



September 14, 2018

Via Email performance@omb.eop.gov

United States Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500

Subject: Response to Referenced Request for Information (RFI)

Reference: RFI on Establishing a Government Effectiveness Advanced Research (GEAR) Center --
Solicitation Number: SPE-RFI-18-0001

To Whom It May Concern:

Microsoft is pleased to respond to the referenced RFI and applauds the government's efforts to consider new ways to bring together experts from across disciplines to help the government catch up with private-sector services and capabilities. We too believe modernization of government IT and enablement of the workforce can bring about improved agency mission execution, citizen service delivery and resource stewardship. And we believe the technology industry, research institutes, academic institutions and non-government organizations can assist with these efforts. Recently an op-ed by Microsoft US Regulated Industries President Toni Townes-Whitley entitled "Answering the Right Questions for a Modern Government" (<https://morningconsult.com/opinions/answering-the-right-questions-for-a-modern-government/>) spoke of the responsibility of everyone to work with the public sector to apply the best private and public sector innovations for agencies to provide better service for citizens than ever before.

Microsoft Mission and Public-Private Partnership Work

At Microsoft, our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. We strive to create local opportunity, growth and impact in every community and country around the world. Our platforms and tools enable creativity in all of us, and help drive productivity, competitiveness and efficiency. They also support new startups, improve educational and health outcomes, and empower human ingenuity. Our sense of purpose lies in our customers' success. Our areas of expertise include IT platforms and tools for the modern workplace; business applications; cloud applications and infrastructure; data analytics; artificial intelligence; and gaming.

Microsoft engages in many formal and informal private-public-partnerships with various governments of all levels around the world including many that include other stakeholders as well.

- One example is the Cascadia Innovation Corridor focused on improving connectivity, innovation and opportunity in the Cascadia region. This coalition includes governments, universities, companies, research institutions and others. (More here - <https://news.microsoft.com/?s=cascadia+innovation> .)

- We believe in a future where every person has the skills, knowledge, and opportunity to achieve more. Around the world we partner with governments and non-government organizations to help provide education, training and retraining. Reimagining the labor market for the 21st century is an enormous task. Success requires a new mindset of lifelong learning and ongoing skill development to match advancing technology. That is why Microsoft is partnering with public and private sector organizations, including nonprofits like the Markle Foundation. Microsoft is investing more than \$25 million to expand the Skillful initiative and help more American workers adapt to the digital economy and changing workplace. Skillful brings together key players across the labor market including employers, state and federal governments, educators, and workforce centers to help American workers adapt to the changing workplace. (More about that partnership and others here - <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/philanthropies> and <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/digital-skills/career-pathways> .)
- Through Microsoft's CityNext program, we and our partners empower cities and citizens to unlock their potential by delivering innovative digital services that can help them lead safer and healthier lives, enriched by high-quality education. CityNext helps cities engage their citizens, empower city employees, optimize city operations and infrastructure, and transform and accelerate innovation and opportunity. (More about this partnership with local governments to empower citizens and public servants here - <https://microsoft.com/citynext/> .)

GEAR Center Areas of Innovation

At Microsoft, we believe advancements in technology can be a force multiplier in unlocking solutions for some of the biggest challenges facing society and government alike. Prioritizing the GEAR Center on the critical components of today's Federal agencies' efforts to deliver a smarter, leaner, and more effective government would be well aligned with the President's Management Agenda, and additionally aligned with Microsoft efforts to support these mission objectives. This includes supporting the cross-agency priority goals such as:

- Identifying optimal ways to deliver on the Technology Business Management framework across large data sets in economical and secure ways.
- Modernizing IT to increase productivity and security. Educate agencies on how to transform existing apps and/or build new mission-critical apps while leveraging an intelligent and accessible data platform across premises and in the cloud.
- Improving customer service across government agencies so that citizens and businesses have high-quality access to reliable services with modern tools and efficient self-service options.

Moving forward, Identifying and prioritizing where to focus the efforts of the GEAR Center would optimally be done by capturing and analyzing the feedback from the voices of the citizens and businesses whom the government serves. Additionally, providing front-line service and support agents equal or better access to answers and information is key to improving customer satisfaction through first contact resolution; and also improves consistent service delivery across agents and channels. The same knowledge bases being used to provide self-service to the public can also be used internally to train and equip staff with the information they need to better serve citizens across all channels from phone to social media to live chat. Harnessing this power to understand the needs of those that we serve, gather feedback on where improvements can be made, and then leverage these data sets to optimize the focus of the GEAR Center would be Microsoft's recommendation. We have helped many agencies and companies implement these models across government and the private sector, and we would be happy to collaborate on the possibilities.

Early Focus Areas for GEAR Center

Microsoft has long been committed to working with policymakers, industry leaders, educators and other stakeholders to ensure that every student, job seeker, and displaced or underemployed worker has access to education and training in basic technology and computing skills. When re-skilling and up-skilling a workforce for the digital era, employers should consider leveraging that same digital technology to create a more efficient and personalized assessment and training based on their roles. One effective approach is to use a connected learning and development platform that provides (i) professional roadmap and relevant internal opportunities, (ii) up-to-date skill profile with credentials, (iii) crowdsourced learning content, (iv) customized program choices, (v) learning recommendations, (vi) on-demand training, and (vii) real-time progress monitoring through dashboards. We have used this approach internally and have helped other organizations do the same, and we would be happy to collaborate.

In Closing

As governments look to leave behind old processes, disparate systems, and paper-based methods, they can move to a digital future for government models and services. And as governments transform to drive value from increasing volumes of data and enable citizen engagement models, the need for improved data security increases. Leaders are now able to overcome challenges by delivering exceptional government services to citizens through digital transformation. We are enabling governments to better serve and protect citizens by connecting people, systems, and information resulting in more impactful outcomes. Microsoft enables digital transformation of government with an integrated, flexible, and trustworthy approach that offers a choice of public, private and hybrid cloud services.

We encourage and hope you will reach out to us to discuss further the opportunity to bring the GEAR Center idea further along. I may be contacted at swalters@microsoft.com. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input into the future GEAR Center.

Sincerely,

Steve Walters
Federal Civilian Leader
Microsoft Corporation