor Department has made significant strides in employee engagement, improving in every leadership category of the rankings and earning the distinction of the most improved large agency in 2014 and 2015. In the past two years, it has ranked sixth among 18 large agencies.

It also helps if Congress pays attention and conducts oversight as it has done with the Department of Homeland Security, which has been called on the carpet numerous times for its low rankings. The congressional spotlight prompted the department to take action, resulting in significant signs of improvement during the past two years.

During President Obama’s tenure, agency Best Places to Work scores initially improved across the government and then began to slip. The president made employee engagement a cross-agency priority goal starting in 2015, requiring every agency to have senior officials in charge of developing and following through on employee engagement plans. He also mandated that SES members have an employee engagement component in their yearly performance plans.

In implementing the goal in 2015, the administration said “A growing body of evidence in the public and private sectors has shown a strong relationship between high levels of employee engagement and improved organizational results.”

Scores began to rise; the government-wide employee engagement score hit 61.5 out of 100 in 2017, the highest registered in six years. Maintaining this momentum requires a strong commitment from the Trump administration to further strengthen the employee experience, from training and developing leaders to ensuring employees have a positive work environment and resources to do their jobs.

Mallory Barg Bulman is vice president of research and evaluation at the nonprofit, nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, where she leads its thought leadership agenda, including overseeing the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings. Prior to that time, she was senior analyst in the Strategic Issues team of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). She can be reached at mbulman@ourpublicservice.org.
Employee Engagement Starts with Meaning
By Alex Pattakos and Elaine Dundon

It is becoming widely accepted that the level of employee engagement predicts how well an organization will perform. Yet engagement scores across sectors and industries have remained stubbornly low over the last decade, despite well-intended investment initiatives that organizations have made. If these scores persist, perhaps the approach that many leaders, including those in government, are taking is not working. Rather than focus on engagement per se, we recommend a focus on the key driver of engagement: meaning. It is meaning that drives engagement which, in turn, drives performance and innovation.

Meaning must begin with the employee. Leaders can influence an employee’s search for meaning at work through encouragement, targeted meaning training programs and establishing a meaning-centric culture. At the end of the day, however, it is the employee’s responsibility to search for and discover individual sources of meaning.

Persistent Low Levels of Engagement
The Gallup Organization, which has studied employee engagement since the 1990s, has reported that about 30 percent of the nation’s workers are fully engaged in their jobs. Alarmingly, studies have shown that the number of disengaged employees outnumbers the number of workers who are engaged.

With more than half of the workforce—including senior leaders—effectively not engaged, our workplaces are in trouble. This means people are not working to their potential, perhaps showing up for work but exerting little effort, wasting time, slowing projects, and not truly caring whether the organization reaches its goals. Their attitudes soon may affect the rest of the group, creating a toxic environment. They may not even show up for work or stay primarily for the paycheck and benefits. But, their negative or even neutral attitudes affect the whole organization in unhealthy and nonproductive ways.

Attempting to increase engagement, many leaders implement such benefits as enhanced health care programs, telecommuting, flextime, job sharing, paid paternity and adoption leaves, continuing education, coaching, retirement planning, time off for volunteering, free food, standing desks and even allowing pets at work. Some of these incentive programs result in increased employee satisfaction and “experience” scores. Many do not. It is time to try a new approach.

A New Approach: Meaning First
The focus on engagement is not the best place to start. We need to get to the root cause of the engagement challenge: the lack of meaning. The failure to enlist employees in meaning is the root of all engagement issues. It also is a key reason why many private and public sector innovation initiatives are difficult to sustain and fail. Our research and field experience in innovation management have shown that they often are not grounded in a meaningful, commonly understood goal. As a result, employees see the initiatives as being just another task and not necessarily in alignment with their own values and objectives.

Against this backdrop, there must be a deeper understanding of what world-renowned psychiatrist and existential philosopher Viktor Frankl referred to as the “primary, intrinsic motivation of human beings”—that is, the search for meaning. Most incentive programs are extrinsic motivators. We need to start with those as they originate with and within the individual.

True engagement begins with personal meaning and understanding ourselves—including interests, talents and motivations—before understanding the meaning of actual work, including how we contribute to it and how our work affects others in the organization and society at large. If we connect with the deeper meaning within ourselves and the deeper meaning of our work, we will be more engaged. In other words, meaning before engagement.
Our work at the Global Meaning Institute has demonstrated that starting with and working from the “core of meaning” is the main driver behind engagement and resilience, health and well being, and performance and innovation, at both individual and collective levels.

A key challenge of this meaning-centric approach is moving away from expecting leaders to be solely responsible for improving engagement. Responsibility must start with the employee and then be supported by the leader.

Great leaders understand the human side of work and that meaning must be the foundation for the organization. As Donald Berwick, former administrator of U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs, so wisely said, “The leader who thinks that it is enough to create report cards and contingent rewards misses the biggest and hardest opportunity of leadership itself—to help people discover and celebrate the meaning in their work... We know that the magic is in the meaning.”

Meaningful public sector engagement is especially important given declining public trust, political polarization, negative press coverage and direct political attacks on government institutions and services. With an increasing number of people questioning the meaning of their work, it is time to consider a new approach to helping them know their work truly matters and makes a difference—to themselves, for others and for society. It is time to focus on meaning as the primary driver for employee engagement, performance and innovation.


A U.S. Army veteran, Pattakos holds a Ph.D. in political science from Northern Illinois University and is a former ASPA National Council member. Dundon earned an MBA from the University of Toronto where she designed and taught the first course on innovation management. They can be reached at: info@globalmeaninginstitute.com
Talk a little about your career trajectory. How did you become interested in public procurement and start your career?

As an MPA student at the University of Miami, I joined ASPA and was referred by Jonathan West, the MPA program chair, to an internship with the Domestic Violence Program in Miami Dade County. My experience as a social worker intern awakened my passion for public service. The scope of the internship included providing counseling services and working on a deferred prosecution program, teaching skills and socially appropriate behaviors to defendants accused of acts of violence against their family members. The teaching approach of my internship supervisor, her skills and the humanity with which she used them to facilitate behavioral change instilled in me a sense of purpose and drive that continues to this day. It has served me well during my last 35 years of county service.

One year later, Miami Dade County hired me as a social worker in a federally funded program aimed at diverting refugees from the criminal justice system. The population I served was comprised of criminally involved, dual-diagnosis clients with a host of social, acculturation and work skills issues. I then supervised a team of social workers who worked with this population in the court system, and later worked with our chief judge to develop funding models to support community-based organizations involved with crime prevention, diversion and re-entry programming. There, I developed contract monitoring and compliance solutions to ensure the investments in the community-based organizations resulted in meeting performance objectives.

Several years later, the Miami Dade county manager asked me to develop a countywide contract compliance function and organization. This led to assembling a cross-functional team represented by a host of client departments involved in the procurement of goods, services and construction. The contract compliance division was implemented and grew to be one of the most lauded organizations involved with contract compliance and contract management in the country. Then-County Manager Merrett Stierheim commissioned a study to evaluate opportunities for efficiency and enhanced value in the county’s procurement activities.

I was hired as the deputy director of the newly centralized procurement agency that resulted from that study’s recommendations. Several years later, I served as its director and the county’s CPO. During the course of six months, my team established the organizational, budgetary, procedural and functional structure to centralize the procurement activities of 50 county departments.

You were SECoPA’s 2017 Hensley Award winner. What does that award means to you and the public service that led you to be an excellent candidate for recognition?

The Hensley Award is one of the most significant forms of professional recognition I ever received. It is a privilege because Kathryn Hensley embodies the true art and heart of public administration. She served for more than 40 years as a practitioner in a variety of governmental agencies at the federal and local level. She is a role model, an accomplished, strong-willed, brilliant and level-headed civic activist and public servant. She cares about fair play, equity, doing the right thing all the time and recognizes the importance of integrity and its role in providing high quality government services. Her grace, intelligence, dignity and great sense of humor have offered valuable lessons for me and my peers. Having served on community-based, local and national professional and advocacy boards, I have led efforts for policy changes that improved the condition of families, children, students, refugees and under-served populations. Mentoring and coaching upcoming professionals at the nascent stages of their careers have been a great interest and passion.
Describe your current role and responsibilities, including the range of products you procure for the county. What does a chief procurement officer do?

As Santa Clara County’s first chief procurement officer, I supervise two agencies providing centralized procurement and contract compliance functions, and support to client departments. I am responsible for a county-wide transformation project that will impact all county contracts for goods, services and construction. This entails implementing a pro-competition business culture and effective technology business solutions to ensure the very best value for the taxpayer, plus creating a healthy, professional, learning and growing environment for procurement professionals. My role includes oversight of the county’s purchasing functions, including our public hospital with a total annual spend of $3 billion.

Talk a little about the team you manage. Do you have team members new to procurement? If so, how do you develop their talent?

Until November 2017, I supervised the countywide fleet management, risk management and procurement function, as well as the county’s self-insurance fund and safety team. I was responsible for an operating budget of $300 million, a multi-year capital budget of $280 million and managing the personnel function that serves 920 employees. My teams comprised more than 520 staff members. I joined Santa Clara County in January 2018. Here, I am responsible for purchasing activities for 20,000 employees serving 2 million residents. The procurement department has 74 positions and the Office of Contract Compliance and Management has five positions. I am recruiting for 26 vacancies, including a procurement director and contracts compliance director. Many team members are new, others are veterans. I work with them and their managers to create individualized professional development plans and will tap the resources of NIGP: The Institute of Public Procurement, ASPA and other professional associations to create a robust learning program to further develop their skills.

What does the talent pipeline look like within public procurement and how are you building that pipeline for the future?

Talent management, especially recruitment, development and retention, is near and dear to me. We are experiencing a phenomenon referred to as the “graying of the procurement professional”: a significant number of retirees who are leaving the public sector for other professional adventures or retiring to enjoy life. With challenges come opportunities. Part of my mission is to move from tactical to strategic methods to secure best value. Working to develop a strategic plan may be attractive to a whole new corps of professionals and recent graduates who may never have contemplated a profession in public administration. Modern procurement positions offer exciting and interesting areas of learning and work, including performance-based contracting, strategic sourcing, commodity alignment, competitive negotiations and research/evidence-based sourcing.

In the past, I hired team members with diverse skills sets and experiences in the business world, academia, community-based organizations and other public agencies; I invested significantly in professional development to ensure we kept up with the latest best practices and innovative approaches to sourcing for our client departments. People, process and technology are the “three Ps” most procurement professionals focus on when developing strategic business plans. We are embarking on an amazing journey in Santa Clara County to strengthen opportunities to innovatively engage vendor communities and ensure a full and open competitive process, resulting in high quality services at the very best pricing.

How is managing a team of procurement specialists different than others in county government? What skills do you need and how do you build on them?

Managing a professional procurement is exciting and challenging. There is constant conversation with a variety of internal clients and external stakeholders, in addition to the relationships we must develop and maintain with elected board members. Establishing credibility, trust and effective business relationships are the most important precursors to success for any purchasing agency. I value and require absolute integrity, as the bar is set higher for professionals charged with protecting the taxpayers’ interest in its commercial transactions. The most important skills sets for a procurement professional are knowledge of methods, sound and effective market research skills, excellent negotiation strategy development skills and actual negotiation and mediations skills. So, too, are effective written and communications skills. Flexibility and listening skills are a plus, as are comfort and agility in managing multiple projects with often competing priorities, without compromising quality, and a level-headed professional demeanor.

What are the most meaningful lessons you’ve learned as a procurement officer?

It has been a pleasure to learn from so many procurement professionals. One of my most meaningful lessons is the art of listening to your client patiently, even if their message is not as clear or even as accurate as you would like it to be. This is essential as you must engage your client in detailed conversations to ensure contract requirements and
the project’s scope is well defined and will result in a successful procurement process. My second most meaningful lesson, one that I continue to treasure, is the value of relevant market research and collaboration across public agencies through such organizations as ASPA and NIGP. It plays a crucial role in understanding commodity and service cost drivers, ensuring we are in touch with marketplace changes, innovation and volatility points, as well as using the research to develop evidence-based solutions to service client departments.

What has been the biggest surprise for you about the field of public procurement?

The sensational borderless talent in our towns, cities, counties, states, schools, colleges and universities that have a passion and utmost dedication to serve their communities and ensure they secure best value solutions with integrity.

What has been ASPA’s role in your career? What member benefits do you enjoy most?

ASPA was the first professional organization I joined as a student and it is the most recent organization with which I re-affiliated. ASPA is, in no small part, responsible for my interest and passion for public service. I have been inspired by so many public administrators throughout my career. Many have been active members and served as its leaders. Most recently, I have had the opportunity and joy to serve on the governing board of NIGP along with ASPA Executive Director Bill Shields, and I have learned so much more from him as to the value and breadth of ASPA’s reach in promoting professionalism and best practices to the benefit of government agencies throughout North America. ASPA brings great honor to our profession. I will always be grateful to the organization for igniting my passion for public service.
Is the U.S. Government Really Dysfunctional?

Here are findings of a Monmouth University poll reported in James Hohmann’s January 9 column in The Washington Post:

Eighty-one percent think that the Founders would be upset with the way institutions such as Congress and the presidency have worked over the past ten years. Just 11 percent think the Founders would be happy.

According to Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth poll, “Hyper-partisanship goes hand-in-hand with government dysfunction.”

I am always concerned when I hear broad claims about U.S. government dysfunction. Approximately 2 million federal civilian employees—plus the Armed Forces and Postal Service employees—and many contract employees go to work every day. They implement, as best they can, thousands upon thousands of pages of existing laws. If Congress is deadlocked and cannot make changes to those laws, the bureaucracy carries on with what we already have. Congress has never failed to fund the government despite the occasional, brief government shutdown.

The frequent deadlock in Congress reflects very intense differences of opinion among the American people across a multitude of issues. The political parties are like two evenly matched wrestlers pushing each other around. Once in a while, one side scores a point; the recent tax reform bill and the 2010 passage of Obamacare are two examples. For the most part, major legislative changes occur infrequently.

Much of this “dysfunction” is that people are frustrated their agendas cannot be enacted because the votes in Congress just are not there. For example, many are upset that Congress has not enacted stricter gun control laws, or repealed Obamacare, or passed comprehensive immigration reform. But, millions of people are on both sides of these issues; it is not surprising that Congress has a hard time making substantive changes.

It also is true that presidents have used their discretionary authority under existing laws to advance their partisan agendas. How? Although laws passed by Congress frequently are very detailed, high-level language remains open to interpretation. Recent presidents have shown little desire to compromise and this partisanship may contribute to low poll numbers. Yet presidents have the right to pursue their agendas. Sometimes they push the envelope on what is allowed under the law. If they overstep the bounds of their legal authority, the courts can (and do) slap them down. Congress always can rewrite the laws to allow less administrative discretion if it so chooses.

 Agencies like the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Homeland Security have built-in prosecutorial discretion. These departments cannot prosecute every possible crime. Instead, they prioritize their efforts based on limited resources. It is only natural that the political parties would adopt differing priorities when they come to power.

Prior to my retirement, my little corner of the federal bureaucracy spent a huge amount of time trying to figure on what words in statutes assigned to us meant and how they should be applied in specific situations. There were many meetings with agency lawyers who usually counseled us to follow the logic of the words as our first priority, not to apply “common sense” or favor customers, taxpayers or some other value. When discretion exists, other values come into play. The lawyers always were thinking ahead to what the courts might say. I do not think the public fully appreciates the importance of the rule of law in our system. If the words in statutes or the Constitution can mean anything at all, then bureaucrats can do anything.

I believe the Founders would be very pleased that the United States still operates under the Constitution they adopted in 1787. There have been no coups or revolutions. We have never missed an election since 1788. They would see that our Constitution and laws really mean something. Our leaders cannot easily ignore them.

The Founders might not be pleased if they thought congressional gridlock caused tangible harm to the country, such as failing to spend sufficiently on the military or service the national debt. They would recognize that today’s intense partisanship is similar to what they experienced in the 1790s.

Overall, I think the Founders would be astonished and thrilled if they came back. They had no idea if the government they created would last. They did continued on page 13
INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING: Issues, Counterpoints and Recommendations

Presumably next on President Trump’s agenda: infrastructure financing. Perhaps by the time you read this article, he will have made a proposal. As we await it, let us look at some background, counterpoints and recommendations.

The 2016 American Society of Civil Engineers’ (ASCE) report on the status of infrastructure for the nation and each state indicates that the state of our infrastructure ranges from discouraging to alarming. ASCE grades 16 categories, including drinking water and transportation; it is a depressing read. The society minces no words and awards an overall grade of D+. My students would be disheartened with such a grade, but my guess is that most Americans do not understand the severity. Further, it seems that most legislators who should know do not care that much.

That said, a 2017 RAND Corporation report suggests that this diagnosis is overstated and lacking nuance. The authors argue that not all transportation and water infrastructure is falling apart, reporting that spending has basically tracked with economic growth during the past six decades and that each location has its own blend of infrastructure, economics and governance issues.

The authors do argue that the big problem rests with the federal government’s failure to target investments in longer term projects likely to produce significant national benefits, productivity increases and greater resilience, not simply “shovel-ready projects.” They also suggest that the decline in federal gas tax revenue led to the failure to complete major regional projects, including a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River serving New York, New Jersey and the entire Northeast.

For the most part, these problems are hidden. Most of us do not notice infrastructure until it stops working: We are late for work because a bridge is closed; drinking water is halted because of bacteria. Yet failing infrastructure financially impacts our families and nation; it is the foundation of our economy and quality of life. ASCE estimates total needs of $4.6 trillion (RAND makes no estimate), some of which is currently available or will be by 2025. Some current funding is available but failing to fund infrastructure fully will bring serious economic consequences, including a loss of $3.9 trillion in GDP, $7 trillion in business losses and 2.5 million lost jobs.

Four years ago, I was part of the State Budget Crisis Task Force, a national commission co-chaired by Paul Volcker. The problems common to every state were mounting infrastructure needs and the lack of funding. At a 2015 Governor’s Forum on Presidential Transition Issues hosted by the National Governors Association, I was on a governor’s panel focused on the mounting deterioration of transportation infrastructure. The story was the same: How do we pay for all this stuff? Most infrastructure financing has been done at the state and local level with bond financing, user charges, fees and tolls.

During the 2016 campaign, President Trump said he wanted to invest $1 trillion. But, total needs are much more. Based on the recent tax reform, that $1 trillion has been lowered still. Meanwhile, many congressional leaders balk at any appropriation and instead suggest “awarding” tax credits to the private sector. This is not a good model. It is not sufficient money, not well targeted and has limited application for maintenance projects.

The only solution is to bite the bullet and initiate a 10-year plan of state borrowing by issuing municipal bonds. This is how most public projects have been built: States issue bonds, spreading the costs across a 20- to 30-year period as future beneficiaries contribute to the investment. However, the federal government must provide more as states simply do not have the resources. This is not a new role as it already provides grants for transportation, water and sewer projects. Here, funding must be substantially increased and consistent.

As the RAND Corporation suggests, the federal government also must support regional long-term projects, as well those that develop resilience to natural disasters, flood risks and changing climate. Doing so will reduce future federal spending on disaster assistance, for which only the federal government has the resources.

Critics argue that taxes will increase, including federal gas taxes. True. How else do you earn $4 trillion? And, the alternatives are more costly.

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This edition of PA TIMES sheds light on a vital yet challenging topic for those of us in the public, academic and nonprofit sectors: workforce management. We strive to measure program and individual success with objective and impartial metrics and return-on-investment statistics. We also recognize that critical to organizational success is a workplace culture that leads to employee satisfaction and engagement.

As leaders in these sectors, how do we find ways to achieve both goals? How do we reconcile the inevitable conflicts between bottom line results and the flexibility, balance and humanity we know improve employee morale and productivity?

My career includes experience in two branches of the federal government, leadership of several membership organizations and board service for many more nonprofits. In each and every workplace, measuring results at the organizational and individual level was difficult, time consuming, frustrating and often counterproductive.

Throughout the years, I have heard criticism from managers and front-line employees alike that includes doubts about the fundamental fairness of the process. Examples: My boss doesn’t like me personally. I shouldn’t be held responsible for something I don’t control. I am being penalized because my carpool leaves before my boss does.

Beyond fairness issues, organizations now wrestle with different generations in the workplace. Baby boomers arrive and leave at the same time every day; millennials may want to sit outside on a Spring afternoon but respond to emails in the evenings and on weekends; employees with family responsibilities want flexible hours to accommodate school children’s activities and elderly relatives’ medical appointments; those who live far from work or are environmentally sensitive want to telecommute.

And, of course, change is a reality and a perpetual condition. Mutually developed program and individual goals agreed upon a year earlier may not be relevant months, sometimes weeks, later. Citizens, customers, members and stakeholders expect us to be agile, flexible, up to date, meet increasing demands in real time and tackle problems as they arise.

We work differently today. Results often are not dependent on one individual but on a team, frequently working in different departments and even different organizations, each with a different supervisor. In these cases, supervisors should provide feedback as a project is in progress, as well as upon its completion—not months later.

Plus, just about everyone dislikes performance evaluations. The process takes hours and hours of time from the supervisor and employee, both of whom are overworked in the first place. It creates documentation that is rarely used or referenced only after the task is done. It typically evaluates only recent behavior and results since few can remember back a year to the start of the evaluation period.

Every day, leaders and supervisors around the world must take these concerns and conflicting demands into account and develop a workforce management philosophy and culture that are effective, fair and accountable to citizens and other stakeholders.

How? What can be done?

First, being a strong, effective supervisor does not come easily. Many in government and nonprofits are promoted into supervisory positions as it is the only way to increase the salary of an outstanding performer, subject matter or technical expert, or valuable employee being recruited away. These are legitimate reasons for promotion, but increasing rank or salary does not automatically make someone a strong coach, fair boss, good mentor or even someone with strong people skills. Supervisors need training when they first get the promotion and then throughout their career. They need not only a fulsome understanding of the program they manage, but the knowhow to leverage the diverse abilities, strengths and contributions of those working for them. They must understand how to help those same employees develop skills and improve weaknesses. They must know ways to resolve conflict, break down silos and encourage innovation.

Government, academic and nonprofit leaders should require training for all supervisors. Period. Full stop.

Second, consider eliminating the onerous annual review and replacing it with regular, real time, ongoing feedback and dialogue between employee and supervisor.

For the past 15 years, more and more organizations have taken this course. Organizations as different as IBM, Microsoft, Accenture, Gap, General Electric, American Forests, the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition and MathCounts have instituted alternatives.
In the October 2016 edition of *Harvard Business Review*, Peter Cappelli and Anna Tavis report, “The main reason more and more companies are dropping (annual reviews) is this: With their heavy emphasis on financial rewards and punishments and their end-of-year structure, they hold people accountable for past behavior at the expense of improving current performance and grooming talent for the future, both of which are critical for organization’s long-term survival.”

Workforce management has challenged leaders, managers and employees for decades. It is worth the time to study the matter and discuss it with our colleagues when we gather for ASPA’s 2018 Annual Conference in Denver. Join us and share the best practices you have developed in this arena and the many others that contribute to this year’s theme, Mission Focused and Service First: Creating Innovative Solutions.

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DYSFUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT

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not know if the nation could defend itself against foreign powers. Now, they would see a phenomenal economic expansion, the nation as a world power and that, partly due to U.S. efforts, “government of the people” has spread to many other countries.

John Pearson recently retired following a lengthy career as a program analyst in a federal government department, and now writes columns reflecting on his experience in public service. He can be reached at goingstrongn2014@gmail.com.

INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING

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Two more suggestions to ensure funds are used appropriately: First, utilize better cost-benefit analysis to determine the best use of the funds. For example, we should improve busy airports, not all airports. Second, stop worrying about where investments will create the most jobs and enabling politics to determine the projects. Rather, invest money where it is really needed for critical improvements and long-term economic benefit. Using jobs as the single funding criterion is a mistake.

This level of investment requires thoughtful consideration of spending priorities, policy constraints and regional differences. If we are going to invest $4 trillion, we need to do it intelligently.

Richard Keevey is former budget director and comptroller for New Jersey, appointed by Democrat and Republican governors. He held two presidential appointments as chief financial officer for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and deputy undersecretary for finance for the U.S. Department of Defense. A senior policy fellow at Rutgers University’s School of Planning and Policy and lecturer at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School, he can be reached at rkeevey@princeton.edu.
ETHICS MOMENT

TRANSACTIONAL ETHICS:
Smoke or Reality?

Every single day, you and I have exchanges with friends, family and even strangers whom we know only in passing or whom we encounter when purchasing a product or securing information. Our attitude and behavior, key ingredients in the nature of these transactions, will determine whether we get what we seek. Classical ethicists understood so well that transactional ethics required men and women to treat one another with dignity—or, to paraphrase 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, treat all beings as ends in themselves, not merely as means for arbitrary use. Similarly, the Golden Rule often serves as the ethical standard for how one should treat others.

But, how do transactional ethics stand up in the age of rampant consumerism, economic individualism and the all-too-frequent mindless pursuit of wealth—the kind that the lyrics in the show “Cabaret” so loudly call out:

Money makes the world go around
...the world go around
...the world go around
Money makes the world go around
It makes the world go ’round

A mark, a yen, a buck or a pound
...a buck or a pound
...a buck or a pound
Is all that makes the world go around
That clinking, clanking sound...
Can make the world go ’round

The answer to this question is not straightforward. On the one hand, an ethos that practically “anything goes” points to the nonexistence of transactional ethics. On the other, there is much to be said for good people trying to live a life of dignity and respect. However tempting, we cannot succumb to the view that everyone around us wishes to take advantage of us.

So, is transactional ethics a smoke screen behind which life plays out in a never ending struggle for advantage? Or, is it a reality that sometimes gets lost in the fog of life? You decide.

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For more than 50 years, NASA has been breaking barriers to achieve the seemingly impossible—from walking on the moon to pushing the boundaries of human spaceflight farther than ever before. We are passionate professionals united by a common purpose: To pioneer the future in space exploration, scientific discovery and aeronautics research. Today, we continue NASA’s legacy of excellence and innovation through an unprecedented array of missions. Join us as we reach for new heights and reveal the unknown for the benefit of humankind.

Thus begins your job search on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) website. Already, you know these are not your typical government positions.

This introductory paragraph also may give you a hint as to why, for the sixth year in a row, NASA has topped the list of the Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte’s Best Places to Work in the Federal Government. ASPA spoke with Elizabeth Kolmstetter, NASA’s workforce engagement division director, to find out exactly why NASA has held this distinction year after year.

“Everybody I ask has a different answer,” Kolmstetter said when we began our interview. “That’s what’s exciting. People feel they can bring out their best talent, whether it’s in science, engineering or one of the business professional groups. NASA gets the best talent because we truly believe in the people.”

The Best Places to Work rankings provide a comprehensive assessment of how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces. According to the Partnership, it includes employee perspectives on leadership, pay, innovation and work-life balance. In NASA’s case, Kolmstetter said leadership excellence, employee involvement and superior communication are the most important aspects of employees’ experiences. Some of the keys to success have been examples set by leadership from the top down, employee engagement and respect.

“We all respect each other and treat one another with a sense of appreciative inquiry and assumed positive intent, even when we disagree,” Kolmstetter said. “We also are all committed to the mission of the agency. That transcends; it’s the genetic DNA. People matter, you can have diverse dialogue and still feel respected at the end of the day.”

That said, employee satisfaction, positive intent and respect do not tell the whole story. NASA faces the same churn and turmoil as other agencies, as congressional and administration priorities change from one Congress or president to the next. How does it overcome the anxieties and ambiguities that accompany those changes?

“People think NASA has a singular focus and we don’t,” Kolmstetter said. “We have many component missions, strategic priorities and multiple programs, all of which evolve, change and are required to flex. We need a workforce that is adaptable based on priorities laid out by Congress and each presidential administration. The difference is we’re committed to the fact that it’s all great work; we just have to figure out how to make it happen. That’s how we get through change: by focusing on the right thing. By getting our people together, assessing how we are going to get the work done, training as needed, communicating, giving people new opportunities, taking action and solving problems effectively. We stay in pursuit of the next step.”

Despite its top ranking and positive intent, NASA is not immune to the workforce management challenges that other agencies face. Take commercialization of space, which has been good for the agency as it has explored and implemented several high profile public-private partnerships. Yet it also presents NASA its first real test: Competing for and recruiting new talent.

“Up until recently, NASA has been the only game in town for certain jobs like world-class astrophysicists,” Kolmstetter observed. “But, with
our partnerships with commercial aerospace companies, we’re now entering a highly competitive market for talent.”

How does it compete? Training and talent development, to start. More than just offering training courses for those interested, NASA leadership demands its people stay on top of their game.

“We expect our people to be world-class in their field and we make sure they’re viable and current in their profession. We also expect our leaders to develop their people, be strong mentors and create a positive, inclusive work environment. Our workforce members are partners in this investment. It’s an active role, not a passive one.”

NASA also has worked to offer benefits that come easier to it than other agencies, including telework, flexible work time and even remote work options. Many employees now take advantage of NASA’s Work from Anywhere program.

“Work from Anywhere means many in our knowledge-based workforce can work from anywhere, not just one telework location. Employees juggle many demands and technology now makes it possible to video or call into meetings, briefings, learning opportunities and more,” Kolmstetter said. “The future of work demands maximum flexibility while maintaining maximum productivity; our workforce is clearly interested in flexible locations, alternate work schedules and global collaboration.”

There are no rose-colored glasses at NASA. Despite occupying the top spot year-after-year, Kolmstetter was quick to note that not all employees are happy all the time and the agency does not rest on laurels that accompany a top ranking.

“This takes a concentrated effort every day. If we’re going to walk the talk and really make this about the people, we have to remain aware that not all employee experiences are the same. Acting Administrator Robert Lightfoot is our champion when it comes to caring about our people. He holds us all, especially leadership, accountable for continuous improvement, inclusion and making NASA a better place to work every day.

“Engagement isn’t one size fits all. People don’t come to public service for fame or fortune. The people I’ve worked with are happy to see their mission succeed without any front page story associated with it. We’re here because we want to support the American people and all humankind. If our mission is successful, we’re successful.”

It was impossible for Kolmstetter to hide the pride she thinks employees feel for the work they do, even in the Workforce Engagement Division, where more work always lies ahead. “There’s a sense at NASA that we all look up and wonder what is possible,” she noted. “How awesome is that? To be always exploring the next great scientific and aerospace discovery—the new discoveries that are broadening man’s place in space. If you’re exploring and seeking to understand things, no matter how small or large, that’s a mission that brings out the best in people.”

For more information on the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings, go to www.bestplacetowork.org.
HR2020 SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES: A Vision for the Public Sector

In late 2016, ASPA hosted a webinar on HR2020 Shifting Perspectives: A Vision for the Public Sector, a report looking at challenges and opportunities for public sector human resources professionals. Presenters were Mila Cosgrove, deputy city manager of Juneau, Alaska, and Lucinda Meltabarger, administrator of the human capital management division for the State of Oklahoma. The webinar was co-hosted by IPMA-HR, which established the task force that developed and released the report.

Below are excerpts from the speakers’ presentation. The entire webinar is available at www.aspanet.org/webinararchives (click on the link to the 2016 archives).

Mila Cosgrove: The task force was charged with two objectives: define the roadmap to success for the public sector HR profession and develop practical tools and resources that our HR colleagues can use going forward. In driving to that mission, we began with the question, Why is an effective HR function critical to achieving organizational success? Answering it directed us on a journey where we defined the customer-based outcome of our efforts and articulated our “why.”

From a customer standpoint, the desired outcome of government is to protect and enhance the quality of life for its citizens. This is true no matter the level of government. Government services are planned and delivered by people in our organizations; from a budgetary perspective, Personnel is our largest line item. So, if people are our main tool or resources, HR is uniquely situated to fundamentally shape organizational outcomes.

Those who follow HR are aware of the ongoing discussion over whether it has a “seat at the table.” As a group, we fundamentally agreed that we cannot argue whether we have that seat. Instead, we need to be bold and pull up a chair, whether invited or not. HR has something critical and important to add to the conversation; making the shift from transactional to transformational is both possible and imperative.

Lucinda Meltabarger: As we shared thoughts for this report, we began with these premises: We should be viewed as a leader. We should be able to recruit new talent. We should be able to foster appropriate risk taking. We should have data-driven decisionmaking. We should understand the challenges of the business world to know our organization’s true mission, focus and challenges. We should transfer knowledge as workers depart and others arrive. We should advise on strategic decisions.

We distilled our themes down to eight lenses: business acumen, innovation, strategic orientation, leadership, culture, talent, technology and communication. The lenses helped us view everything with clarity.

Business Acumen

Business acumen is the ability to see the organization with an executive level mentality—that is, to see the big picture and understand the components and how they fit together. HR professionals must look beyond their area of expertise and understand service delivery, organizational and resource constraints and key objectives for all of the clients our staff serve. This means learning public sector language and understanding metrics, performance measures, finances, technology, public process and political realities, both internal and external. It also means translating a message about how HR serves the organization at every level, from line employees to the executives.

How do we get there? Volunteer for assignments outside HR. Attend meetings of elected and appointed officials. Perform a critical self-assessment of knowledge gaps. And, talk about HR initiatives in terms of business outcomes.

Innovation

Innovation is important as the pace of change requires organizations to continuously improve to stay productive and relevant. This is especially true for HR. Moving forward is critical and HR is well positioned to be innovative. We have a unique view of the organization, having seen more of its functional parts than any other area. We can understand where things work well and offer ideas for innovation.

To move from having an innovative perspective to being a true innovation leader, you must be willing to take risks. The HR profession guards our organization against unnecessary risk, but we can experiment and help improve through pilot projects that create conceptional ideas. It also is critically important to coach senior leadership on change management strategies. Change for change’s sake is self destructive; it should relate to outcomes.
for operational changes, the rate dropped to 63 percent. How do we move forward from our current state to being a leader with a seat at the table? Seek mentoring or feedback. Consider yourself the chief marketing officer of HR. Designate a day or time of day to focus on the big picture. Interview leaders of other departments and front line employees. Develop the HR staff so they can understand “transactional” vs. “transformative.”

Culture
HR has significant opportunities to help all levels plan and change culture. We must focus on integrity and consistent practice of values. Employees need to trust that you value what you say you do. We need to work on system policies and procedures that are in alignment with (or slightly ahead of) senior leadership’ current values. We need to influence leadership by providing reasons why specific values should be integral to organizational culture. We need to champion employee engagement and client services to provide a reality check to senior leaders. And, we need to adopt and promote innovative practices to attract, select and promote employees with desired personality traits.

Talent
Talent management is where we systematically promote an approach for performance excellence by creating a culture of high engagement, workforce capability and capacity through integrated strategies. This includes learning and development programs that align with mission, vision and core values. But, there is a lot of discussion about talent in the public sector context. Baby boomers are departing, which means we are losing institutional knowledge. Managers also have a lack of confidence in the hiring process.

Ninety-four percent of our survey respondents agreed that talent management is vital to a public organization’s success. When asked if their organization can meet recruiting and retaining goals, only 37 percent said they were prepared.

What do we need to do? Create a culture that focuses on employee engagement. Educate ourselves about talent management and the urgency for implementing strategies within organizational culture. Revisit and revise antiquated employment rules, policies and procedures. Understand roles and responsibilities related to talent management and share them between HR and management.

Technology
Technology is key to creating potential opportunities and success as HR prepares organizations to deliver services and respond to future challenges. For the purposes of this study, we define technology

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Over the years, much has been written about the importance for the reformation of the current civil service system. In fact, President Barack Obama’s FY 2015-2017 budgets referenced the outdated federal personnel system by noting that “an alternative, cost-effective system needs to be developed that will allow the Government to compete for and reward top talent, while rewarding performance, and increase responsibilities of and encourage adequate flexibility to family caregivers, among other factors.”

Regardless of whether any legislative changes are on the horizon, agency management officials, including chief human capital officers, can take specific steps to make sure the federal workforce is aligned and poised to meet mission requirements. The passage of the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Act in 2002 and the subsequent enactment of the modernization of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA-MA) in 2010, provided the necessary framework to facilitate inter- and intra-agency collaboration in the design, development and implementation of strategic goals and objectives.

Recommended Actions

There are a number of steps an agency’s CHCO can take to help manage an agency’s workforce during times of transition. These include:

1. Strengthening the Link Between Strategic Planning and Human Capital Management

The modernization of GPRA in 2010 established a well-defined strategic planning timeline for federal agency leaders to follow during the initial stages of a new administration. Specifically, by law, the head of each agency is required to produce and publish a new strategic plan by the first Monday in February, one year after the Presidential inauguration.

In addition to establishing this regular strategic planning cadence, GPRA-MA also solidified the importance of sound management oversight and execution by creating the chief operating officer (COO) position in government. Among other important duties, an agency’s COO is responsible for coordinating and collaborating with other C-suite executives to develop, implement, track and report progress against strategic planning goals, objectives and outcomes. While these priorities are being established, an agency’s CHCO must provide keen insights to the strategic planning process and ensure that the organization’s workforce is aligned to execute its mission.

2. Analyzing Key Workforce Trends

In order to contribute to the strategic planning process, an agency must have the systems and processes in place to capture, let alone analyze, the impact of key trends. Before charging full steam ahead into the world of predictive analytics, it is important to first understand the availability, reliability, and validity of existing data that is being used to drive and inform agency decisions.

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) data provides one important vantage point to understanding key trends. However, the richness of FEVS data should not be viewed as the ultimate source for basing strategic human capital decisions. Depending on the availability of data and sophistication of the underlying information technology systems, agencies should begin identifying ways to overlay data for a more comprehensive view of the critical trends. For example, mapping employee engagement with customer service data and turnover trends could
yield important information about the overall engagement, performance or developmental needs of a specific functional area, program or office.

3. Solidifying the Talent Pipeline

On Dec. 15, 2015, President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order designed to strengthen and improve the talent management, succession planning, recruitment and development processes for our government’s Senior Executive Service (SES). With more than 60 percent of the SES workforce eligible for retirement in 2016, the timing of the President’s Executive Order could not be more critical heading into a change in administration. Although we have yet to experience the much-anticipated retirement wave, agencies that have been planning for the potential loss of talent and institutional knowledge are in a better position to replace key staff when turnover occurs.

Taken in isolation, a retirement wave could have a devastating impact on the government’s ability to achieve its mission and manage its workforce. However, a five-year trend analysis of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) FedScope database yields important information for agencies to consider. Specifically, from FY 2009-2014 more employees quit (455,000) federal service compared to those who retired (366,000). An astounding 84 percent of those quitting federal service during this timeframe left before reaching their 10-year service anniversary. So, if you look at these trends as a whole, it would seem that the retirement wave may be compounded by a strong undercurrent of employees quitting federal service.

In short, the President’s Executive Order on strengthening the SES workforce is an important first step to ensuring agencies have strategies in place to transition new leaders into executive level positions. However, without the proper succession planning, recruitment, hiring and talent management strategies in place at all levels of the organization, the talent pipeline may run dry long before the well can be replenished.

4. Focusing on Employee Engagement

In 2015, slightly more than 421,000 employees responded to the FEVS. Multiplying this population by the number of items on the survey (84), gives the federal government an impressive 35 million unique responses that can be categorized and organized by agency, organization, and specific demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, tenure, grade level, etc.).

While the survey yields an impressive amount of detail and information, analyzing the survey trend data can be simplified based on the way items are grouped. For instance, OPM organizes similar items into three important indices: (1) Engagement Index; (2) Global Satisfaction Index; and (3) New Inclusion Quotient (New IQ) Index. The index measures provide an incoming administration a fast and reliable way to understand critical trends.

As illustrated in the five-year trend analysis chart of the FEVS Engagement Index, differing employee perceptions are evident for leadership, supervisors and work experiences.

While it is important to reinforce the earlier point about layering human capital data for strategic planning purposes, an incoming administration will undoubtedly ask for a historical analysis of employee engagement trends during their transition briefings. Providing this data with an appropriate level of analysis coupled with key actions needed to improve employee engagement can solidify the value of the CHCOs throughout and beyond the transition process.

5. Underscoring the Importance of Operations

While it is important to focus on the strategic aspects of managing the federal workforce, without good processes in place at the operational level, an agency CHCO may have difficulty contributing credibly to the strategic planning process.

Throughout the years, administrations have attempted to streamline, expedite and improve the federal hiring process. While some improvements have been made, there still appears to be a recognized rift between the human resource office and managers related to important indicators including speed and quality of the hiring process. Successful agencies are able to keep an open dialogue and promote collaboration between HR and managers on important aspects of the hiring process, including identifying key competencies by position, designing assessments, writing job announcements and selecting candidates.

Conclusion

Since the passage of the CHCO Act in 2002, federal departments and agencies have taken steps to improve their strategic human capital practices and human resource operational activities. However, the strengthening and modernization of the GPRA in 2010 reinforced the importance of cross-agency collaboration by ensuring that all C-suite functions are involved in the design, development and implementation of the strategic planning process. As the new administration embarks on this process, CHCOs will play an important role in establishing goals, strategies and objectives. CHCOs will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the federal workforce will be poised to meet its mission requirements.
We understand the importance of data and the need for technology to get us raw data to build reports. That said, the public sector does not always have the budget to develop the technology that provides accurate, real-time workforce data. In the future, technology should enhance communication with employees and those in training. Our professionals must have access to data for the workforce it supports.

**Communication**

Communications touches every employer and changes rapidly. Currently, many things we do can be accessed by stakeholders outside the organization. We have younger workers working with real-time, accurate information. Drafting a long memo and sending it through multiple review channels to go out to employees are antiquated. Today’s workforce expects timely messages.

We asked an open-ended question about what concerns staff the most about their communications method. The respondents provided answers that fell into three categories:

1. Difficulty communicating with staff without access to computers.
2. Failure to adopt a millennial communication strategy.
3. Consistency in communication throughout organization.

We need to partner with departments and agencies to develop communications plans, build messaging appropriate for a given social platform with a consistent look and feel and encourage executive leadership to cascade all information.

**Meltabarger:** Our best advice is to be a leader, read the report and do a thoughtful self analysis to your performance. Your clients will tell you how you are doing if you are willing to ask and listen. Then, use the feedback to develop an action plan for your performance and HR function.

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Citizens in many democratic nations are calling into question whether their countries can deliver for them. Public frustration is increasing on income security, health care, public safety, education, public spending, infrastructure, corruption and inequality, to name just a few. For quite some people, frustration has turned into resignation and cynicism.

That these concerns are widespread globally—and not limited to a specific nation or political ideology—suggests that something is taking place about the way democratic governance is practiced, especially at national levels where concern about progress seems most profound.

It has become popular to cast the matter as legislative gridlock or personal or leadership ineptitude. However, my observation from around the world leads to a different conclusion: the lack of public administration theory and practice on democratic leadership in national governments.

National leadership is a topic about which the public administration community should have more to say than it has. Political science theory has been plentiful about political control of national bureaucracies. But, the point here is a different one: We need greater executive leadership where political leadership is lacking, as many have said is the case.

This is no swipe at political leadership, per se. Political accountability in democracies has done a great deal to ensure human rights and civil liberties; political leadership is a proven source of needed policy change in bureaucracies. Political accountability also provides legitimacy of which one-party states often are envious. Rather, this argument is more focused.

As modern government comprises thousands and thousands of programs, the very large number of leadership tasks in national departments requires contributions from political appointees and career executives alike. Political officials and legislatures provide some leadership, but it is inevitable that more is needed from career executives.

It is worth contemplating the extent of this challenge, an important numbers game. Senior leadership in national departments has hundreds, sometimes thousands, of programs to lead. Its responsibilities include implementing a president’s policy agenda, ensuring overall strategic direction, providing accountability to legislatures and media, managing coordination of regionally or globally dispersed operations, managing legal risks, providing leadership in crisis conditions, ensuring investments in capability development and even more (I recently provided an extended list in Administration & Society). Although the number of “major” national programs is seldom well catalogued, 7,000-10,000 is a reasonable guess. What about leadership for all of them? Take a recent New York Times article, reporting that the U.S. vehicle fatality rate is about 40 percent higher than Canada’s or Australia’s, as other countries have embarked on evidence-based campaigns to reduce vehicle crashes. That the United States has not is not necessarily a matter of political ideology, but the reality of “other priorities.” Now, imagine this lack of leadership across thousands of other programs. The need for leadership becomes clear.

It is beyond the capacity of democratically elected officials and their appointees to provide leadership for all of the above; indeed, they usually do not. A distinctive feature of democracy is what I call “distributed leadership” in national departments, a need to ensure that leadership tasks are well distributed across appointees and executives who comprise senior management. There are appointee-led leadership and executive-led leadership; today’s challenge is to increase the latter on major issues and do so with political accountability. The nature of distributed senior leadership is distinctive in the
public sector; no such focus, theory or practice is found in the private sector. More should be made of it in public administration theory.

Political accountability of increased executive leadership is not a very difficult task; it involves appointees giving a thumbs up—or down—and input for executives’ initiatives, though sometimes involving legislative coordination, too. The greater challenge is to ensure proper conditions and incentives for executives’ strategic leadership. In fact, this leadership is found already in many technical and security agencies. Judging by the other issues, we need much more of it.

Comparative public administration shows insight into practices that could be further developed. First, we might start training political appointees for their governance tasks, as many are not aware of what is expected of them; few are prepared. As officials, training can be required, similar to ethics, media and legislative relations. Role clarity and accountability matter, too. Such training could be legislated, as necessary.

Second, we should shine greater light on departments’ strategic capabilities and performance. Are they capable of providing what citizens rightly expect based on their missions and authorized program objectives? What strategic challenges do they and major programs face? Are they meeting them? An office of accountability could provide external assessment, led by credible experts. In democracies, citizens, voters, legislators and the press have a right to know how well departments and major programs are being led.

Third, strategic leadership should be a criterion for executive appointment and reappointment, promotion and performance bonuses. Doing so increases the pressure to take leadership seriously on all parties; all executives must be strategic leaders, regardless of their appointees’ dispositions. Assessing strategic leadership can be part of the appraisal, with personnel commissions as appraisers that oversee selection, promotion and rewards of senior civil servants.

Fourth, we should set aside budgetary resources for new executive initiatives, either trials or pilot efforts by executive order. The outcomes, if positive, can later be written into law. Appointees can veto those inconsistent with their ideology and give guidance as needed. In many agencies, new initiatives are funded from efficiency savings.

These practices are far from pipe dreams. China, Singapore, New Zealand and South Korea already practice them to varying degrees. It is time to learn from other countries, even if we do not wish to become like them in other ways. A good practice is a good practice. Empowering executives to show greater leadership will not solve every problem, but it must be a priority in these times. We may have been asking too much of our political leaders and their appointees. Reform of appointee-executive relations is imperative for democracies around the world.

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Pay for Performance Is Here to Stay

By Howard Risher

A late December headline in Government Executive read, “White House Calls for ‘Fundamental Reform’ to Feds’ Pay.” The column was prompted by the release of the Federal Pay Agent’s annual report. In a joint statement, the secretary of labor, director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget described the salary program they wanted to see:

“We believe it is imperative to develop performance-sensitive compensation systems that will contribute to a government that is more citizen centered, results oriented, and market based. We need to empower federal agencies to better manage, develop and reward employees in order to better serve the American people.”

If this description is translated into a successful replacement for the General Schedule (GS) salary system, it is likely to become a model for other public employers. Yet there are major hurdles. One is the training needed to prepare 250,000 supervisors to manage pay and performance. A second: Convincing 2 million skeptics that pay decisions will be fair.

When public employers replace a salary program, the most popular model is based on “broadbands.” The idea, which gained popularity in the private sector when GE adopted it in 1990, is based on the program model commonly used for college faculties. Discussed and recommended in federal reports and proven in several states, it significantly simplifies and reduces the time and cost to determine how much a job is paid. When a new salary system is introduced, jobs can be slid horizontally from the old to new salary system with minimal disagreement. The banded salary model also makes individual performance and career progression the focus of salary increases, providing flexibility to respond to labor market developments.

Is Pay for Performance the Best Alternative?
In the January-February 2009 issue of Public Administration Review, James Perry published a lengthy summary of the research on pay for performance (PFP) (“Back to the Future: Performance-Related Pay, Empirical Research, and the Perils of Persistence”). His conclusions were largely negative. I followed with a rebuttal article.

Rereading what he and I each wrote, I was surprised that I would change very little of my argument today. My more than 40 years as a consultant and manager have convinced me that when employees are rewarded for performance, performance improves and employees are more engaged.

Researchers too often make the mistake of assessing PFP in isolation. The alternatives are general pay increases or step increase policies. Yet neither contributes to an organization’s success. Even more, neither would attract better qualified millennial job seekers. For organizations concerned with talent management, PFP is the logical choice.

It is important to appreciate that PFP encompasses four proven plan concepts: merit salary increases; piece-rate incentives, with payouts linked to individual productivity; group or team incentives, with payouts linked to achieving goals; and gainsharing group plans with payouts linked to savings. Each can contribute to improved performance. A fifth, discretionary bonuses, are inconsistent with theory as experience shows that bias and discrimination are common. Companies limit discretionary payments to small “spot” awards.

PFP is so deeply entrenched in the private sector that research there effectively ended years ago. Merit salary increase policies essentially are universal for all exempt employees. Executives, managers and at least senior professionals also participate in group incentives, with payouts linked to a combination of company and individual goal achievement.

No one in business would seriously question the importance of financial rewards or suggest returning to policies where cost increases are automatic and unrelated to company performance. To be sure, PFP is not without problems. There are examples of incentives driving deleterious behavior. Wells Fargo
Bank is a recent one. Those situations can be avoided with better planning. However, the stories confirm the power of incentives to influence behavior.

The PFP debate has been the focus of countless columns, including a column on the PATimes.org website in 2011, where Joseph Adler asked, “If there are jurisdictions with a successful PFP system please forward any information to the email address below.” Others have entered the debate, including Bill Wilder, human resources director for the city of Charlotte during a time when it was nationally recognized for its management practices, including PFP. More recently, I offered two columns discussing the new salary system Tennessee has introduced, and Indiana is yet another state making the change. Some states have PFP policies going back to the late 1960s. It is safe to describe the trend as a slowly moving tidal wave.

What Is Needed for Success
The Adler column concludes with a key point— “...PFP has become a permanent part of the political and public administration landscape”—and ends with a list of what the “literature suggests” are the reasons for problems. Based on my experience, here are some necessary steps to avoid them:

• Elected leaders must make PFP a priority and hold executives accountable for its success.
• This is best planned as a management initiative, not a human resources one.
• The foundation for successful PFP is a credible basis for managing performance and employees need to believe increases will be fairly determined.
• Employees and managers must be involved in the planning; they understand better than anyone what will be accepted.
• Employers need to invest in preparing managers to manage staff performance so that it improves. Follow-up training each year would be helpful.
• Human resources must review annual ratings and increases for patterns that suggest bias or discrimination.
• A proven approach requires managers to justify high and low ratings in meetings with peer level managers.
• At year end, employees should be surveyed or asked to join in focus groups to identify areas for improvement and management must commit to addressing problems.

Success makes agencies a better place to work. That benefits both employees and the public.

Howard Risher has been a consultant on pay for performance for more than 40 years. He managed consulting practices in two national firms and also managed the pay programs in two large corporations. He is a graduate of Penn State and University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School. He is the author or editor of six books, including Primer on Total Compensation in Government. He can reached at h.risher@verizon.net.
It was an exciting shift for Kassie Dulin — becoming director at the nation’s largest law firm devoted to religious liberty in America. Her master’s from Regent University made her resume stand out. “Regent’s online model provided an unparalleled combination of high-quality instruction, flexibility and specialization,” she says. Our faculty, with experience in government agencies and the military, blend principled theory and real-world practice so you can advance in business, nonprofit, public service, policy making and more. Move to a new level in your career.

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Tell us about your Section. Looking at health and human services administration, what are the aspects on which you focus the most?

The Section on Health and Human Services Administration (SHHSA) is broadly focused on research and practices that touch on both health care and human services administration. Rather than narrow the focus, SHHSA is committed to providing and supporting venues for discussion on both areas that are interesting to our practitioner and academic members. SHHSA-sponsored panels at the ASPA Annual Conference reflect this approach, as are the webinars we plan for 2018 on issues related to technology in health care, program delivery and evaluation and health care budgeting and finance.

What are your Section’s primary objectives?

SHHSA’s primary objectives include:

- Providing a forum for the exchange and dissemination of ideas, knowledge and information among academics and practitioners involved in managing health and human services programs.
- Fostering and developing global working networks among academics, agencies and practitioners related to health and human services administration.
- Being a conduit for ideas, knowledge and information to the ASPA membership, related organizations and the public at large.
- Supporting students who select health and human services administration as an area of study and mentoring graduate students and young faculty members in these areas.

What are the top concerns within health care and human services today and why?

At the top are the stability of health care insurance systems and the cost of health care; there are a number of top public administration scholars writing about aspects of these issues, such as Medicaid waivers. The macro-level complexities found in insurance systems are found elsewhere in health care. For example, the types of roles in health care and human services organizations are increasingly complex; it is important that those interested in these fields better understand how personality and collaborative capabilities can shape service provision. It is also important to understand how interprofessional interactions affect service provision—how people in different occupations must collaborate while treating a patient or providing a service—and how interpersonal relationships matter in interorganizational partnerships. Finally, we must delve into how individual health care and human services providers understand rules, react to complex and changing situations and are comfortable with new technologies. These issues are core to administration and management.

This issue’s theme—public workforce management—has significant implications on health care, mental health issues, family leave concerns and more. How does SHHSA intersect with this subject and what do you consider the most important aspects of workforce management?

The growing scope and role of U.S. health care means these critical issues will continue to be an important discussion when it comes to workforce management. Job growth in health care is consistent due to an aging population, which is further magnified by increased demand for health care services later in life, and newer technologies that...
expand the number and types of public sector roles people must fill. The number of individuals filling traditional roles must increase and appropriate training programs must be developed to address new and innovative roles.

Beyond this expansion, those studying the health care workforce are interested in the ways that health care providers interact with coworkers and patients, and how they understand and implement policies in these interactions. The diversity of coworkers and patients requires that those working in front-line positions must strive to understand cultural differences, broadly defined. Technology also plays an important role, as it infuses these interactions. New technology, both our common conceptions of it as well as related practices, will be crucial in both shaping interpersonal interactions and improving caring processes.

Given that SHHSA focuses on government and nonprofit angles of health and human services administration, what do you see as the primary differences between the two?

The complexity of U.S. health care delivery and payment systems results in shifting and fuzzy boundaries between sectors and functions. Although it is tempting to draw clean boundaries to shape our discussions of health care, we are forced to consider the sectoral differences on a case-by-case basis. That is, those interested in research or contributing to practice must examine the specifics of the state, function, health care specialty, patient type and reimbursement system.

What is SHHSA’s most valuable benefit, according to members? What programs and publications help to strengthen their participation?

Section members have indicated that access to the Journal of Health and Human Services Administration is the most valuable benefit. They receive a print copy of the journal four times annually and, though a majority of our members have online access to it via their university library, we are investigating the possibility of offering online access via the JHHSA website. Mary Ann Feldheim recently took the helm as editor of the journal and has crafted a broad vision focused on a healthy communities model incorporating individual, community, civic, environmental and economic health.

How did you become an ASPA member and get involved in SHHSA?

I joined ASPA in 2007 as a doctoral student at Rutgers—Newark at the suggestion of then-Dean Marc Holzer. Since then, I have served as treasurer and executive committee member of the Section on Public Performance and Management, coordinator for the ASPA-NISPAcee MOU secretariat, executive committee member of the New York Metro Chapter and membership task force member. Though I have been an SHHSA member for 11 years, my real involvement began last year during conversations with current leaders about the Section’s efforts and impact. ASPA has been invaluable for professional networking, presenting and getting constructive feedback on my research, and in providing service opportunities.

For more on the Section on Health and Human Service Administration, go to https://shhsa.wordpress.com. Henderson can be reached at alexander.henderson@liu.edu.
THE FOUNDERS’ FELLOWS PROGRAM:  
Reflections from the 2017 Class

The Founders’ Fellows program is ASPA’s premier program that recognizes the current and future accomplishments of the next generation of those serving the public good, whether in the academic or practitioner communities, or both. Inducted during ASPA’s 2017 Annual Conference, the 25-member class—selected following a rigorous review process—represents the best of ASPA and public administration.

As ASPA welcomes the next class of Founders’ Fellows at the 2018 Annual Conference in Denver, PA TIMES asked several 2017 Fellows to reflect on their experiences and share their insights with those pursuing careers in public affairs. They were Sombo Chunda of Virginia Commonwealth University; Javon Davis of the City of Kansas City, Mo.; Ana-Maria Dimand of Florida International University; Brittany Haupt of University of Central Florida; Andrea Headley of Florida International University; and Zehavit Levitats of the University of Haifa.

How has your experience as a Founders’ Fellow shaped your experience of public administration?

Chunda: Prior to being a Founders’ Fellow, I had travelled to more than 20 countries around the world. My understanding of public administration was largely informed by my experiences in my home country and observations from my travels. Being a Fellow has helped me understand and experience public administration at a deeper level. Public administration should never be relegated to the mercy of politicians, but instead thrive and be responsive so government can function well.

Through this program, I have felt directed to seek ways to make the essence of public administration a reality, from the first day of the program. I realize this is not achievable by one person. It needs a variety of people to be involved and engaged in processes at different levels. I have asked myself, How can excellence be attained in a very complex political environment, a complexity that spans the globe? There can be many responses; one that was strengthened in my Fellowship year is that people are at the core of effective, noble public administration.

Davis: At the 2017 Annual Conference, it was insightful as a practitioner to be among emerging academics looking to produce research to help move government forward. It has been extremely beneficial to be part of a network that includes leading researchers looking to tackle the same issues that I am. Through mentorship and access, this program has been an excellent opportunity for me to grow and become a more well rounded administrator. The diversity of interests within our cohort taught me about a wide range of topics, from emergency management and policing policy to procurement and human capital. The research was enlightening, but it also helped demonstrate how complex and multifaceted public administration can be.

It should be every public administrator’s goal to make evidence-based, data-driven decisions. This network has given me a pipeline to some of the best researchers in the country. The program and ASPA put that notion into practice and created an environment where academics, practitioners and those in between can collaborate, innovate and learn from each other.

Dimand: The Founders’ Fellow experience has given me an unrivaled opportunity to build strong relationships in public administration. The 2017 cohort is a sample of outstanding young scholars and new professionals. Our diverse backgrounds paved the way for a beneficial dialogue and outstanding exchange of ideas. The feedback obtained during the Founders’ Fellows panels was of chief importance in the development of my dissertation.

The Annual Conference is one of the largest and best conferences I have attended so far; being a fellow made it twice as beneficial and enjoyable. The opportunity helped me grow as an individual
and a scholar. I am certain there always will be opportunities to collaboration with the scholars in the cohort who share my research interests.

**Levitats:** The Founders’ Fellow experience has extensively enriched and broadened my view of public administration. One of the unique benefits of the Annual Conference, and the program in particular, is integrating outstanding scholarly work and practitioners’ know-how. Attendance at young and senior scholars’ diversified research presentations, as well as panels led by practitioners, helped me deepen my understanding of the discipline, gain scholarly insights into its unique attributes and increase my appreciation for the significant tasks of public administration, worldwide.

Moreover, my experience in the program has provided me with tools to advance my academic career. My mentor has instilled in me much confidence during the program and it is thanks to her advice that I had the opportunity to meet with senior scholars in my field of study, with prospects for future collaboration. I found my cohorts’ work to be intriguing and they still provide me with new perspectives from which to pursue my research, as we remain connected both through ASPA activities and social media.

**How has your relationship with your Founders’ Fellows mentor shaped your professional development?**

**Davis:** I was partnered with an excellent mentor. Before talking to him, my knowledge of procurement and procurement policy was extremely limited. He helped give me a basic understanding of an aspect of government on which many public sector entities spend a generous portion of their budgets. This understanding has played a role in how I view procurement within my current role and has encouraged me to dig deeper into the effects of procurement, city-wide.

Additionally, being paired with someone who works in a related field, whom I can see at several conferences throughout the year and with whom I can check in, is very beneficial to maintaining and growing our relationship. He has been extremely insightful and has given great advice about working in local government, networking and how to handle obstacles that one can face early in their professional journey. I am grateful for his mentorship and know that we will stay connected well beyond my year in the program.

**Dimand:** I was assigned to a mentor with experience both in academia and practice. My mentor has been working for local government in the United States for a number of years, has earned a doctoral degree and has taught in a public administration program. I was very pleased when I learned who my mentor was going to be—it was a perfect match.

We established a phone meeting and discussed the goals we wanted to reach during the coming year. We also met face to face during the conference and exchanged stories about the Ph.D. program and work-life balance strategies. During the Founders’ Fellow panels, I presented the ideas I had for my dissertation. My mentor attended my presentation and provided valuable feedback and collaboration opportunities.

**Headley:** One of the unique aspects of the program is the mentorship pairing providing to each Fellow. Being paired with someone who has had extensive involvement in the field of public administration, higher education and ASPA was extremely beneficial for me. My mentor was able to provide me with insights regarding the academic job market, as well as public service more generally. He also served as a bridge to connect me to other people who he felt shared mutual interests and could serve as good role models. The open relationship provided by my mentor really allowed me to feel comfortable asking him any questions, which has been extremely beneficial.

**Levitats:** The relationship with my mentor was one of the most empowering experiences I have had in my professional and academic career. In our first conversation, prior to the conference, she showed true interest in me and my work and provided me with instrumental tips for making the most out of the program. During the conference, she attended my presentation and showed true pride and interest in my work, as if it were her own. Further, she took the time to introduce me to leading senior scholars in our field and help me build a meaningful professional network. Her support in me as a Fellow, Ph.D. student and future professor instilled confidence in me throughout the program and beyond.

**What part of your Founders’ Fellows experience has been the most meaningful this year and how so?**

**Chunda:** I think learning from my mentor has been most meaningful and connecting with my cohort has been inspiring and encouraging. My mentor delivered a lecture at ASPA’s 2017 Annual Conference from which I learned that a picture can be painted about you and you have the power to define who you are. While the lecture was designed in keeping with the overall conference theme, the lesson is useful in everyday life. The moment we stop
Through this program, I have met amazing people from across the world and I am still in touch with some. One even asked me to share my experiences working in my country with his students to help them have a broader perspective on what the situation is like elsewhere.

**Davis:** The most meaningful part of this experience has been the relationships I have gained within the cohort. I still stay in contact with many of the Fellows and they serve as a great sounding board for any ideas I have regarding research and career steps. The program does a great job bringing individuals together who are still trying to figure things out and giving them a little community in which to find support and guidance. While in Atlanta, a group of current and former Fellows came together to create the Students and New Administration Professionals Section, which expanded the opportunities for collaboration among newcomers in the discipline.

It is always great to meet and work with civic-minded emerging professionals who, like you, want to make the world a better place. The program gave me 25 new friends to socialize with during conferences or otherwise. I know I can also reach out to them to hear how their localities are handling certain issues. Having a diverse and informed network of people who share interests has been amazing. I remember leaving Atlanta feeling inspired by the people I met in the cohort and feeling confident that the future of public administration is extremely bright.

**Haupt:** I think the most meaningful aspect is the relationships with other doctoral students and new professionals. The doctoral journey can be very isolating at times, especially if your program does not have a high student population. Navigating the ups and downs is alleviated through a support network that helps affirm your progress. This program created a space for networking on a personal level, as well as professional. The individuals with whom I connected rejuvenated my spirit.

**Headley:** The most meaningful part of my experience has been the networking. At the Annual Conference, being a Fellow was a distinct honor that many know to be a very competitive process. Not only was I able to network with other students and new professionals in ASPA who will be my colleagues in the field, but also, being a Fellow opened up other opportunities for networking. The Fellows’ welcoming reception and recognition ceremony included other senior scholars in the field who attended and mingled with the cohort. Attending the Student and New Professional Summit, I was able to interact with the speakers in a more intimate environment. These opportunities and more provided me with the opportunity to broaden my network and make meaningful connections with people who I may not have had the opportunity before.

What has been your most powerful learning experience this year?

**Chunda:** Things can be done differently and there is always room for improvement. Prior to my year in the program, I had worked for many years as country manager for an international NGO. When you get into a program like this, there is a risk that you will fail to connect with people. Founders’ Fellows helped me navigate this. When I sat through the first day of presentations at the 2017 conference, I realized there are always alternative actions to take and even better ways can be sought.

**Davis:** As one of my rotations as a Cookingham-Noll Management Fellow, I spent four months working in the Office of Community Engagement, Policy and Accountability within the Kansas City Health Department. This office aims to fix upstream issues that contribute to health inequities in our city, many of which stem from racial and economic segregation, limited educational opportunities, lack of resources and neighborhood disinvestment. While I have always known there is poverty in every major city in the United States, it has been extremely eye-opening to work with the resulting issues first-hand. One of the most compelling data points I learned was that there is a 13-year difference in our highest and lowest average life expectancy when looking at zip codes in our city. Unfortunately, Kansas City is not alone; that is the story for many major metropolitan areas. The work from this rotation has stuck with me and encouraged me to work on social equity issues within my community.

**Levitats:** The most powerful learning experience the program provided is greater self-confidence. Coming to this program as a young doctoral student, I was hesitant about presenting my research in front of such a dignified group of people. However, the program is structured in such a manner that it feels safe and empowering. ASPA’s president and executive staff, the program’s mentors and ASPA’s Student Representative are all very supportive and make the Fellows feel confident and relaxed. The positive experience motivated me to further step out of my comfort zone and experience growth. Thanks to this positive experience, I attended various academic conferences and programs during the past year, of which one of the most professional and...
exciting was ASPA’s 2017 Young Scholars Workshop, that took place in Chennai, India.

What will you take with you from this experience that will shape the next few years of your career?

Chunda: I value human connections and relationships. I am taking with me the amazing people I have met who have been of great inspiration in many ways. I am also taking with me the quest for excellence and passion. Working in public administration can be a tough and thankless job. It is easy to find someone to blame—and most of the blame falls on those charged with the responsibility to implement the government policies or train the implementers. To stay strong, I will need passion to pour myself into the hard work required. Founders’ Fellows is prestigious and the mark of excellence on it is worthy of aspiration. When my time comes to be a peer mentor or a senior mentor, I want to take on the opportunity with full responsibility, passing down what I have learned.

Haupt: There are many things I will carry with me. The main aspect I hope to continue is to listen, understand and validate students, given that I hope to become a professor. My doctoral journey was not typical and the lessons I have learned will be infused into my teaching and mentoring practices. Perhaps one day I will be a Founders’ Fellow mentor and can impart my wisdom and experience onto future public administrators.

Levitats: Being a Fellow shaped my realization of the importance of collaboration and networking as a scholar. The insightful interaction with both cohorts and senior scholars has positively shaped my entire outlook on the role of networking in academia. I believe that sharing work and ideas with colleagues is essential to my current and future growth.

Sombo Chunda is a Ph.D. student in public policy and administration in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research interests are in public accountability and international development. A native of Zambia, Chunda worked as country manager for an international development organization. She can be reached at chundasm@mymail.vcu.edu.

Javon Davis serves as a Cookingham-Noll management fellow in the City Manager’s Office of the City of Kansas City, Missouri. In this role, he works on initiatives to make the city a more equitable place. A graduate of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, he can be reached at Javon.davis@kcmo.org.

Ana-Maria Dimand is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Public Administration at Florida International University. Originally from Romania, she worked there for a central government organization, initially as a legal advisor, and specialized in public procurement. She left her position as head of the public procurement office to pursue her Ph.D. with a research focus on sustainability in public procurement, government collaboration and contract management. She can be reached at adima007@fiu.edu.

Brittany Haupt is a doctoral student in University of Central Florida’s public affairs program. Her research includes cultural competence, crisis communication, community resilience and competency-based education with publications in Public Administration Review, Journal of Public Affairs Education, Disaster Prevention and Management, Journal of Emergency Management, Risk, Crises, and Hazards in Public Policy, and Frontiers in Communication. She can be reached at bhaupt@knights.ucf.edu.

Andrea Headley is completing her last year as a doctoral candidate in public affairs at Florida International University. She holds an MS from FIU and a BS from the University of Miami. Headley’s research, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, centers on organizational behavior and police-community relations. She can be reached at ahead004@fiu.edu.

Zehavit Levitats is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Haifa’s School of Political Science in Israel. Her research centers on public management and the relationship between public servants’ emotions, attitudes and performance. She holds a master’s degree in organizational development consulting and teaches management skills in the university’s Executive Master of Public Administration Program. Levitats received the James E. Webb award for best paper and presentation at ASPA’s 2017 Annual Conference. She can be reached at zhativ@gmail.com.
Members in the News

American University Names Wilkins as New Dean

Vicky Wilkins has been named the new dean of American University’s School of Public Affairs, effective January 8.

Announcing the selection, President Sylvia Burwell said Wilkins “...is a strong and collaborative leader, thrives at developing creative and entrepreneurial high quality approaches to education, research and outreach, and is the right person to work with the school’s students, faculty and staff to take the school to the next level.”

An internationally recognized scholar, highly regarded teacher and experienced administrator, Wilkins came to the university in 2014 after holding faculty and administrative positions for 11 years in the Department of Public Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. Her successes continued as the School of Public Affairs’ senior associate dean for academic affairs. Her accomplishments in recruiting and retaining distinguished faculty, growing graduate enrollments and formalizing valuable partnerships led her to serve as interim dean last fall.

Wilkins earned her Ph.D. in political science at the University of Missouri—Columbia. She holds the faculty rank of professor of public administration and policy with research interests in representation, specifically minorities, women and policy outcomes. She is a nationally and internationally recognized expert in representative bureaucracy and street-level bureaucrats.

In Memoriam: Mario Rivera

Mario Rivera, regents professor of public administration at the University of New Mexico (UNM), passed away Dec. 22, 2017 at the age of 70.

A lifelong educator, Rivera worked at UNM since 1993. He held a Ph.D. and master’s degree from the University of Notre Dame and a BA from Harvard. Late last year, he was elected as a National Academy of Public Administration fellow.

In Memoriam: Francis Yanak

Francis Yanak passed away Dec. 3, 2017 at the age of 89. An active ASPA member for more than 15 years, he was a familiar face and highly respected member of the Bay Area Chapter and belonged to both the Section on Personnel Administration and Labor Relations and Section on Public Law and Administration.

Yanak served in the Army as a longshoreman during World War II and later in Korea, and graduated from Seattle University. A federal government career employee with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, his service spanned 34 years in eight geographic locations. It included assignments as project manager with the Equal Employment Opportunity Program in Washington, DC and regional director in St. Louis and San Francisco. Following retirement, he worked for Bank of America and had assignments for the United Nations in Indonesia and China.

During retirement, Yanak earned his MPA and Ph.D. from the University of Southern California, after which he taught in Golden Gate University’s EMPA Program for more than a decade.
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Mississippi
Mississippi
Mississippi
Nebraska
Nebraska
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New Jersey
New Jersey
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Oklahoma
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