

Connecting Research to Practice

IBM CENTER RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT

2025-2026



IBM Center for
**The Business
of Government**



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Dear Colleagues:

The IBM Center for The Business of Government connects research to practice, supporting work by scholars that benefits government through analysis of real-world experience and practical, actionable recommendations. Center reports are intended to spark the imagination—crafting new ways to think about government service delivery and operations by identifying trends, new ideas, and best practices in public management and innovation efforts. Center reports help government executives respond more effectively to mission and management priorities. Center awards have gone to almost 1,000 leading researchers in public management, who have produced reports on improving the effectiveness of government. The Center’s work assists public sector executives, managers, staff, and stakeholders in addressing real-world problems and improving government performance and effectiveness.

With this research announcement, the Center is pleased to solicit proposals that result in reports with practical, actionable recommendations for government leaders and public managers across the following five research areas:

- **Advancing Multi-Sector Partnerships to Improve Outcomes and Productivity**
- **Improving Financial and Operational Effectiveness**
- **Leveraging Technology to Improve Service and Efficiency**
- **Using Data to Drive Priority-Setting, Decision-Making, and Performance**
- **Strengthening the Government Workforce**

Study proposals should identify strategies for engaging agencies and other stakeholders, as well as examples and illustrations of current models that can be adapted, so that government can implement recommendations effectively.



The IBM Center shaped this new agenda by collaborating with government, academic, and nonprofit leaders to identify key areas of need for expert perspectives on how the public sector can transform. Importantly, the Center seeks studies that address both individual trends influencing government, and research that integrates topics to build strategic frameworks that can guide government efforts more broadly across the above trends—discussed further in the next section below.

Through research in and across these five topics, the Center will continue to communicate what leading experts know about effective practices and lessons learned for government leaders and stakeholders. Such communications can promote public understanding of the benefits that a well-functioning government delivers, which can help to drive trust in government.



Strategic Research Focus

Frameworks for Government Improvement

Across all of the research areas that the Center identifies, developing comprehensive and strategic approaches to governance emerges as a key imperative. Such enterprise strategies can drive effective and resilient public sector performance that serves the nation. Government agencies operate in a dynamic environment shaped by fiscal constraints, policy shifts, evolving global connections, rapid technological advancements, and low levels of public trust. To address these challenges, research into establishing and refining strategic frameworks can redefine the role of government in the 21st century. Such research can help to align government functions and actions, societal expectations and concerns, and constitutional principles in a way that guides practical and actionable recommendations to improve near- and long-term outcomes.

Accordingly in addition to the specific research areas outlined in above, the IBM Center seeks to advance research that integrates research across the five areas above in building elements of a broader strategic framework for improving government. The Center seeks studies that take a general perspective about how best to achieve service quality and operational efficiency in the public sector, identifying mission and program objectives as well as useful indicators of problems, progress, and outcomes. Such overarching insights can identify innovative strategies to optimize resource allocation, reduce costs, enhance customer experience, and strengthen resilience against multiple risks. By addressing these issues holistically, insights can inform policymaking and drive reforms that deliver long-term value to government and the public.

Strategic objectives that can frame and integrate research across the five topics above include:

1. **The Role of Government in Managing Effectively.** Research can articulate core missions of government, identifying the gap between its intended and actual functions across agencies and programs. Studies can explore how to align government operations with societal goals and individual needs; how to coordinate across federal, state, and local government; and how to strengthen continuity of services as economic conditions change over time—all of which can enhance the people's trust in the public sector. Key research metrics might involve debt and deficit impacts, the balance of mandatory versus discretionary spending, and the effective use of tools such as spending, loan guarantees, tax expenditures, and public-private partnerships.
2. **Innovation to Drive Outcomes.** Research can identify examples of data-driven decision-making, process automation, and artificial intelligence to enhance operational efficiency while maintaining service quality. Studies on shared services and cross-agency collaboration can identify effective practices to reduce unnecessary redundancy, as well as analysis and indicators to improve program delivery.
3. **Public Information and Engagement.** Successful government transformations rely in part on citizen interactions and communication. This can inform government decisions and communicate government priorities, policies, actions, progress, and next steps effectively—and can also enlist citizens in identifying opportunities to solve problems. Research can show how government reform efforts could be made more durable by involving trusted voices from local communities to enhance the credibility and impact.

Research that informs this kind of strategic integration across multiple topics can help to address complex issues facing government. Such studies can ensure that, where relevant, specific research points to meaningful and replicable improvements in public management. The Center hopes that content from these studies can strengthen a collective effort to enhance government effectiveness and responsiveness to public needs.

We look forward to receiving proposals that address improving government in the topic areas identified above and in building broader strategic frameworks, and to continued work with leading public management researchers. Please visit <https://www.businessofgovernment.org/content/research-stipends> for the latest deadlines.



Advancing Multi-Sector Partnerships to Improve Outcomes and Productivity

The complexity of modern governance necessitates innovative collaborative approaches that bridge traditional bureaucratic divides. Multi-sector partnerships, including collaborations between federal agencies, state and local governments, private sector entities, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations, are increasingly essential for addressing complex public challenges. However, evolving political, fiscal, and social dynamics—including trust in government, funding uncertainties, rapid policy shifts, and varying stakeholder values—demand a reexamination of how these partnerships are structured and sustained.

The IBM Center seeks insights on public-private partnerships, intergovernmental collaboration, and whole-of-government strategies, insights, and experience—addressing how best to create partnerships, and to help them make progress on their objectives. Practical research on multi-sector partnerships is crucial for informing service delivery and improving outcomes in order to build a more resilient, innovative, and effective public sector. Such research will provide policymakers and public managers with the research and tools needed to foster effective partnerships, and deepen understanding of best practices, governance frameworks, and policy mechanisms.

Effective governance today requires cooperation among a diverse range of stakeholders. While previous research has highlighted the benefits of partnerships, new insights are needed to address evolving challenges and opportunities in collaborative governance, such as regulatory hurdles, accountability mechanisms, and the role of emerging technologies.

Focus Areas

1. **Public-Private Partnerships and Collaborative Networks.** Public-private partnerships have demonstrated success in infrastructure, technology, and service delivery. Research should identify models for such partnerships to achieve innovation, risk mitigation, and long-term sustainability. Studies of collaborative networks should explore how diverse actors align goals, share resources, and leverage technology to improve efficiency and impact. Additionally, such studies can provide insights into how government agencies can effectively partner with the private and nonprofit sectors to realize innovation and efficiency for better outcomes. Key research questions include:

- What are the ideal models for structuring sustainable public-private partnerships, and what underlying conditions (e.g., trust, funding, shared vision) ensure their success?
- How might international models and lessons of public-private partnerships (e.g., Canada's integrated statistical system or India's integrated civil service) inform U.S. federal strategies for building collaborative capacity?

2. **Intergovernmental Coordination.** Effective coordination across jurisdictions remains challenging amid policy misalignment and low levels of trust. Research should investigate scalable models for intergovernmental collaboration in areas such as emergency management, infrastructure, public health, and public safety, considering factors such as trust-building and aligned incentives. Identifying successful case studies and governance frameworks can help policymakers design more effective multi-sector strategies. Key research questions include:

- How can intergovernmental coordination be enhanced through trust-building mechanisms and aligned incentives to improve service delivery and policy outcomes?
- What essential elements can promote coordination across multi-sector partnerships to align local, state, and federal efforts and address trust in government?

3. **Whole-of-Government Approaches.** Research should investigate mechanisms for fostering cross-agency collaboration, breaking down silos, and aligning mission objectives to achieve seamless cross-agency collaboration. Additionally, studies on data-sharing agreements, joint budgeting processes, and outcome-based performance metrics can support more cohesive governance structures. Key research questions include:

- What governance frameworks and tools (e.g., portfolio budgeting, data-sharing platforms, operational procedures) can best support whole-of-government collaboration across federal agencies?
- What organizational infrastructure and human capital skillsets are required to sustain effective cross-boundary collaboration, and how can institutional and expert knowledge be retained amidst turnover?
- What collaborative governance models can enhance transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement given diverse perspectives?



4. **Incentives for Collaborative Governance.** Collaboration hinges on incentives and skilled personnel. Research should explore how funding structures, career incentives such as cross-agency rotations, team rather than individual reward systems, and training programs can cultivate a culture of cooperation and preserve expertise. Key research questions include:

- How can federal agencies design incentive structures to foster stronger partnerships with private and nonprofit sectors and with other governments and levels of government, particularly in resource-constrained environments? What could these structures look like, and what impediments to their adoption might need to be overcome?
- What financial and regulatory mechanisms can ensure resilient and sustainable multi-sector partnerships amidst funding uncertainties?
- How can multi-sector initiatives be assessed based on metrics to improve performance?

5. **Strategic Foresight and Future-Oriented Partnerships.** Anticipating future challenges requires strategic foresight. Strategic foresight offers a unique lens for designing resilient partnerships as it is not just a tool but a guiding framework for reenvisioning partnerships. Research should investigate how scenario planning, emerging technologies such as AI-driven tools, and lessons from past successes can inform adaptive, resilient partnerships. Key research questions include:

- What role can emerging technologies, such as AI-driven decision-support systems, play in identifying future pathways for effective multi-sector partnerships and data-sharing initiatives?
- How can federal leadership encourage strategic foresight and supply lessons from successful partnerships (e.g., Transition Management Fund, Operation Warp Speed) to drive cultural and structural change for collaboration?

Please refer to the [Resources](#) section to review a number of prior center reports in this research area.



Improving Financial and Operational Effectiveness

The financial and operational challenges facing government demand rigorous research to develop practical, evidence-based solutions that enhance efficiency, resilience, and accountability. Public agencies operate in a complex environment shaped by fiscal constraints, policy shifts, evolving global dynamics, and rapid technological advancements. Effective management of public finances and operations is critical to delivering on government missions, optimizing taxpayer resources, and maintaining public confidence.

The IBM Center seeks to advance research that explores the full cost of government operations and that drives cost-effectiveness, operational efficiency, service quality, and resilience in public sector management. This research should build on existing scholarship on process innovation, budget formulation and execution, disruptive technologies, and predictive analytics to address contemporary challenges. These challenges include fiscal pressures, budget uncertainties, demand for transparency, and the integration of emerging technologies. Research should also identify best practices from the private sector, other levels of government, or international organizations that can be adapted to strengthen financial and operational management.

Such research can inform analysis of cost efficiencies or savings, and provide government executives and public managers with practical, actionable insights and recommendations derived from real world front-line operations that can deliver long-term value to governments and the public.

Focus Areas

1. **Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency.** Research should examine data-informed decision-making, strategic thinking, process automation, and artificial intelligence to enhance operational efficiency while maintaining service quality. Studies on shared services and cross-agency collaboration can identify the best practices to reduce redundancy and improve program delivery for better outcomes and higher return on spending. Key research questions include:

- What strategies can enhance operational efficiency while improving outcomes and service quality in federal programs?
- How can data be leveraged to improve financial and operational decision-making in and across agencies, and what examples can illustrate the use of data and analytics by agencies?
- How can federal agencies implement agile and lean management principles to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and accelerate service delivery, in a manner similar to how these and similar strategies have streamlined processes in the private sector?

2. **Financial Management and Cost Effectiveness.** Innovative financial strategies, such as performance-based budgeting innovations, are critical to optimizing resource allocation under fiscal constraints and policy shifts. Research should investigate how advanced analytics and oversight tools can improve cost-efficiency while also incentivizing performance improvement. Key research questions include:

- How can federal agencies use predictive analytics to anticipate and prevent operational bottlenecks and improve resource allocation?
- How can new approaches to budgeting, such as performance-based and zero-based models, help agencies to make strategic choices, measure progress, improve outcomes, reduce costs, and plan for the future?
- How can lessons learned and from budgeting experience be made more transparent to the public, so that an engaged citizenry can inform budget innovations in a way that increases accountability for results and public trust?
- How can federal agencies measure success using fiscal metrics?

3. **Risk Resilience.** Research should focus on building resilience to economic downturns, cybersecurity threats, and financial fraud. Resilience can help agencies to “bounce forward” by adapting and improving in response to challenges, rather than merely recovering to a prior state. Studies that include foresight models and scenario planning to enhance risk management are also encouraged. Key research questions include:

- How can federal agencies develop integrated risk assessment models to prioritize resource allocation across economic, cybersecurity, and operational threats?
- How can strategic foresight and scenario planning be increased to anticipate future uncertainties, in order to identify financial and operational problems and improve performance?

4. **Procurement Reform.** Studies should explore modernizing procurement through digital contracting, increased vendor competition, and streamlined acquisition processes. Key research questions include:

- What procurement innovations can increase competition, reduce costs, and enhance efficiency?
- What new approaches can enable agencies to benefit from acquisition reform, such as early engagement with industry, agile procurement models that enable scaling proven solutions, or share-in-savings approaches?

5. **Regulatory Reform.** Research should identify how governments can balance compliance with flexibility, leveraging technology and public engagement to improve regulatory decision-making. Key research questions include:

- How might agencies develop regulations that accurately implement the intention of policy while building in flexibility to address out of the ordinary, unanticipated events?
- How can modernizing regulatory processes inform recommendations for agencies to streamline and encourage flexibility in compliance, while maintaining oversight and accountability?

Please refer to the [Resources](#) section to review a number of prior center reports in this research area.



Leveraging Technology to Improve Service and Efficiency

The impact of technology on government operations and service quality, and on citizen knowledge and engagement, is widely recognized. Governments can utilize intelligent automation, and hybrid cloud services to improve service delivery, enhance decision-making, and empower constituents for effective and continuous engagement.

The IBM Center seeks research that highlights how technology can bring substantial benefits to government mission execution and service quality. This may include innovation to support decision-making, enhancing crisis resilience, and implementing technology that prioritizes cybersecurity and privacy while refining user experiences.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing offer significant potential for governments, now and in the future. Their capabilities enable the curation of vast amounts of unstructured data, pattern recognition, and real-time decision-making. Countries worldwide are investing heavily in these technologies, recognizing them as strategic assets for government effectiveness as well as social good, economic growth, geopolitical impact, and cybersecurity.

Beyond its use as a tool, technology itself is a critical area of research. Studies can assess the overall implications of technology for program planning, operation, and evaluation, which can enable transformation to a more productive government. Showcasing successful government applications of technology can provide practical insights for managers.

Focus Areas

1. **Emergency Preparedness.** Research can highlight how governments can leverage AI in supporting first responders, such as through weather forecasting, wildfire tracking, and post-disaster assessment to optimize evacuation and relief efforts. Key research questions include:

- How can governments upgrade existing technologies and adopt emerging innovation in a way that supports crisis response?
- What new innovations can help agencies foster strategies and practices to better prepare for and respond to unfolding crises that are occurring with greater frequency and magnitude, including impacts connecting to health care, supply chain management, natural resources, and population dynamics?

2. **Benefits Delivery.** Studies can point out how analytics technologies could aid in providing the right amount of financial support to those in need more rapidly, while also detecting fraud in benefit applications and transactions and applications earlier, promoting cost-effectiveness and program integrity. Key research questions include:

- How can agencies effectively partner with contractors or grantees to leverage technology for enhanced direct services and indirect support in strategic planning and resource allocation? What are the implications of different contract or grant models for better outcomes?
- What case studies illustrate the use of AI and automation for improvements in program efficiency, effectiveness, operations, and financial integrity, specifically addressing areas such as fraud detection in healthcare services? Are there consistencies or concerns across cases?
- How can governments employ AI or similar forms of automation to facilitate seamless information sharing across different agencies or departments, ensuring a comprehensive, customer-centric view when serving individuals?

3. **Cybersecurity.** Protection can be enhanced by research into new technologies that identify attack patterns, perform predictive risk analysis, and automate responses, while respecting privacy and strengthening identity management. Key research questions include:



- What innovative cybersecurity approaches will ensure protection of sensitive data and maintain public trust?
- What are the most prevalent cyber threats today, and what technology solutions can counteract these risks and ensure information integrity?
- How can agencies integrate new technologies to maximize privacy safeguards and reinforce robust identity management and access controls, balancing automation with human oversight?

4. **User Experience.** Studies can demonstrate how streamlined administrative processes and reduced burdens can be achieved via technology, particularly in critical areas such as disaster and health assistance, facilitating eligible populations’ access to services. Noteworthy models have emerged, particularly in providing services around major life experiences (as opposed to government organizational stovepipes); studies can highlight pilot and program success to identify lessons learned and next steps. Key research questions include:

- How can governments harness technology to elevate user experiences for diverse stakeholders (citizens, businesses), learning from successful models like apps for local transportation, to streamline service delivery and reduce administrative burdens?
- Given the benefits of AI and automation, how can government agencies maintain a human-centered approach, ensuring technology complements rather than supplants human interaction in service delivery?

Please refer to the [Resources](#) section to review a number of prior center reports in this research area.



Using Data to Drive Priority-Setting, Decision-Making, and Performance

Decision-makers at all levels need high-quality, credible data and evidence for informed decisions. Research should explore using data to create public-facing dashboards and metrics for measuring progress, identifying improvement opportunities, and ensuring transparency. In addition, data can inform research on program evaluation to help agencies develop knowledge and skills needed to build capacity for improving performance.

The Center seeks research on developing a data strategy that enhances government program results. This involves defining data elements across networks for real-time data agreement, including disaggregated data for population-specific insights. New methods for collecting and providing data in usable formats with minimal burden are needed, especially during crises.

A comprehensive strategy for future data collection is essential, involving high-priority data identification, comprehension of governing conditions, and evaluation of continued data collection feasibility. Non-federal data can serve as an alternative when federal data is unavailable.

Enhancing federal data usability is crucial, entailing understanding user needs, rendering data actionable, and effectively communicating its value to decision-makers. Lessons from state and local successes highlight the value of harnessing, linking, and analyzing data for improvements.

Documenting specific cases of data and evidence use by line managers and the outcomes of informed decisions is vital. Similarly, examples of lost or discontinued data insights and their consequences should be detailed.

Focus Areas

1. **Evidence-Based Decision-Making.** Research can continue to address implementation of the Evidence Act, requiring evidence-building plans, annual evaluations, and capacity assessments. Such work can capture agency experiences and how to integrate these activities into strategic plans. Research can also document instances of data and evidence use and outcomes, as well as consequences of lost or discontinued data. Key research questions include:

- How can data and evidence be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to enhance program delivery and outcomes, considering data archiving, future collection strategies, and non-federal data utilization? How can evidence best support decision-making?
- How can various data sets e.g., (internal/external customer service, employee surveys, administrative, outcome data) be analyzed for greater insights, and what research can improve data and evidence analysis across agencies?
- What are lessons learned in developing agency Learning Agendas and building individual or organizational evidence capacities under the Evidence Act?

2. **Transparency.** Research can help agencies utilize public reporting and accessible dashboards to expand stakeholder engagement. This work can make data comprehensible and enable disaggregation for greater understanding. Key research questions include:

- What initiatives and novel actions are governments undertaking to help the public comprehend and utilize government performance data? What consistencies across these examples demonstrate replicability?
- What are new ways to communicate different types of data and evidence, such as public reporting, dashboards, or text alerts?

3. **Customer Experience that Improves Usability and Reduces Burden.** Studies can focus on understanding user needs, rendering data actionable, and communicating value effectively. Such activity can focus on user-centric strategies to make federal data beneficial for all stakeholders in a way that minimizes compliance costs, simplify reporting, and improve risk management. This can help government to differentiate between reasonable and unreasonable burdens, eliminating the latter. Key research questions include:

- How can tensions between customer experience goals, security, and other public objectives be addressed effectively?
- What are innovative ways to reduce administrative burden while achieving program integrity objectives?

4. **Data Agreements.** Studies can help government to develop network agreements focusing on data collection, authentication, storage, updates, and use. This can point out ways to safeguard federal data during transitions, create a comprehensive data strategy, and consider non-federal data. Key research questions include:

- What best practices can inform data agreements used to develop and retain the integrity, reliability, and security of data?
- How can government best frame incentives to drive high-payback, evidence-informed practices that have a high return on investment?

5. **Learning from State and Local Successes.** Analysis can demonstrate how to harness, link, and analyze data for improvements of federal data practices with state and local examples. Key research questions include:

- What successful models exist for involving the government workforce and partners in using data to optimize program activities?
- How can successful burden reduction efforts by other governments inform federal strategies?

Please refer to the [Resources](#) section to review a number of prior center reports in this research area.



Strengthening the Government Workforce

The government workforce is essential to delivery of critical services to the American people. Hiring, managing, retaining and developing skilled workers are essential for a well-functioning government—and their absence can introduce substantial risks. Productive public service relies on a workforce that implements laws and supports administration priorities effectively and efficiently across areas that include recruiting, promotion, and training, in order to deliver key services to the people and continuity across administrations.

The Center seeks research on how governments at all levels face the challenge of operating at various resource levels. New ideas can help agencies to best manage given potential challenges facing the workforce today and in the future. Such ideas can include identifying core tasks performed by government relative to work that can be done by commercial or non-profit partners, or making performance metrics more precise and potentially tied more directly to compensation to incentivize high performance and deal effectively with poor performance.

This can start with defining the future of work for a government that serves the needs of the people by hiring outstanding talent. Other areas of focus can include hiring process reform, adopting pay and job classification systems that match speed the adoption of modern pay practices, and providing agencies with more tools to compete effectively in the rapidly evolving workplace.

Focus Areas

- 1. The Future of Work.** New models of work organization support distributed teams that can cross geographies, enabled by AI and other emerging technologies. These imperatives are shifting as the way that work gets done evolves, given changing expectations for work requirements from a new generation—as well as new business processes, greater interagency and intergovernmental collaboration, reskilling the government’s workforce to match mission requirements, and demands to reallocate work responsibilities across government, contractor, and nonprofit workforces. Research can help governments learn from and adapt models in the U.S. and globally to redesign the workforce. Studies can also highlight how introducing the impact of technology on the workforce offers opportunities to drive greater productivity, while focusing on skills and moving from lower to higher value work. Key research questions include:
 - In what way can government adapt private sector practices that have been demonstrated as effective, in planning for a future regarding what work can be automated, who can do the work, where work is done, and how best to balance new technology with new work practices for service delivery?
 - How can research identify differences in work patterns between the public and the private sectors, and how these differences may affect job satisfaction and productivity?
- 2. Revitalizing the Hiring Process.** Effectively operating the government hiring process requires overcoming a system that confuses applicants, hiring managers, and even human resources specialists who have the difficult task of interpreting many pages of rules and agency policies on hiring. Federal hiring rules have become so complicated that they often present a barrier to working for government. Inadequate hiring and retention of young people, who often have other work opportunities, is a growing problem as the workforce ages out and retires without a pipeline to fill behind them. Research can point to examples of agencies and governments engaged in successful hiring and workforce management—addressing processes and actions to address risks, challenges, and opportunities. Key research questions include:

- What methods can help agencies to simplify hiring processes?
- How can hiring processes for government work be adapted for the workforce of tomorrow?

3. **Modernizing Public Service Pay Systems.** Government compensation systems minimize the impact of performance, as most employees' pay increases are awarded simply for time in service. The current reliance on a position-centric human capital management system based on stable work requirements does not align with the rapid changes in mission, work roles, required competencies, and labor markets that agencies experience today. The General Schedule (GS) system for valuing work and administering pay has not kept up with the constantly changing nature of the government's 21st century missions, and the methods agencies use to meet those missions. Research can focus on how to better link compensation and performance to incentivize quality work and attract top talent, as well as reward systems that encourage collaborative and outcome-focused management to make progress. Research can also identify strengths and weaknesses of different pay systems used by government. Key research questions include:

- How can new models of pay and overall compensation incentivize more productive work in government?
- What are proven models and processes for flexibility in pay and rewards, and how can agencies enable flexibility to tailor strategies and actions accordingly?
- How can pay be better tied to the achievement of mission and functional outcomes?

4. **Accountability in the Government Workforce.** Government workers often report a perception that poor performers are not being dealt with, which indicates a problem exists—but the extent of the problem is not well-defined. Evidence suggests that government workers generally do their jobs well, but those who do not are in many cases not dealt with effectively. Government can reform accountability by expecting excellence, establishing work performance standards, and taking timely action. Research can identify factors for high and low performance based on data, at agency and sub-agency levels. Research on organizational health can also help agencies to increase employee engagement around common mission objectives. Key research questions include:

- What approaches have governments successfully used to align their workforce strategies with the mission outcomes they seek to achieve?
- How can accountability be defined for government work? More specifically, what performance measures can be defined to drive greater productivity, and to link individual and organization-level metrics; and what are effective ways to reward good performance and sanction poor performance?

5. **Driving Greater Productivity from Government Work.** Governments at all levels face the challenge of operating with reduced resource levels. New research can help agencies to best manage in this environment, such as identifying core tasks performed by government and work that can be done by commercial or nonprofit partners, or making performance metrics more precise to incentivize greater productivity. Studies can provide insights on the most effective ways to train and develop a high-performing workforce. Additionally, supplementing government employees with contractors or reserve forces may allow agencies to maintain surge capacity and expertise in critical key areas like cybersecurity; the National Guard, U.S. Digital Corps, or International Science Reserve provide potential models. Civilian agencies can adapt methods used in the defense sector to focus work on mission outcomes. Key research questions include:

- How can government adapt skill development strategies across sectors (defense and civilian), in academic and vocational school settings, and from leading commercial practice?
- How can current classification systems, like the General Schedule in the federal government, be reformed to improve outcomes from work? Are there new ways to allocate positions across different categories that align with workforce goals?
- How can government capacity be enhanced by using new ways to engage scientific, technical, or other relevant expertise on an as-needed basis, via channels that may include rehired former employees, reserves, university or nonprofit partnerships, or other forms of surge capacity? How can this be done while maintaining oversight to ensure effective outcomes from such work?



6. **Leadership for a New Era.** The complexity of managing government operations and missions during times of change requires a set of leadership skills and behaviors involving cross-team and flexible approaches to achieve statutory and administration priorities, and also to addressing the culture of agencies and the public that they serve. In this context, research can inform new leadership imperatives. Key research questions include:

- What evidence validates successful leadership in government, including examples of how leadership was practiced to accomplish progress? Can new approaches to leadership help drive better performance across government?
- What strategies might help government better manage work by function (such as for budget or technology) or by discipline (such as health care, natural resources, or international affairs), in a way that can better align position protocols to actual work done?

Please refer to the [Resources](#) section to review a number of prior center reports in this research area.



Resources

Please note that the links provided serve as illustrative examples of the types of reports available within each research area. For comprehensive access to our reports, please visit: <https://www.businessofgovernment.org/reports>.

ADVANCING MULTI-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTIVITY [◀BACK](#)

- [Addressing Complex and Cross-Boundary Challenges in Government: The Value of Strategy Mapping](#)
- [Improving Performance with Intergovernmental Grants—Lessons from the Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program](#)
- [Human-Centricity in Digital Delivery: Enhancing Agile Governance](#)
- [Silo Busting: The Challenges and Successes of Intergovernmental Data Sharing](#)
- [Cross-Agency Collaboration: A Case Study of Cross-Agency Priority Goals](#)

IMPROVING FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL INCENTIVES AND EFFECTIVENESS [◀BACK](#)

- [A Prepared Federal Government: Preventing Fraud and Improper Payments in Emergency Funding](#)
- [Digital Modernization for Government: An Implementation Framework](#)
- [Opportunities for Management when Budgeting](#)

- [Enabling a More Resilient and Shared Supply Chain Strategy for the Nation: Lessons Learned from COVID-19](#)
- [Transforming How Government Operates: Four Methods of Change](#)
- [Financial Management for The Future: How Government Can Evolve to Meet the Demands of a Digital World](#)

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND EFFICIENCY [◀BACK](#)

- [A Guide to Adaptive Government: Preparing for Disruption](#)
- [A Prepared Federal Government: Preventing Fraud and Improper Payments in Emergency Funding](#)
- [AI and the Modern Tax Agency](#)
- [Preparing Governments for Future Shocks: Building Cyber Resilience for Critical Infrastructure Protection](#)
- [Preparing governments for future shocks: An action plan to build cyber resilience in a world of uncertainty](#)
- [Preparing governments for future shocks: A roadmap to resilience](#)

USING DATA TO DRIVE PRIORITY-SETTING, DECISIONMAKING, AND PERFORMANCE [◀BACK](#)

- [Optimizing Analytics for Policymaking and Governance](#)
- [A Prepared Federal Government: Preventing Fraud and Improper Payments in Emergency Funding](#)
- [Creating Public Value using the AI-Driven Internet of Things](#)
- [Adopting Agile in State and Local Governments](#)
- [Silo Busting: The Challenges and Successes of Intergovernmental Data Sharing](#)

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE [◀BACK](#)

- [Reskilling the Workforce with Technology-Oriented Training](#)
- [Accelerating Government Innovation with Leadership and Stimulus Funding](#)
- [Preparing the Next Generation of Federal Leaders: Agency-Based Leadership Development Programs](#)
- [Navigating Generative AI in Government](#)
- [Mobilizing Cloud Computing for Public Service](#)



Guidelines

The IBM Center for The Business of Government taps into the best minds in academe and the nonprofit sector, who use rigorous public management research and analytic techniques to produce research and recommendations that help public sector executives and managers improve government effectiveness. The Center seeks practical findings and actionable recommendations—not just theory or concepts—in order to assist executives and managers more effectively respond to mission and management challenges.

Description of Stipends: Individuals receiving a stipend should produce a 10,000- to 12,000-word report. The manuscript should be submitted six months after the start of the project. Recipients will select start and end dates for their work. The report should be written for government leaders and public managers, providing practical knowledge and insight.

Eligibility: Individuals working in universities, nonprofit organizations, or journalism.

Size of Stipends: \$20,000 for each report

Deadlines: There are two funding cycles, with deadlines in the spring and fall each year. Applicants will be informed of a decision approximately 10 weeks after the deadlines. Applications must be received online (by midnight EST) or postmarked by the due date.

Submitting Applications: Interested individuals should read our latest research announcement, and apply online. Applicants will complete a series of fields that include the proposal title, proposal summary (100 word limit), the research report proposal (1,500 word limit) to include the (i) purpose, ii) methodology, and (iii) results of the proposed report, a category for the proposal, and a resume for each author.

Though not a requirement, the Center encourages applicants to submit information online. Attachments are permitted, but should adhere to the constraints outlined in the guidelines.

Evaluation Criteria: Government leaders and public managers want answers to the “So what?” question. They want to know “Why should I care?” and “What do I do next?” Consequently, proposals are reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Will the proposed report be of high value and timely to government leaders and public managers?
- Will the report provide practical insight and understanding of the topic?
- Does the applicant demonstrate the potential to produce a final report that will be clear, understandable, and highly communicative to government leaders and public managers?
- Does the applicant demonstrate outstanding command and knowledge of the topic?
- Does the report provide practical, actionable recommendations for government leaders and public managers?



APPLICATIONS

Can I apply online? Yes, online applications are preferred.

Does the Center only fund reports for U.S. federal executives and managers?

No. While a majority of the Center's reports focus on executives and managers in the U.S. federal government, we are also interested in reports that discuss new approaches to improving the effectiveness of government at state, local, and international levels. The most competitive proposals tend to be those that have a very strong "story" that can be generalized to a broad audience.

Do you need to itemize a budget in the proposal or describe how the \$20,000 stipend will be used? No. The researcher can use the stipend however he/she deems appropriate.

Can I submit more than one proposal at a time? No. Researchers are asked to submit only one proposal per review cycle. Multiple proposal submissions may lead to disqualification.

Does the Center accept proposals for topics outside the scope of this announcement?

Yes, however, most projects that receive stipends will be closely related to the themes outlined in this announcement. While we consider proposals touching on other government management challenges, these themes are of greatest interest.

Can independent researchers or consultants apply? Independent researchers or consultants must have an affiliation with a nonprofit organization, an academic institution, or journalistic institution. A letter from one of those organizations describing the affiliation must be included in the proposal.

Can graduate students apply? If the proposed report is part of a graduate student's doctoral dissertation, he or she may apply. However, the proposal should include a letter of endorsement from the individual's dissertation advisor.

Can current government employees apply? Yes. However, the Center does not provide a stipend payment to government employees.

STIPENDS

How long is the report? Reports should be 30 to 40 pages in length.

Does the Center provide stipends larger than \$20,000? No.

Does the Center pay for overhead expenses? No. We do not pay overhead, indirect, or operating costs.

Can the recipient's institution receive the stipend? Yes. Individuals receiving a stipend have the option of requesting that the stipend be paid directly to their institution. As noted above, however, no overhead costs will be included in the stipend.

REPORTS

Who is the audience for completed reports? Reports should be written for government leaders and public managers, with a goal of providing practical insights and actionable recommendations to help improve the operation and management of government.

How quickly must the report be completed? Recipients will select the start and end dates of the project. Recipients will submit a completed manuscript six months after the selected start date. The project should start no later than three months after stipend award.

How will the report be reviewed? Upon receipt of the manuscript, the IBM Center reviews the draft for consistency with the recipient's original proposal. The Center may offer editorial suggestions to better address how government leaders and public managers will read and act upon the report's contents. Upon request, the Center can also arrange for external peer review.

How will the report be published? The IBM Center will publish the report and distribute it to government executives, managers, and stakeholders.

Can recipients publish the report in other publications? Recipients retain all rights to the research and can publish findings anywhere they wish. The IBM Center must be cited, however, as providing support for the project.

About the IBM Center for The Business of Government

Through research stipends and events, the IBM Center for The Business of Government stimulates research and facilitates discussion of new approaches to improving the effectiveness of government at the federal, state, local, and international levels.

About IBM Consulting

With consultants and professional staff in more than 160 countries globally, IBM Consulting is the world's largest consulting services organization. IBM Consulting provides clients with business process and industry expertise, a deep understanding of technology solutions that address specific industry issues, and the ability to design, build, and run those solutions in a way that delivers bottom-line value. To learn more visit ibm.com.

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