

Terri Long Thomas Malone Thomas Romeo Thu-Huong Ha Tiffany Dovey Fishman Tim Fernholz Tim Lagan Tim McManus Timothy B. Clark Timothy W. Cooke Todd Woody Tom Monahan Tom Fox Tom Shoop Tom Somodi Tomás Garza Tony Crabbe Tony Crawley Tracey C. Jones Travis Bradberry Trinette Brownhill Tron Jordheim Uri Friedman Venkat Srinivasan Vickie Elmer Vicky Gan Vicky Oliver Victoria Grady Vivian Giang Walt Grassl Wendy A. Suzuki Whitney Vickrey Will de Freitas William D. Eggers William MacAskill William MacAskill William A. Maidens Yitz Jordan Yonah Freemark Yoni Applebaum Yves Morieux Zach Wener-Fligner Zachary M. Seward Zachary Sniderman Zainab Mudallal Zoe Grotophorst

- By Date

RECENT POSTS

You May Be Doing Customer Service All Wrong

9:00 AM ET [Leave a comment](#)

How We Can Fix the VA Appeals Process

April 14, 2016 [7 Comments](#)

Leveling the Playing Field by Design

April 13, 2016 [9 Comments](#)

Why Congress Needs to Lift the Pay Cap on Administrative Law Judges

April 13, 2016 [10 Comments](#)



[Share this on Facebook](#)

[Tweet this on Twitter](#)

[Share this on Google Plus](#)

[Share this on LinkedIn](#)

[Print this article](#)

[Email this article](#)

[AA Increase size](#)

We are entering a season when many groups are thinking about how to advise the next administration on matters of policy, organization, or both. The National Academy of Public Administration is now working on this, specifically addressing the challenge of how to incorporate strategic foresight and policy.

Addressing this challenge is a significant intellectual effort, but even more formidable in terms of political psychology. Successful politicians, in the course of their campaigns, will have projected a narrative about what they intend to do if elected.

During the transition period between election and inauguration, the President-elect and closest advisers will be working to structure and populate a new administration that will have to translate the campaign narrative into operations. The atmosphere is one of certitude and determination, which is not conducive to the open, questioning frame of mind required for the practice of strategic foresight.

Several years ago, I led a [research project](#) that focused on strategic foresight, developing ideas that were based in part on my experience in the Clinton-Gore White House. That project resulted in a report in 2012, [Anticipatory Governance: Practical Upgrades](#), which offers three sets of actionable solutions. Each solution includes a range of options for how it might be implemented.

Solution 1: Systematically Integrate Foresight and Policy Development. Unlike some other countries, the U.S. does not have an institutional mechanism or office at the top of government to methodically scan the horizon or generate alternative future scenarios. The military, the international affairs community, and homeland security each have offices to do this for their respective domains, but there isn't something like this for the federal government as a whole.

The report observes: "The acceleration of today's events has the effect of compressing the time that policymakers have to respond, and government processes that are designed to be deliberate are challenged when the rest of the world is speeding up." If such a process were in place, events like Katrina, the 2008 financial crisis, and the anticipation of the Arab Spring in 2011 might not have been as stark.

The report recommends:

- Organizing a foresight system that has access to the top of government but is detached from day-to-day crises;
- Creating brokering arrangements between foresight and policy development;
- Incentivizing the use of foresight when developing policy;
- Training professionals to incorporate foresight and collaborative skills into their professional development.

Solution 2: Use Networks to Organize and Manage Complex Issues. Policy issues today do not respect traditional organizational boundaries inherent in large bureaucracies. Network theory offers an alternative way to organize governance. This is reinforced by a wide range of both national security and domestic policy observers. The report recommends "management to mission" rather than the traditional "management by jurisdiction." The challenge is to approach this in

a way that respects current accountability and resource allocation institutions, and is seen as legitimate by stakeholders in a democratic system in a strategic way.

The report recommends:

- Networking the strategy and policy planning offices across agencies to provide a "whole picture" view of major issues;
- Leveraging the processes of existing deputies' and interagency policy committees to focus on strategy, not day-to-day operations;
- Engaging the Cabinet to strategically coordinate planning and execution;
- Networking integrators for cross-agency missions, as envisioned in recent law;
- Budgeting for strategic impact by integrating OMB and policy council decision-making systems;
- Synchronizing national strategy reports so they interrelate;
- Systematizing strategic priorities, such as through a framework of national strategies that are reviewed regularly;
- Communicating with Congress at a strategic level rather than the traditional disaggregated program or agency levels.

Solution 3: Continually Monitor and Respond to Policies During Implementation. Feedback systems exist throughout the government, but according to the report, this is not done systematically at the top of the government. Feedback is necessary to monitor and adjust policies; to provide accountability and control; and to learn what works and what doesn't. The ideal is to monitor actual events in close-to-real time to alert policymakers to potential consequences of these actions.

The report recommends:

- Ensuring presidential decision reports include a set of elements that will make it possible to track policy execution to determine its effectiveness;
- Establishing an institutional venue for feedback on policy implementation (there is no COO at the White House other than the Chief of Staff to follow through on decisions made by the president);
- Monitoring specific performance indicators among senior officials to provide early warning signals if circumstances are deteriorating;
- Conducting diagnostic reviews of major policies to routinely check for signs of deterioration (these could be similar to data-driven reviews currently conducted by some of the major departments).

Flush with victory, incoming administration staff may be reluctant to re-examine their goals through the prism of foresight, of course. On the other hand, any candidate will have been thinking about risk-management, and the new administration may from the outset be receptive to an approach based on using foresight as a risk-management tool. If so, it would follow that the president elect and his or her team will be open to the question of how to organize this process quickly, as an early priority, radiating from the most senior levels of the new administration.

By Leon Fuerth is a former diplomat who served as national security adviser to former Vice President Al Gore. This post first appeared on the National Academy of Public Administration's [T16 blog](#).

 **Get the Excellence in Government newsletter** — the big ideas resource for your federal mission and career

 Previous Post | [Succeed By Planning Your Work and Life the Way Green Berets Plan Missions](#)

Next Post | [How to Design Contracts that Deliver Results](#) 

Want to contribute to this story? Share your addition in [comments](#).



[Big Data, Big Challenges](#)



[Get Smart. Get The D Brief](#)



[The Biggest IT Contracts of 2016](#)



[Budgeting Challenges and Opportunities](#)

MOST COMMENTED

The Economic Case for a New WPA

17 comments · 1 hour ago

Clinton Promises to Create New Immigration Office

122 comments · 1 hour ago

Hillary Clinton Says She Wants Half of Her Cabinet to Be Women

89 comments · 1 hour ago

Another Bonus Ban, Feds' 'Golden Parachute' Pensions and More

55 comments · 1 hour ago

[► MORE COMMENTS SITE WIDE](#)

JOIN THE DISCUSSION