



Recruiting, Preparing, Retaining, and Rewarding Highly Qualified Career and Appointed Officials

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Introduction

Over the past two months, the NAPA T-16 Human Capital Panel met three times (March 4, March 17, and April 8) to identify and discuss a preliminary set of topic ideas that could be submitted to the Presidential campaigns and transition teams.

Recognizing that the list of potential topic ideas was limitless, the Panel took careful steps not to repeat issues or rehash ideas that have been discussed at great lengths. For instance, given our mission, it would be well within our purview to outline the case for modernizing the federal civil service system. However, NAPA's influence on a topic like this could be diluted since several good government groups have offered a comprehensive set of reports on this particular issue.

Instead, our Panel established a two tiered threshold for identifying human capital issues to include in this initial deliverable. First, we wanted to ensure that our issues offered practical insights and solutions to complex problems. In the event that a particular topic area has been popularized by other groups, we took steps to bring a fresh perspective that may not have been apparent or considered. For example, under Topic Idea 1: "The NAPA List" our Panel outlines the benefit of developing a list of fellows who have served in Presidentially Appointed Senate-confirmed positions within an Administration. While we could have discussed the appointments process itself, our T-16 Panel felt that the Academy would be better positioned over a longer-term by providing a list of former senior level officials who could serve as formal (or informal) mentors to nominees and appointees.

Second, our Panel also felt it was critical to identify issues that rise to the level of strategic importance for the candidates (and their transition staff) to know now and heading into the election and beyond. For example, Topic Idea 2: "Strong Leadership at OPM" and Topic Idea 4: "Leading a Troubled Agency" both support and promote the idea that appointing qualified political leaders is critical to the success of the incoming Administration.

We believe that this two-tiered threshold best positions NAPA to support the transition teams as they organize and prepare to govern immediately after the election.

To summarize our 9 topic areas, we organized this deliverable around three key questions: (1) why is the issue/topic important; (2) what are some of the remedies that could serve as potential recommendations; and (3) how does NAPA's expertise serve as a differentiator on the particular topic? Taking this approach provides a consistent way to gauge whether our Panel was able to (1) offer practical insights and solutions to complex problems and (2) identify issues that rose to the level of strategic importance.

As illustrated in the table on the following page, each of our 9 topics align with at least two elements of the human capital lifecycle areas as defined by our Panel's original charter (recruiting, preparing, retaining, and rewarding). While the narrative issue summaries do not explicitly describe the linkages to the lifecycle areas, the chart provides a visual representation to make the alignment more apparent.



NAPA T-16 Human Capital Panel Initial Topic Ideas				
	Recruiting	Preparing	Retaining	Rewarding
Topic Idea 1: The NAPA List: Fellows Who've Served in PAS/PA Positions	●	●		
Topic Idea 2: Strong Leadership at OPM	●	●		
Topic Idea 3: Helping Veterans by Improving the VA	●	●	●	●
Topic Idea 4: Leading a Troubled Agency	●	●		
Topic Idea 5: Improving Federal Executive Accountability			●	●
Topic Idea 6: The Government's C-Suite: Overview of Executive Management Responsibilities	●	●	●	
Topic Idea 7: Why Employee Engagement Matters	●	●	●	●
Topic Idea 8: Building the Cybersecurity Workforce	●	●	●	●
Topic Idea 9: Encouraging Executive Branch Innovation	●	●	●	●



Topic Idea 1: The NAPA List: Fellows Who've Served in PAS/PA Positions

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

The quality of political appointees can have a dramatic impact on both the success of the presidency and the ability of the Administration to execute public policy. As soon as the candidate becomes President-elect, thousands of other issues crowd their agenda which adds to the importance of appointing the right people to the right positions. This is especially true since the incoming team must deal with the complexity of inheriting a workforce of 2 million employees within 75 days of the election. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that key Administration appointees and career executives are ready to lead at the start of the new Presidency.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

Presidential appointees and those in the appointments process can benefit significantly from consultation and advice provided by those who previously held those posts. Therefore, the T-16 Human Capital panel is beginning to compile a list of NAPA Fellows who have held political appointments (both PAS and PA) in previous administrations as well as current contact information. Once we capture the list of Fellows, we will categorize them by agency, position title, and administration. We then intend to provide the roster to transition teams prior to the election. This way, the candidates will have the information readily available as they begin the process of identifying potential nominees to fill critical positions heading into the post-election and post-inauguration periods.

With that said, we understand that the NAPA "Veterans List" would have the greatest utility in the early months of 2017. Within the first several weeks of the new Administration the Senate will be holding hearings on cabinet level appointees. After that, however, the Office of Presidential Personnel (OPP) will be working on sub-cabinet appointments. This is when the NAPA Veterans will be most valuable to a new Administration. While OPP will likely keep the identities of those considered for appointment close-hold, it is reasonable to assume that Presidential Personnel will want to consult with former PAS members of their party to help identify potential candidates. Once the person has been nominated, he or she will be consumed with preparing for confirmation hearings. During this period the nominee would benefit greatly from consulting with those who have held that or a similar position before. After confirmation, insights from previous incumbents will continue to be valuable. Leadership team building among political and career leaders is a topic that will be of particular value to the new appointees.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

There are several reasons why NAPA is in a prime position to provide this list to the candidates and their transition teams. First, NAPA has many Fellows who have served in the highest levels of government for both parties across multiple Administrations. Thus, our Fellows can serve as informal advisors to Presidential Personnel and the nominees themselves. Second, through many Presidential Administrations, NAPA has studied and reported on ways to improve the appointment process.



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Therefore, since NAPA has a wealth of Fellows experienced in the top levels of the executive branch, we have a comparative advantage to facilitate the transition of new political appointees into their new positions. In addition to position descriptions and policy memos, new appointees can learn much about the administrative and political realities of their new positions by talking with people who have held the positions before.

As an added benefit, NAPA should anticipate that this list will receive significant attention from the media as well and the publicity would further solidify the Academy as a major contributor to the transition activities.

4. **When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?**
 - Pre-election



Topic Idea 2: Strong OPM Leadership

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Human capital management issues are continually cited as areas of concern for general executive branch management. Strategic human capital management remains on the Government Accountability Office's High Risk List. Across countless reviews and analyses of challenges agencies face, solving an agency's human capital problems is repeatedly highlighted as a prerequisite to making progress in other management and program efforts. As the central management agency responsible for implementing the personnel policies and practices set forth by the Congress and the President, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will play a significant leadership role in supporting the new Administration's management initiatives across agencies. As Chair of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, the OPM Director heads the only CXO Council that is not more directly managed from the Office of Management and Budget. In addition, OPM plays an important ministerial role in supporting the Office of Presidential Personnel to manage the smooth administration of political appointees' employment. The Executive Office of the President must have a strong partner in OPM.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

Selecting a strong leader as OPM Director is essential to making the partnership between the White House/Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and OPM work well. Recruiting someone with management or public administration gravitas and previous executive agency leadership experience would be valuable. Private sector experience as a human resources executive may be valuable, but the statutory context in which Federal HR rules must operate is very different. The ideal candidate would have the perspective gained from central management agency experience. If the new Administration intends to pursue ideas for reforming personnel systems, some legislative background would also be valuable. There is also ample precedent for the White House elevating OPM's status by treating the Director as a member of the President's Cabinet, which would clearly illustrate and support the leadership role the Director is expected to play.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

NAPA has decades of experience studying, evaluating and supporting OPM leadership, programs and proposals. NAPA can offer perspective on the important function OPM serves and what has contributed to its successes and failures. Several former OPM Directors are NAPA Fellows who can share insights about the challenges OPM faces.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- No later than Post-Election, but even sooner would be good



Topic Idea 3: Helping Veterans by Improving the VA

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Scandals at the VA provided graphic examples of poor government performance and criticism of the VA has become a means by which those running for office can evidence concern for veterans. Even Presidential candidates who are not basing their campaigns on changing the current Administration will feel pressure to explain how they will “fix” the Federal Government in general and the VA in particular. At issue is whether there are changes that both satisfy the demand visibly to “do something” and actually improve services to veterans.

Congress has changed the law to enable more rapid removal of VA managers and employees who misbehave, but the major challenges remain: recruiting qualified personnel and getting adequate resources to provide services to all eligible veterans.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

Although much of the dissatisfactory performance at the VA can be attributed to poor management and insufficient resources, it is nonetheless also true that various offices in both the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration continue to provide poor service. For example, the Veterans disability claims process has been a longstanding issue on the GAO High Risk List.

In August 2014, President Obama signed the Veterans’ Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014 (PL 113-146). In addition to providing the Secretary of the Department with the authority to remove executives for performance and misconduct (See Topic Idea 6: Improving Federal Executive Accountability) the law also established additional workforce requirements for the VA.

Specifically, section 7412 of Public Law 113-146 requires the Department’s Inspector General to determine the top five medical occupations with the largest staffing shortages on a yearly basis. The law also gives the Secretary the authority to recruit and directly appoint employees to serve in positions where a staffing shortage has been determined.

While the results of these provisions are still in question, providing quality services to our nation’s veteran population will continue to be a focal point for the candidates and the next Administration. Therefore, the incoming President may should maximize the use of all flexibilities necessary for managing the Department which could include:

- Expand opportunities for public-private competition to improve service delivery in underperforming programs and/or geographic locations
- Allowing direct hiring authority for temporary managerial positions (career or non-career managers) to include 3-year once-renewable term appointments (with agency-specific priority reinstatement rights for career managers). This could be modeled after the authority given to the Defense Department to hire highly qualified experts for certain positions.
- Utilize existing flexibilities in law to pursue demonstration project authority for establishing an alternative personnel system within the Department



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- Modify VA Accountability Act proposal to provide for expedited procedures only for managers. Convert managers from Title V MSPB appeal to Title 38 internal agency review.
3. **How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.**
NAPA Fellows have both run and fixed the VA and other federal agencies and have actual experience with what does/doesn't work. Know limitations in Federal personnel and procurement laws and regulations.
 4. **When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?**
 - Pre-election

Note from the Panel Chair:

[April 27, 2017 news reports](#) indicate that the U.S. Senate is considering legislation that will mandate additional human capital flexibilities for VA executives and employees. Depending on the outcome of the debate, our Panel may need to consider modifying this topic area by providing a summary of the changes and the overall impact they will have on (1) the new Administration's ability to successfully manage our government's second largest Department and (2) any anticipated consequences they may have on the entire civil service system.



Topic Idea 4: Leading a Troubled Agency

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Congress and the media are continually surfacing issues and problems where agencies are under scrutiny for failing to provide services or engaging in inappropriate practices. The campaign may well raise examples and promise solutions. The incoming Administration will be expected to shift quickly to management mode and take responsibility, establish accountability, and implement remedies. Incoming appointees will be expected to lead and change troubled agencies where problems and counter-productive cultures may be entrenched. Those appointees must be able to offer strong leadership to engage their workforce and withstand extreme, often hostile, scrutiny in the press and on the Hill. The success of a new Administration's actions to address trouble spots in the Executive branch will go a long way to establish its credibility and reputation.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

At a minimum, the transition team should anticipate arenas where scrutiny will likely be most antagonistic. Of course this would include any trouble spots the campaign itself has elevated for discussion.

A transition team's personnel operation could make a concerted effort to identify and recruit experienced public and private sector managers who have a record of managing change successfully in the organizations they have led. Simply being a successful manager of a well-run organization may not hone the skills necessary to effect substantive change in difficult circumstances, especially when it must be done in the Federal fishbowl. It will be particularly important to select talent with the temperament necessary to withstand withering – sometimes unfair – criticism, to acknowledge needed improvements, and at the same time to support the workforce on which one must depend to achieve needed results. An incoming Administration may do well to establish a capacity within the Executive Office of the President to offer new agency leaders practical support for diagnosing and addressing agency problems and for responding effectively to antagonistic inquiry.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

NAPA is uniquely qualified to draw on its Fellows' unparalleled experience and offer practical advice and counsel with respect to handling and responding to difficult situations. We are familiar with the tools and tactics that work best in leading troubled agencies. Our Fellows include many current and former agency leaders who have survived every sort of circumstance. Unlike many consultants and advisors, we can offer real-life experience and support.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- No later than Post-Inauguration, but agency reviews Post-Election should surface issues so anticipating them for selection process would help



Topic Idea 5: Improving Federal Executive Accountability

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Congress is putting increasing pressure on VA, IRS, and the Executive Branch generally to hold senior executives 'accountable' (that's become code for making it easier to fire them). Three years ago, in response to the wait-times scandal at VA, Congress passed legislation drastically shortening the adverse action appeals process for that agency's SES members, only to have MSPB recently reverse three proposed terminations. This has led to a series of legislative proposals that would further reduce appeal rights for VA executives, and Congress is considering other bills that would do so for other VA employees, and even SES members in other agencies like IRS. There is every indication that this trend will continue with the new Congress as well.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

Virtually everyone agrees that Federal executives (as well as managers and rank-and-file employees) should be held accountable when they fail to fulfill their responsibilities. In that regard, most experts concede that the current process for holding them accountable—from proposed notice of termination through MSPB appeal and even judicial review—is exceedingly complex and time-consuming. However, can it be made simpler, faster, and most importantly, more effective? Several alternatives are worth considering:

- **Option 1: Status Quo.** Despite lots of rhetoric to the contrary, it is possible to separate SES members for cause. It takes time, patience, as well as knowledge of the title 5 USC adverse action appeals system and MSPB case law, but one can argue that it should take some effort to fire a senior executive...given that they often interface directly with political appointees, they deserve the protections against unfounded or politically motivated personnel actions that they are afforded under current law. However, a number of pending legislative proposals suggest that Congress may continue attempts to alter those protections.
- **Option 2: Current VA Model.** As noted, current law shortens adverse action appeal time limits for SES members in VA and further, precludes the Presidentially-appointed members of the MSPB from reviewing the administrative law judge's determination upon review, and there are proposals to extend these features government-wide. However, that approach would take legislation, and it has been severely criticized by almost everyone—by Congress and VA itself, as a result of recent MSPB reversals, as well as the Senior Executives Association—and the Justice Department has determined that one provision violates the Appointments Clause of the Constitution.
- **Option 3: Modified VA Model.** Another option would be to extend the shorter SES adverse action appeals time limits established by the original VA legislation, but allow MSPB to review and mitigate the penalty as part of its review (as noted, the current VA legislation precludes mitigation, and that was one of the main factors that led to MSPB's reversal). This too would require a change in the law, and attempt to address some of the constitutional issues noted above. However, given the mood of the majority in Congress – and perhaps even the VA – this approach



would not likely be acceptable to them.

- **Option 4: Revise the Standards for SES Appeals.** This approach would require legislation to actually change the factors by which MSPB adjudicates executive-level adverse action appeals, to reflect more clearly that senior executives should be held to a higher standard by virtue of their leadership responsibilities. Today, the government has to show that the termination of an SES member is “only for misconduct, neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a direct reassignment, or to accompany a position in a transfer of function.” However, crafting a fair and balanced standard will not be easy. Note in this regard that some have argued for a ‘conduct unbecoming’ standard for SES adverse actions, which MSPB has defined as “unattractive, unsuitable, detracting from one’s character or reputation or creating an unfavorable impression.”
- **Option 5: Administrative Review of SES Adverse Action Appeals.** This approach would require legislation to remove executive adverse action appeals from MSPB jurisdiction altogether, and have them adjudicated (likely under revised evidentiary and adjudicatory standards, per Option 4 above) by an administrative body established by law, perhaps using the ‘conduct unbecoming’ standard cited above, and possibly with limited court review. VA has proposed folding VA SES members under the purview of the internal Professional Review Board it uses to remove physicians and other medical professionals for cause. Under currently proposed legislation, the Secretary would retain ultimate authority to accept or alter the action of the Review Board. As an alternative, others have argued for administrative review by a ‘jury’ of SES peers appointed by an agency or the Administration. Either alternative would require legislation, which would also have to address the constitutional issues raised by the Justice Department and possibly offer limited court review.
- **Option 6: Move SES Members to ‘At Will’ Status.** Under this alternative, legislation would be required to eliminate executive adverse action appeals rights altogether, except for allegations that an executive adverse action was based on a prohibited personnel practice; that relatively narrow determination could be made by an agency’s Inspector General, and/or perhaps even reviewed by the MSPB, but absent a finding in that regard, an executive’s removal would be sustained. All other terminations would be not be appealable. Making career executives ‘at-will’ employees would essentially return the senior civil service to the spoils system; this option may also suffer from insurmountable constitutional concerns.

All of these options, as well as their many variations (including the *status quo*), have advantages and disadvantages that are well beyond the scope of this summary; however, they would bear summary examination in any final paper prepared by the Panel. While this paper highlights options for the appeals process, there are other means necessary for holding executives accountable, including the current performance management and awards process.

In a 2015 GAO released an audit entitled *OPM Needs to Do More to Ensure Meaningful Distinctions Are Made in SES Ratings and Performance Awards*



(GAO-15-189). In their findings, GAO noted that more than 85 percent of career executives within the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies were rated in the top two of five categories for fiscal years 2010 through 2013. They also noted that career SES received approximately \$42 million in awards for fiscal year 2013. GAO recommended that OPM consider ways to refine the SES performance appraisal system certification guidelines to promote making meaningful distinctions in performance. According to the report, OPM disagreed with the recommendation stating that, among other things, it could result in forced distributions in ratings. As our panel moves ahead, it would be beneficial to provide additional background and suggested recommendations to the transition teams on strengthening the SES performance management process.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

When it comes to civil service law and practice, this subject is one of the most controversial...and also one of the most arcane; as a result, it tends to attract solutions that are too simplistic and/or fraught with unintended adverse consequences. NAPA's expertise and experience in this area is relatively unique, and we may be the only extra-governmental organization that is able to (a) explain the current executive adverse action appeals process in a way that is understandable to policy-makers; (b) understand and describe the unintended consequences of the various options under discussion; and (c) actually devise one or more solutions that may achieve greater executive accountability while still protecting SES members from arbitrary, capricious, and otherwise politically motivated adverse actions.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- Post-election, unless this becomes a campaign issue.



Topic Idea 6: The Government's C-Suite: Overview of Executive Management Responsibilities

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

To compliment the list of appointees described in the previous summary, the NAPA T-16 Human Capital panel also proposes to develop a set of summary descriptions that provide background on the roles and responsibilities of key managerial jobs in the government (Assistant Secretaries of Management, COO, CIO, CFO, CAO, and CHCO). The summaries will help an incoming Administration understand the importance of each role and how they interconnect with one another to improve cross-agency collaboration. This information will be especially important should the President-elect choose to fill any of the positions with political appointees and can therefore utilize the detailed information in the NAPA summaries as a cross-reference to any position listed in the Plumb Book.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

In addition to listing specific duties (some of which may be found from the authorizing statute for the position) the descriptions will include an overview of strategic and operational challenges associated with each job. For example, it will be critical to understand and articulate how new legislative mandates such as the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) impact the stewardship of the CFO function in government by making spending data more readily available to the public. Also, NAPA will reinforce that each c-suite executive is responsible for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs. This is a critical point since many c-suite program areas have been identified as high risk by the Government Accountability Office for their susceptibility to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. In short, the Presidential candidates and transition teams must understand that the c-suite positions are a critical role in government, especially during the first year of the new Administration when legally mandated strategic planning activities must take place.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

Several of NAPA's Fellows have served (or are currently serving) in c-suite executive roles in the government. Some of the same Fellows have served in similar roles for the private sector as well. Therefore, NAPA can leverage the unique experiences of our Fellows to inform the development of the summary position descriptions and highlight the key differences between leading private and public sector organizations.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- Pre-election – with a release in Fall 2016



Topic Idea 7: How to Improve Federal Employee Engagement

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) continues to serve as the single most important data source for capturing Federal employee perceptions of their work experiences, their agencies, and their leaders. Thus, the survey will give incoming political leaders the opportunity to develop a detailed perspective on the engagement levels of the workforce as a whole. It also gives the incoming Administration the ability to compare engagement trends at the government-wide and agency-specific levels. In addition, the level of detail for FEVS reporting has improved over time as results are now available at the managerial/programmatic level. Thus, incoming political leaders can use the survey results to understand employee engagement trends for particular program areas/offices, especially those that align with strategic priorities of the President and the new Administration.

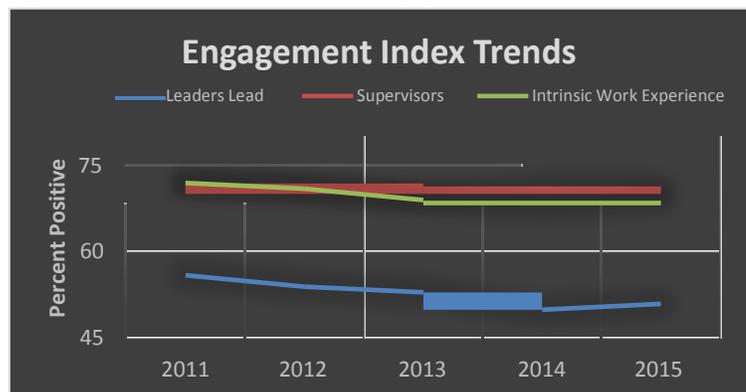
The utility of FEVS for incoming political executives also stretches beyond understanding critical perceptions of the workforce. For example, based on requirements outlined in the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization (GRPA-MA), Departments and agencies must submit new strategic plans no later than the first Monday in February following the year in which a new term commences. Thus, FEVS data is an integral source of information that should be used during the development of specific goals, targets, and measures of success for the strategic planning process at the outset of the Administration.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

In 2015, just over 421,000 employees responded to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. 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 means (e.g., gender, race, tenure, employee grade level, education level, occupational field, 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, the Office of Personnel Management (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 of understanding critical trends.

As illustrated in the 5-year trend analysis chart of the FEVS Engagement Index, differing employee perceptions are evident for (1) leadership; (2) supervisors; and (3) work





experiences. An incoming political team should review this data to gain an initial understanding of the disparities in the way supervisors and leadership are regarded.

However, it is important to reinforce that one must find the true meaning behind the trend line before reaching major conclusions. It will be critical for an incoming Administration to take into consideration several other factors that can influence or improve trend data. For example, nearly 60% of the government's senior executives are eligible to retire in 2015.

Coupling this fact with the recent [Executive Order on the Senior Executive Service](#), agencies are now being asked to improve their recruitment, development, and retention activities for executive level talent. This enhanced emphasis on hiring and career development in the Executive Order presents the next Administration with the unique opportunity to design strategies that not only strengthen executive level capacity but also find ways to determine their overall impact on employee engagement as well. Through this deliverable, NAPA must advocate for more leadership development at every level if we wish to increase employee engagement and organizational success.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

The Academy can complement the Partnership for Public Service's *Best Places to Work* by focusing on the critical intersection points between FEVS data and the agency strategic planning process. This will be especially timely as it is anticipated that OPM will be modifying the strategic human capital planning requirements from 5 CFR 250 over the coming months. For instance, Agencies must ensure that human capital planning is integrated within the GPRA-MA Strategic Planning and Annual Performance Planning processes. Finally, NAPA can also underscore the importance of designing and developing sound and reliable methods to improve engagement, which may include the following: (1) identifying key areas that will have largest impact on engagement; (2) communicating plans, actions, and results with the workforce on a regular basis; and (3) recognizing that engagement activities and associated results will take time to mature.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- Post-election – after the 2016 FEVS results are released to provide the President elect and their team with the most up to date analysis of some high level trends.



Topic Idea 8: Building the Federal Cybersecurity Workforce

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Protecting government systems and networks against cyber threats and attacks is considered a matter of economic and national security. In that regard, the executive branch and Congress have considered increasing the quality, quantity, and level of expertise of the government's cybersecurity workforce a priority. Effectively addressing cybersecurity workforce issues across government requires significant coordination and oversight. Several strategic initiatives have been organized and are underway with top level leadership and direction from the Executive Office of the President through Executive orders and Office of Management and Budget memoranda. Specific examples include the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) within the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the Department of Commerce and the ongoing effort led by the Office of Personnel Management to identify the Federal cybersecurity workforce more consistently. A range of efforts to improve recruitment and retention are underway particularly in the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, where the cybersecurity workforce addresses significant mission requirements. These efforts have proceeded with considerable bipartisan interest and support in the Congress.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

The new Administration should take clear steps to sustain the momentum that current initiatives have achieved to improve the recruitment and retention of the Federal cybersecurity workforce. Early, strong interest and leadership from the White House will be important for establishing accountability for continued leadership and for executing roles and assignments. Capitalizing on the bipartisan support this subject receives should help deter a natural tendency to reinvent the wheel.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

Many NAPA Fellows have experience pursuing enhancements to the systems and programs for recruiting and retaining cybersecurity and similar highly technical staff in rapidly evolving technologies. In its past studies and reports, NAPA has been called upon by Congress and agencies to examine these issues and make recommendations for next steps and improvements.

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- Pre-Election to transition teams



Topic Idea 9: Encouraging Executive Branch Innovation

1. Why is the topic/issue important?

Our democracy is experiencing a crisis of doubt and skepticism about its most distinguishing feature: the institutions and procedures of self-government. To be responsive, accountable and efficient, government now needs to be able to change and improve itself in continual cycles. That requires a new internal dynamic and new institutions and techniques to carry it out. Will the U.S. regain momentum as a vibrant, functioning country of self-government and citizen engagement? Or will it continue to deteriorate into a polarized, paralyzed stew dominated by self-serving special interest and characterized by a cynical and disengaged public? This question will be answered in part by how well the institutions of government learn to modernize and improve themselves.

2. What are some remedies that could serve as potential recommendations?

NAPA could recommend that major administrative units of the Federal Government establish an "Innovation Laboratory" devoted to reviewing, reworking, lightening and making less burdensome and more effective the system of regulations and procedures that supports discharge of the agency's public responsibilities. This would essentially be a task of innovation and modernization in a central activity aimed at more effective management, more useful interaction with users/customers, and design of a cheaper, more effective regulatory system.

Currently, the concept of creating centers of innovation is starting to take hold in the Federal Government, although not on a wide-spread basis. For instance, OPM established an innovation lab to help agencies resolve pressing managerial and program challenges. Simply stated, the innovation lab gives agencies a "safe space" for testing ideas and concepts through facilitated discussions with staff members who are trained to stimulate rapid decision making.

In keeping with the spirit and mission of the NAPA T-16 Human Capital Panel, we could explore the benefits and utility of leveraging OPM's Innovation Lab (and their trained staff) as the conduit for facilitating discussions and ideas on how best to enact civil service reform. The current Administration and many good government groups, including NAPA and the Partnership, have long argued that our civil service system is in dire need of updating. In fact, the President Obama's FY 14, 15, and 16 budget submissions noted that the Administration was "committed to developing an alternative, cost-effective (personnel) system that will allow the Government to compete for and reward top talent, incentivize performance, and encourage adequate flexibility to family caregivers, among other requirements."

While it is evident that civil service reform is needed, the public Administration community at large, needs to find an alternative way of building momentum necessary for change. If NAPA wants to push the envelope, we could propose that the new Director of OPM convene a group of stakeholders hosted by the agency's innovation lab in a series of discussions to create a roadmap for civil service reform, with the main focus on how best to enact



meaningful change. Invited participants should include representatives from the executive and legislative branch, good government groups, Federal employee unions, and academic experts.

3. How NAPA's expertise serves as a differentiator on this topic/issue.

It is not clear that NAPA has a distinct advantage over groups on this particular topic since the innovation lab concept is relatively new. However, to the best of our knowledge, it does not appear that any other group has promoted the idea of using the innovation lab approach to facilitate meaningful civil service reform.

Setting this type of a goal would allow the incoming OPM Director to make their mark early in the Administration. It would also assuage GAO's concerns about the OPM innovation lab, which were outlined in a March 2014 report ([GAO 14-306](#)). In that report, GAO noted that OPM must improve the way it monitors progress and reports results.

A secondary advantage of having NAPA spearhead this recommendation is that it could allow the organization to help attract new talent into public service. With a little effort NAPA could link the right parties in the departments sponsoring Innovation Centers with sources of potential employees. In addition, NAPA could also help the departments establishing innovation centers to draw in outside organizations with relevant expertise, such as the Citizens Engagement Laboratory (change strategies and logic), or The Billions Institute (scaling methodologies), *et al.*

4. When is the most important time to communicate this information to the candidates (Pre-Election, Post-Election, or Post Inauguration)?

- Post-election