Empowering Citizen-Driven Government through Collaboration and Service Delivery

ACT-IAC Institute for Innovation

Quadrennial Government Technology Review

2012
American Council for Technology—Industry Advisory Council:

The American Council for Technology (ACT) is a non-profit educational organization established by government leaders in 1979 to improve government through the efficient and innovative application of information technology. ACT was created to provide an objective and trusted forum for collaboration and education. In 1989, ACT established the Industry Advisory Council (IAC) to bring industry and government executives together to collaborate on IT issues of interest to the government.

ACT-IAC is a unique, public-private partnership dedicated to helping government use technology to serve the public. The organization provides programs that facilitate communication, education and collaboration. Recognized as the premier collaborative forum in the government IT community, ACT-IAC has been called “a model of how government and industry can work together” and “the Switzerland of the government IT community.”

ACT-IAC welcomes the participation of all public and private organizations committed to improving the delivery of public services through the effective and efficient use of information technology.

Institute for Innovation’s 2012 Quadrennial Government Technology Review:

The Quadrennial Government Technology Review (QGTR) is an initiative through ACT-IAC’s Institute for Innovation to provide senior government leaders with a discussion of some of the nation’s most pressing challenges. Over 100 volunteers from government and industry provided input to the seven papers that comprise the QGTR. Recommendations are offered to provide ways that information technology can make a positive impact on these challenges. Information technology underpins virtually every federal program and agency mission. Increased efficiency and effectiveness is especially critical to mission support, especially at times of budget shortages. This paper provides background information and recommendations developed by a cross-section of ACT-IAC members and represents a non-vendor specific, non-partisan perspective. The papers may be found at www.actgov.org/quadrennial.

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Introduction

Throughout American history, citizen engagement has been a powerful mechanism for impacting change. Citizens have always been an important and influential force in shaping the direction of government. Due to the quick adoption of technology over the last two decades, today's citizenry has more diverse requirements and expectations than ever. This diversity directly impacts how, when and where citizens engage with one another, business and the government.

Not only has living in a digital world altered how Americans interact, but it has also created new expectations for real-time, effective and relevant access to anything, anytime — and that includes government services. Citizens are also looking for a better user experience.

These expectations have caused a major paradigm shift in the relationship between citizens and government. Today, understanding the needs and expectations of each citizen is critical to government’s success and positive brand perception. By embracing this change as an opportunity, agencies and citizens look toward collaborating openly to drive toward a country that is more responsive to citizens’ current needs and future expectations.

Citizen-government collaboration allows services to be designed around the needs of a constituency, not just a branch of government. The current trend toward open data and transparency must continue to grow. This trend is a key enabler to an informed citizenry and promotes collaborative citizen-empowered innovation. By providing access to appropriate data for citizen use -- both for informational and collaborative purposes -- government can maximize investments with a clear return on taxpayer dollars through cost-effective service delivery models. To accomplish this, government must transition from a traditional and reactive service delivery model to a proactive framework where citizens are engaged in the design and delivery processes.

Key Recommendations:

- Create defined standards of commitment and performance.
- Develop a key indicator presentation of information.
- Involve citizens in the formation and evaluation of data sets.
- Move to two-way communication with citizens.
- Create digital windows to government for business.
- Create secure digital windows to government for citizens.

Citizen Expectations Vary

The needs and expectations of citizens depend on their perspective. One solution may not fit all. Therefore, further development of interfaces with government must consider requirements
based on a variety of citizen roles. The following model proposes three major constituencies: citizen partners, citizen advocates and citizen consumers. Each group shown in Exhibit 1 – Three Major Constituencies, depicts some of the factors that may influence overall expectations for government interaction. The major constituent groups are defined as:

- **Citizen Partners**: Those who will work with government to accomplish the country’s goals more efficiently and effectively.

- **Citizen Advocates**: Any unified group willing to engage government through virtually any means in order to augment, improve, complete, disrupt or otherwise alter the course of services, legislation and policies.

- **Citizen Consumers**: Those who expect a quality of service through a use of technology that equals or exceeds that of the private sector.

Traditionally, participation in government was limited by physical constraints, such as the number of people you could pack in a room, or the time required for travel between open forums. With the power of digital tools and open data -- the potential for collaboration is limitless. However, today’s government resources are limited when it comes to collaboration. The challenge is how to use those limited government resources and leverage new technologies and government processes in an efficient manner to meet people’s desire for more engagement. The result must be a government that is more responsive to citizen wants and needs.
Exhibit 1 – Three Major Constituencies

Citizen Partners: Making Society Better Together

The size and scale of the issues our nation faces every day requires a partnership between citizens and government to develop innovative solutions to problems. Technology can help to improve those partnerships and accelerate visibility into important issues. Technology can also maximize investments by providing more effective, efficient and responsive solutions. Citizen
partners are those who will work with government to accomplish the country’s goals more efficiently and effectively. They may provide input to or engagement with solution developers using crowd sourcing or similar methodologies.

Technology offers the opportunity for citizens and government to work together and leverage one of our nation’s greatest assets – the creativity of its people. Government agencies not only benefit from a broader base of skills and insight, but also can increase citizen engagement through partnerships. Citizens benefit through being able to offer input to causes they care about, and government reaps the rewards of positive public sentiment, when citizens’ concerns or suggestions are legitimately considered or adopted.

**Bright Spots and Examples**

Although each instance of government -- whether federal, state or local -- is unique because of the constituents it serves, many governmental functions overlap. One example of this overlap is public transportation. Thanks to open source licensing and development practices, government can leverage solutions developed elsewhere, customize them for specific needs and give back any enhancements to the community for others to build upon.

- Creative ideas are proliferating at local levels where citizens interact with government most frequently. [SeeClickFix.com](http://www.seeclickfix.com) is an example of a service for local governments where citizens take pictures of potholes, broken hydrants and other deficiencies and text them to a central repository. The citizen does not know what level of government maintains that road and should not have to worry about directing the deficiency to the right agency.

- The [Code for America](http://www.codeforamerica.org) project enables citizen participation through ‘hack-a-thons’ and fellowships for talented individuals. It enables government entities to exchange ideas and valuable tools through an open source model.

- Astronomy has a long history of impressive contributions from amateurs, but given the expectation of required expert knowledge, it is not often considered a field where average citizens bring about positive change in the community. Yet, open data practices enabled exactly that kind of groundbreaking contribution from two high school students. By pouring over deep space data, the teens accounted for 40 percent of the current findings from the [Pulsar Search Collaboratory](http://www.kentucky.com/2012/02/05/2057225/rowan-county-high-schoolers-make.html).

- Through funding from institutions such as the Department of Energy, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation, a crowd sourcing platform, [GalaxyZoo](http://www.galaxyzoo.org) was built to allow the public to assist in the identification and classification of galaxies.

These improvements came about through leveraging new technologies with government data transparency and combining government processes to facilitate these citizen partners’ actions.

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1 [http://www.kentucky.com/2012/02/05/2057225/rowan-county-high-schoolers-make.html](http://www.kentucky.com/2012/02/05/2057225/rowan-county-high-schoolers-make.html)
Recommendations

Define standards of commitment and performance. Data driven engagement is key to enabling active participation. It engenders proactive roles and processes to enhance growth and sustainability. Governments have made great strides in providing data, but they must make it more interpretable to the general consumer. In addition to providing information, government can do a better job at defining standards of commitment and performance while taking an analytical approach to management and delivering services. Communication and dissemination of relevant statistics is at the heart of a modern and vibrant democracy.

Key indicator measurement at the presentation layer. The development of key indicator measurement at the presentation layer of information could be in the form of a dashboard of qualitative and quantitative information citizen and government agreed upon for service and performance measurement. The transparent presentation design should be real-time and enable two-way communication. Direct citizen input that is sharable and modular allows the presentation of the information to become a data set in itself.

Involve citizens in the formation and evaluation of data sets. With the availability of ever-growing data sets, citizens continue to emerge more than ever before as an empowered, informed body that is ready to act. In their daily lives, citizens consume, collect, and share data that is important to them. Therefore, government should involve the citizenry in forming and evaluating data sets. Whether as official contributors to key data sets with agreed upon service level agreements, or part of a point-in-time engaged audience, the ability of citizens to contribute to data set formation and evaluation can be enabled by engaging citizens as partners.

One approach could be to develop mobile applications and portals that enable collection and evaluation of data in real-time centered around specific topics. To take the recommendation one step farther would be to integrate the model into the development of a secure, personalized window to government. By linking all contributions in the collection, the sharing and evaluation of data into a personalized account will embrace the culture of collaboration and partnership discussed as part of a citizen-centered government.

Citizen Advocates: Using the Power of Communities of Interest to Bring About Change

Social media and emerging technologies make it easier for Americans to take a proactive role in transforming government. Highly engaged groups employ social media for reshaping the context of conversations and discussion -- large and small. Citizen advocates seek to alter the course of services, legislation and policies and, as a unified group, work to engage government.

Bright Spots and Examples

In some ways, government is joining an already ongoing conversation. Through virtual town hall meetings, micro-targeted candidate fundraising campaigns, targeted outreach by public affairs
groups and crowd sourcing program data, government is exploring and utilizing new and innovative ways to reach its constituents.

Sharing data is required for enabling citizen partners. Data.gov is a prime example of how those partners have become citizen agents. Thanks to data.gov, millions of advocacy groups, activists, and entrepreneurs can leverage government data to provide new consumer services and assist in the effective management of government bureaucracy. This data is not just used casually by citizens. Scientists, for example, may use this information to find ways to reduce the costs of a federal grant or a state-funded program.

Federal data is not the only example of citizens acting as change agents through social media, mobile applications and emerging technologies. During EPA’s “Apps for the Environment” challenge, one aspiring team built Toxic Slayar, an augmented reality app that leverages EPA’s open data on toxic releases by company and location. This app allows consumers to be more informed about the businesses they patronize and unseen environmental impacts from chemicals. Through this challenge, EPA made government data more effective by empowering consumers and changing the individual and institutional behavior.

New forums of engagement, such as the White House’s online petition site We the People (https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/) are beginning to change the way the public engages with government. This website bridges the gap between formal participation through lobbyist groups and informal exchanges, such as Twitter. Currently, when a threshold is met, the Administration offers an official reply. But it is only a matter of time before citizens demand more than just a threshold for recognition. They will expect a platform for engaging government in two-way communication and furthering demands of the people.

Recommendations

Move to two-way communication. Through social media tools, everyone can communicate directly with the White House. No one must wait for Congress to speak on his or her behalf. Whether government is actively listening and engaging or not, citizens are using technology to provide input on rules and policies. This is an example of communication that is asymmetrical, but not two-way.

With an effective and proactive two-way engagement approach throughout all levels of government on critical policy, legislative issues or those that shape service delivery, citizen advocates have the ability to contribute to the process and collective work of government.

Through two-way communication with citizens, issues can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily and escalated through the chain of local, state and federal entities as necessary to address citizen needs. Further, through citizen advocacy the government will be increasingly attuned to the sentiments of constituencies and allow citizens to act as change agents.

2 http://appsfortheenvironment.challenge.gov/submissions/4583-toxicslayar
Citizen Consumers: Engagement by Needs or Events

All citizens are direct and indirect consumers of government services focused around events and communities of interests at various points in our lives. The government’s ability to structure services around these key moments increases efficiency by making the flow of information simpler to navigate. Citizen consumers expect a high quality of service and creative applications of technology to improve their overall experience when interacting with government. Given today’s many points where citizen consumers must interface, there is a need to bring order and easy access to today’s dispersed services. These ideas align with those of the Smart Lean Government³ effort, which focuses on government created platforms that support citizen services based on communities of service and life events. Both communities of service and life events maximize services available to citizens. In a Smart Lean Government, harmonized suites of citizen services optimize and minimize citizen interaction with all levels of government.

Bright Spots and Examples

The U.S. Small Business Administration created an online community for small business owners. It is a stellar example of a foundational approach that can be replicated for other applications. Small business owners collaborate, get answers to questions and find helpful tips and access tools that help them complete their desired action instead of muddling through pages of content.

Citizens consume government services both directly by applying for permits or passports and indirectly by leveraging data created during the course of government business or through the physical and digital infrastructure supported by the government. The previous example speaks to the modernization of services directly consumed by citizens. An indirect example already exists as illustrated by the recent release of the 2010 Census Data. This population trend data stimulated and empowered countless academic and economic consumers of information to examine its implications for our nation and world. In a more digital sense, the National Broadband Initiative provides an example wherein government used a unique crowd sourcing system sponsored by the FCC to measure and collect broadband speeds throughout America. To highlight some of these findings, the Department of Commerce released a National Broadband Map.

These initiatives focus on the power of citizens as active participants in our free market economy, not just as passive consumers.

Recommendations

Secure digital windows to government for business. Today, government is making progress on building windows into business services. These solutions offer an opportunity to improve

³ [http://www.actgov.org/SLGExecSummary](http://www.actgov.org/SLGExecSummary)
processes and maximize the use of investments to provide the best overall citizen-to-government experience. Sites such as the beta version of the Business.USA.gov website take the first step to streamline content for businesses by crowd sourcing material from the SBA, Commerce and others. However, more can be done to tailor the individual solutions based on personal requirements. For example, if an individual accesses an offered option using individual sign-on from the chosen government online personalized mashup, he/she should be presented with personalized information targeted at their current needs and business status.

A personalized digital experience would tailor information to the individual and his/her geographic requirements, including:

- District/state/city-specific zoning, license or permit information.
- A snapshot of potential area competitors.
- Questions that other local business owners have asked, and the answers.
- List of registered local services that might be useful, including general contractors.
- Lists of local business associations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

Today, even one-stop shops for information still represent a government committed to letting the citizen do the work. Entrepreneurs need to know what information they are looking for or face the daunting task of digesting the whole of government to determine what is relevant. A future proactive, service-centric government will bring the relevant information to the business by collaborating across agencies and levels of government to reduce redundancy. Even a simple enhancement to website content can make life easier for the citizen. For example, instead of Agency A maintaining a page on environmental regulations related to the target audience (and likely letting the content go out-of-date eventually), the agency could link to the authority, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and a relevant repository for such data on EPA.gov.

**Secure Digital Windows to Government for Citizen Services:** Citizens expect government to provide the same (or better!) level of service than they get in their lives as consumers. Citizens want to interface with government via an integrated view that is agnostic to agency or department.

For example, as government transitions from its traditional delivery model, where recent efforts have generally focused on modernizing paper-based processes into Web-based models and then to a citizen-driven framework, it is critical that government explore revolutionary methods of executing its mission and engaging citizens.

One area of study is the whole area of citizen’s financial status with the federal government. For example, in today’s online, tech-savvy world, consumers have heightened expectations of their financial institutions. This includes their personal bank, brokerage firm, insurance company and
so on. They want to check account balances, transfer money, pay bills and adjust their investments any time using their computers or smart phones.

What if a citizen could go to an online site, log in to their secure government-wide personal account, and check their current financial status populated with information from not only the Internal Revenue Service, but also the Social Security Administration, Federal Housing Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services? This means that tomorrow’s citizens could:

- Confirm their tax status (account balance or refund history), to include prior years.
- Make changes to their filing status (e.g., single to married filing jointly) or address.
- Check their Social Security projected benefits.
- Examine benefits for families who adopt a child with special needs.
- Check their FHA Loan application status, current interest rate and loan amount.
- Confirm balances after consolidating student loans.

The concept could certainly extend beyond finances to capabilities such as downloadable veteran's records such as military service record, separation status, medical records and more. These processes are not in place, making access to even one’s own personal information cumbersome and time-consuming.

Conclusions

These examples highlight the way government should adapt to work in the 21st century and provide greater service to citizens and businesses. The citizen-driven government must use these varied outlets to build digital communities. A citizen-driven government model extends the community concept by asking citizens to sign up/opt-in to improve the service. By asking questions on user experience, systems can evolve.

Metrics must transparently include the good and the bad. This is the only way to effectively gauge performance and make proper decisions about change. Easily accessible, interpretable data and dashboards allow citizens to obtain as little or as much detail needed to participate in government at their comfort level. When it comes to justifying funds, agencies can use measures of time, frequency and ease of use for various applications and parse the information by user profile. Enabling this capability could involve the creation of a new office/department whose core mission is to handle inter- and intra-agency agreements. Not only would service delivery be transformative, but longstanding issues such as improper payments would be greatly reduced as the citizen becomes linked in a common way across the government environment. This capability could extend beyond any one layer of government — imagine being able to get personal property tax, city hall meeting times and other information specific to an individual’s state and local government, all in one easily navigable online hub, accessible through a browser or application.
Citizens are reinventing traditional practices of engagement -- and the government can leverage these ever-growing platforms. In fact, government has no choice but to listen and engage, or be rendered increasingly at odds with the public it seeks to serve. This evolution demands government attention and commitment. It requires input and participation from citizens working beside their elected representatives.

U.S. citizens are already directly involved in major shifts in our government and society. Much of the groundwork for future engagement is established. The next term of administration has a host of opportunities for further citizen engagement by enabling various movements to unfold productively.

Citizens will collaborate and drive action, whether within the confines of current solutions or by establishing their own solutions. We have seen this in times of emergencies. As demonstrated repeatedly on a global level, governments can be involved in the process of reshaping countries -- or they can watch from the sidelines. The government’s lack of ability to engage some segments during the digital revolution has created for many citizens a culture of apathy and negative perceptions about government’s value. Agencies must evolve, involve and collaborate with citizens in ways that stretch limited budgets, provide transparency and deliver services seamlessly with the ease and interfaces citizens are familiar with from non-governmental transactions. Only in this way can we move toward the vision of a truly citizen-driven government.
Appendix A: Readiness Framework

By putting in place a readiness framework (Exhibit 2 – Readiness Framework Model) for systematically and strategically measuring and reporting on engagement, government institutions at all levels (federal, state and local) can evaluate their effectiveness and put proper incentives in place to drive engagement both internally and externally.

These measurements ensure government is able to make smart decisions about where to focus investments in order to constantly refine citizen-engagement programs to meet not only today’s imperatives, but also those of tomorrow. Most importantly, however, is the intersection of a government that is actively working toward involvement in service delivery with the citizens themselves.

Exhibit 2 – Readiness Framework Model

Using the proposed Readiness Framework model in Exhibit 2 above, and building upon previous attempts by government, agencies can transition into a citizen-driven government structure that is well positioned among various constituencies to maintain confidence and satisfaction. The Readiness Framework offers areas that agencies can measure to clearly evaluate progress. As shown in this exhibit, “Engagement” relates to the breadth of active community outreach. Citizen-driven government is intended to leverage the energy, intellect and activism of significant groups. Traditional focus groups or small forums would be considered low on the
‘engagement scale’. Broad outreach on a particular topic: smoking cessation, wellness initiatives, motivating parents to learn math so they can mentor their children, would be high on the ‘engagement scale’. “Capability to Deliver” may be determined through an analysis based on organizational readiness, human capital/culture and a series of success metrics.

All elements of government must be ready to make the transition into the citizen-driven government model. The majority of tasks reside in the Executive Branch due to its sheer size, data volume and importance to national security. There are certainly implications for Judicial and Legislative functions as well. The importance of creating channels that seamlessly integrate state and local governance into the federal-constituent feedback loop must not be forgotten, either.

**Capability to Deliver**

Elements for consideration in the development of a maturity model include:

- **Organizational Readiness**: infrastructure; definition of processes and roles.
- **Human Capital/Culture**: impact on resources, human capital and risk profiles and cultural effect.
- **Success Metrics**: real-time analytics, calculation of ROI/ROE.

A point system for each category will determine readiness for change to a citizen-driven government. Some sample questions include:

**Organizational Readiness**

- Have all privacy and security concerns been reasonably addressed?
- Are digital assets in place and/or budgeted for?
- Is the required data clean, open, modernized, and available?
- Are there data governance policies and rules in place?
- Have solutions been tested and evaluated in a production environment?
- Are the processes clearly documented and communicated?
- Does the process support continuous improvement?

**Human Capital/Culture**

- Are there skilled resources to implement solutions?
- Do people/team’s performance evaluations have clear alignment to success of citizen-centric model/initiatives?
- Is there depth of resource available for succession planning, surge, and change of scope?
Does the agency have the brand and process in place to recruit required talent?

Is there executive sponsorship and active involvement?

Are stakeholders engaged through the organization to stay the course?

Has the organization undergone shifts in priority and focus successfully in the past?

Success Metrics- ROI/ROE

Are success metrics clearly defined by audience?

Is there formalized reporting structure for success metrics that provide transparency to make real-time adjustments to strategy?

Can the traffic/number of participants be measured in digital strategy/gov within an agency program?

Can private companies interface with the service/data/program?

What time will be saved through the program?

What money will be saved through the program?

Through a combination of metrics and assessments as suggested above, agencies can analyze their readiness status and create a path forward to maximize their technology investment, reduce duplication and provide clarity. A focus on these metrics will bring citizens increasingly closer and more supportive of their government.
Appendix B: Additional References on Citizen-Driven Government (see in-text links for direct examples)

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Primary Purpose / Insight Gained</th>
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<tr>
<td>WhiteHouse.gov</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Examples of citizen engagement by inviting the citizenry to contribute ideas or view data. We the People and the Tax Receipt are examples, as are the president’s SAVE Award within government agencies, which could prove to be a model for citizen coproduction as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Computer Week, “U.S. CIO urges citizen engagement,” April 3, 2012.</td>
<td>Trade publication</td>
<td>CIO encourages more public-private partnerships, setting the stage for businesses to propose technology that facilitates coproduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCN, “Don’t look now, but everybody is watching,” March 28, 2012.</td>
<td>Trade publication</td>
<td>The ever-increasing importance of social media metrics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OhMyGov, “Government IT workers skeptical of social media,” 2009.</td>
<td>Trade publication</td>
<td>Highlights the hurdles CIOs and others may face in implementing social media or other new technologies and coproduction service agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), “Public Involvement Spectrum.”</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>A potential starting model to discuss evolution of services from informing to empowering.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance International, “The Governance International Coproduction Tree.”</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Another model that highlights what factors feed into coproduction.</td>
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<td>“GAO-11-908 - Streamlining Government: Key Practices from Select Efficiency Initiatives Should Be Shared Government wide,” September 2011.</td>
<td>Government publication</td>
<td>GAO was asked to (1) describe selected initiatives that federal departments are implementing to achieve efficiencies; and (2) identify key practices associated with implementing these initiatives, as well as selected state initiatives, that can be applied more broadly in the federal government. GAO reviewed agency documents and interviewed officials from the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DOD), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as officials from five states—Virginia, Iowa, Texas, Washington, and Georgia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Lean Government, <a href="http://www.actgov.org/SLGExecSummary">http://www.actgov.org/SLGExecSummary</a>.</td>
<td>ACT-IAC initiative</td>
<td>Additional information on the SLG group referenced in the Guiding Principles section of this paper.</td>
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Quadrennial Government Technology Review Team for Citizen-Driven Government

Adam Coonin, Hitachi Consulting (Member)
Joshua DeLung, ENC Strategy (Editor)
Mike Dunham, Casewise (Member)
Megan Dunn, Ambit Group (Marketing Communications Liaison)
Amy Fadida, A.M. Fadida Consulting (member)
Christina Frederick, Sapient (Topic Lead)
Sieglinde Gooding, Vocus (Member)
Jay Handley, IC Fi (member)
Karina Homme, Salesforce.com (Member)
Jay Huie (Member)
Naveen Krishnamurthy, Riva Solutions Inc. (Member)
Jeffrey Smith, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP (Member)
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Montressa Washington, IBM (Member)

Quadrennial Government Technology Review Steering Committee and Advisors

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Molly O’Neill, CGI Federal (Co-chair)
Anne Reed, Anne Reed Consulting (Co-chair)
Jim Williams, Daon (Advisor)
Bob Woods, Topside Consulting (Advisor)

ACT-IAC Staff Support

Kenneth Allen
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Institute for Innovation

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The Institute commissioned the 2012 Quadrennial Government Technology Review to develop a series of reports and executive briefings for consideration by the next administration. Each report focuses on the use of information technology to address a national challenge. These papers, and additional information on the Institute, can be found on: www.actgov.org/quadrennial.

Empowering Citizen-Driven Government through Collaboration and Service Delivery
Educating our Workforce for Today’s Jobs in Science and Technology
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Unleashing the Power of Information Technology to Reduce the Budget Deficit
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Dave Wennergren, (Government Liaison)

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