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Harnessing the Power of Data to Improve Government Services

It's all about the data—make that, *data management*.

For decades, governments have developed policy and programmatic frameworks that promote collecting, analyzing, deciding on, and disseminating information in ways that drive better results and make most effective use of public resources. In the U.S. government, law and policy—ranging from the Paperwork Reduction Act and E-Government Act to the Privacy and Federal Information Management and Security Act—have guided agency actions around using and protecting information, based primarily on effective management of information systems that store that information.

In the last several years, the advent of powerful new analytics technologies has focused government leaders in a different direction—toward rapid management of data based on applications and tools that do not rely on large internal systems. Such innovations as artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain are important not because of the technologies per se, but because they enable government to work with industry, nonprofit, and citizen partners through collaborative networks that leverage data from a massive variety of sources in real time.

This issue of *The Business of Government* highlights leaders who are driving public sector forward in harnessing the power of data to improve services, quickly and effectively. From the blockchain-powered business networks that share information to drive more effective trade across nations, to agencies adapting AI in reaching faster and more effective decisions, to leaders who are driving cross-cutting data strategies that support a transformation in how government achieves measurable improvements in service and stewardship—these and similar strategies point to a new era for government to capitalize on information resources for mission results.

The Center for The Business of Government continues to support new research by academic experts that identify practical solutions to 21st century challenges. Better and faster use of data is core to this work, and is also a key factor in our support for a new collaborative venture with the National Academy of Public Administration to launch the Agile Government Center (AGC). As Center Visiting Fellow G. Edward DeSeve notes in his Viewpoint in this edition, an agile government interacts with its citizens to constantly exchange data in pursuit of continuous, incremental performance improvement. The AGC will provide a home for sharing principles, practices, and success stories that can help governments, and we look forward to working with NAPA and engaging with a broad range of leaders across sectors in building this resource.

Just as the AGC promotes spreading agile techniques from their initial roots in software development to a broader set of programs and functions, actions of today's visionary leaders in adopting emerging technologies promote broadening access to data from its roots in legacy IT systems. We hope that this issue helps change agents across government understand models for how best to integrate innovation, agility, and data in achieving better results for the public they serve. ■