The National Academy of Public Administration’s Transition 2016 Initiative: Equipping the Government for Success in 2016 and Beyond

Congressional and Executive Branch government management improvement initiatives over the last several decades provide a strong foundation for addressing some of our government’s greatest management challenges. A sustained focus on performance, financial, acquisition, human capital, and information technology management has identified and instituted best practices that, if adhered to, would likely substantially improve the results achieved by government programs. Successful achievement of an Administration’s policy goals depends, of course, on high performing government programs and people. Greater progress could be made, however, if management improvement initiatives that showed progress weren’t discarded in the churn of a Presidential transition.

Despite a number of comprehensive management improvement laws (i.e., the Chief Financial Officers Act, the Government Performance and Results Act, Clinger-Cohen, and the Chief Human Capital Officers Act) and successive Presidential Management Agendas, the government’s capacity to plan and execute the laws effectively and efficiently has not kept pace with the government’s growing mission. Moreover, highly visible administrative failures have contributed to a continued erosion of public confidence in the federal government’s ability to perform. And, we can be sure the next Administration will face a multitude of new threats and challenges to its ability to administer programs. To restore public trust in government, government must learn how to perform better.

The National Academy of Public Administration has traditionally played a strong role advising Congress and the Administration on what's worked and what has not in management initiatives. It will play that role again in 2016. Its nearly 800 Fellows, elected because of their public management expertise, represent every conceivable facet of government and can offer advice in many of the issues a new Congress and Administration will confront.

Led jointly by former Obama and Clinton Administration official Ed DeSeve and former Reagan and Bush (41 & 43) Administration official, David Chu, Transition 2016: Equipping the Government for Success in 2016 and Beyond, will bring together a group of Fellows renowned for their contributions and expertise in government and program management, especially in times of transition, to oversee the Academy's contributions to the upcoming Presidential transitions. Specifically, the initiative will:

- Advise potential Presidential Administrations on which management improvement initiatives have worked, which have not, and where gaps in current management improvement initiatives may exist;
- In partnership with the American Society for Public Administration, conduct studies and produce other content, through the Advising Leaders project, that represents the most advanced thinking on the government’s management challenges and how to overcome them; and
- Inventory and spotlight, in cooperation with Ernst & Young, LLP, through the Political Appointee Project, those Presidentially-appointed positions most critical to the improvement of agency and program management and provide insights to new political executives on the challenges of managing in government.
Strengthening the management capacity of the government will enhance the American people’s trust in it. But the erosion of that trust is just one example of the erosion of trust in the nation’s institutions, overall. Attention must be given to enhancing the governance of and trust in the nation’s institutions, as government alone cannot solve all the nation's problems. The Academy’s Transition 2016 initiative will contribute to the Academy's ongoing discussion of ways to draw attention to and improve governance of not only government, but of the nation’s institutions.

We look forward to working with our partners and sponsors, including the American University School of Public Affairs, Key Executive Leadership Program, which is a leading academic sponsor of this initiative, current and former Executive and Legislative Branch officials, and potential Presidential Administrations to convert this upcoming transition into a new dawn for management improvement.