GEAR Center RFI 2018

The Project Management Institute (PMI) is pleased to respond to the Office of Management and Budget's Request for Information (RFI) on the development of a GEAR Center. The activities you are envisioning for the GEAR Center are similar to what PMI provides as a service to its members and we have some information to share.

Founded in 1969, PMI represents 2.9 million professionals working in nearly every country in the world through global advocacy, collaboration, education and research. We advance careers, improve organizational success and further the profession of project management through our globally recognized standards, certifications, resources, tools, academic research, publications, professional development courses and networking opportunities.

PMI engages with world-leading organizations and governments globally on improving project and program delivery in a variety of environments, including those that benefit from a public-private partnership. To be successful, there is a need for clarity about utilizing standards, metrics for accountability, and the risk assignment of each party in a project. These criteria enhance participant confidence and the ROI for involved stakeholders. PMI has published several white papers that show this in a variety of industries, geographies and contexts.

PMI's research and collaboration with business and government also includes digital transformation issues. Project, program and portfolio managers are the human bridges that connect organizational strategy to operational implementation. As a result, there is a widening gap between employers' need for these skills in the workforce and the availability of qualified professionals to fill those needs. This gap is particularly acute within federal agencies, where there has been a dramatic increase in the number of jobs requiring project-oriented skills taking place at the same time many professionals are retiring from the workforce[1].

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[1] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Policy and Evaluation, *Issues of Merit,* August 2018, p.5 at https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1540524&version=1546183&application=ACROBAT, retrieved September 5, 2018

Top 10 Federal Occupations

Rank	1977 Occupation	Employees	2016 Occupation	Employees
1	General Clerk	90,202	Program Specialist	84,870
2	Secretary	56,518	IT Specialist	82,248
3	Clerk-Typist	52,615	Nurse	75,867
4	Nursing Assistant	37,110	Management Analyst	72,609
5	Supply Clerk	27,397	Investigation/Compliance Technician	42,949
6	Air Traffic Controller	27,232	General Clerk	42,529
7	Clerk-Stenographer	25,157	Investigator	42,133
8	Computer Specialist	24,826	Contract Specialist	37,329
9	Engineering Technician	22,268	Investigation/Compliance Specialist	35,795
10	Electronics Technician	21,941	Attorney	34,381

PMI appreciates the opportunity to share these views and would be interested in engaging as a participant in the GEAR Center going forward.

1. Given the mission of the GEAR Center, what should be:

o Its strategic approach and operating objectives?

As a convener of organizations across the industries and perspectives being targeted in this RFI, the GEAR Center stands to serve as a leading example in leveraging information that the government may already have in order to catalyze innovation for management practices and the federal workforce of the future from across a wide variety of stakeholders. As an information and data partner with these organizations the GEAR Center can help to drive solutions to some of the most critical challenges facing government today.

The GEAR Center could explore applying standard or common business practices in lieu of some existing regulated processes and procedures that have ensnared many initiatives within government. There should also be an ability to develop an approach that allows easy and regular communication with the stakeholders, that hold the information and ideas the GEAR Center needs. The goal of that approach is a clear and distinct articulation of each requirement so that the creative and innovative capabilities of both individuals and organizations can effectively move in the right direction.

PMI agrees with OMB on a number of specific areas of innovation and practice to prioritize, including upskilling federal employees. By 2027, employers globally will need 87.7 million individuals working in project management-oriented roles, including almost 20 million in the U.S. The talent gap could result in a potential loss of some US$207.9 billion in GDP through

2027[2]. Rather than rehash of the same kinds of policies and programs that the federal government has initiated over many decades the GEAR Center, could become a pilot vehicle for the government to work with stakeholders on the issue. This also provides an opportunity to explore how government's investments and partnerships with education organizations

3. *What models of public-private partnership should inform the GEAR Center:*

What sectors, stakeholders, types of expertise, and networks or programs should be involved?
What should a governance structure look like or include?
How should the GEAR Center maintain mission focus without the Federal Government being responsible for ongoing administration, staffing, and operational management?

Traditionally, with public private partnerships (PPPs) being used primarily for targeted community needs (i.e., infrastructure, services, etc.), that allow for both load sharing of risk and revenue across public and private sectors, it is recommended to adjust the structure accordingly.

We recommend a "Public Private Coalition" with the specific goal of improving the way the federal government serves its constituents while reforming and revitalizing the programs and processes government uses.

This coalition would allow government, industry, academia, and NGOs to effectively collaborate with clear expectations of inputs and outputs. To launch, it is common for a central core group of these organizations to get things started. There should be several assets developed – including a digital portal to organize activity, share information and collaborate. The GEAR Center could also choose to hold an event or conference on a regular basis – or multiple events focused on different subjects or themes of interest. Participating organizations would be able to send representatives, special guests, and speakers on key topics to ensure the sessions are advancing the innovative thinking and dialogue for the effective management of government and the workforce of the future.

PMI has excellent experience with such collaborative and incubating environment. PMI routinely convenes collaborative networks that involve senior leaders representing influential organizations from the business, government, academic and social sectors. The efforts help to support industry, NGO, and government knowledge, networking, and learning on common challenges associated with improving overall value delivery. This includes core discussions around strategy and execution within large complex organizations. The groups utilize knowledge management techniques and peer networking to discuss solutions and insights for bridging the gap between strategy design and strategy delivery across a variety of industries, sectors, and the government. For example, one key group brings experienced senior executives together to incubate and solve challenges cross-cutting both private sector industries and the public sector in the area of delivering and executing against the organization's mission or

[2] Project Management Institute, *Project Management, Job Growth and Talent Gap 2017-2027,* https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/job-growth-report.pdf, accessed August 27, 2018

strategy. The other focuses on utilizing cutting-edge research and solutions with executive leaders regarding strategy design that is ultimately aligned to the delivery capability of the organization. This approach of thinking and innovation demonstrably bridges the gap between overall strategy design and execution accordingly.

The mechanism of choice should revolve around basic goals including cost to taxpayers, investment human capital from government officials, the ability to access and deliver datasets and the interests of the Administration in sustaining the initiative to address systemic issues or rejuvenate ideas for a discreet problem.

Additionally, PMI has used a design thinking approach to promote innovation and new ways of thinking. Bringing together senior leaders and the next generation of project leaders within their respective organizations, they ideate on solutions to persistent business challenges related to management, project delivery and the realization of associated benefits, organizational agility and more. A design thinking approach used within this group of leading global organizations has allowed PMI to think towards the future of work and design solutions and recommendations with the end user in mind. PMI's experience in using design thinking in this manner could greatly contribute to the GEAR Center's intended mission to bring about new possibilities for how citizens and governments interact in the future.

PMI would be pleased to contribute research, materials, and subject matter expertise around the concept of digital transformations, the workforce of the future, the overall delivery capability of an organization and constantly evolving leading practice toward aligning delivery to the designed strategy or mission.

4. What examples already exist that serve a purpose similar to the GEAR Center, whether for governments or other institutions?

o How might such examples be replicated, scaled, connected, or more systematically leveraged?

o Opportunities for the Government to learn more about these examples, such as through a demonstration, virtual interaction, or other method?

The GEAR Center could be unique in its construction, its focus and its potential success. However, there are other ideas out there and some examples may be useful. A team from the National Institutes of Health proposed "The Public Health Innovation Model: Merging Private Sector Processes with Public Health Strengths.[3]" Another example is Innovation.gov[4]. These serve as comparators for the GEAR Center to decide how it might approach these issues differently, and how to best scope impact and outcomes targeted based on past efforts. PMI would also suggest the GEAR Center examine efforts around the world such as the UK's Major Projects Leadership Academy,[5] which brings together participants from Whitehall, Oxford

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[3] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5545580/
[4] https://innovation.gov/toolkit/innovators/public-engagement/
[5] https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/programmes/execed/custom/clients-and-case-studies/mpla

University and the private sector to develop actively engaged executive sponsors for the highest priority initiatives within government to lead them to successful delivery.

PMI has established groups of our members to network and exchange ideas in formal and informal settings. Our work is most effective when there is a combination of in-person events during the year, regionalized or industry specific workshops, joint research efforts and peer-to-peer engagement or digital engagement through online platforms. This model has also proven successful for testing and piloting strategies, ideas and new product roll outs.

PMI would also point out that the GEAR Center's mission should be properly defined[6]. For example, we often place an emphasis on 'practice' in addition to 'thought' as a key distinction of focus on how to bridge the gap between formulating a strategy and delivering it. PMI selected an organization focus of, 'Practice Leadership' including tools such as frameworks and assessments that support executives in delivering a strategy[7]. Alternatively, other efforts PMI supports utilize leading management practices to deliver a strategic advantage that helps them do more with less, meet their strategic objectives and avoid costly project failures. This shows organizations how they compare with peers across industries, gaps in practices and how to approach change.

Through capability building offerings – including resource libraries, executive education programs, assessments and certifications, and publications – participating organizations will have the chance to further develop knowledge and expertise. This can also bring key government perspectives into the group from around the country or the world. However, the federal government is not lacking in suggestions, perspectives, ideas and solutions. The GEAR Center should make execution on ideas a major priority and OMB has a unique opportunity to see that change is driven accordingly. This is an area where PMI would be particularly well suited to support to the GEAR Center.

7. What models, approaches, and opportunities should inform an anticipated early focus on reskilling and upskilling Federal employees? For each questions, please cite any available data or research to support your answer.

What are leading practices for effective reskilling, upskilling, and training adult workers, including opportunities for new applications of existing models?

Reskilling, upskilling and retraining encompasses a series of steps. A leading first step, is an exercise to benchmark or review the competencies of the existing roles against the requirements and 'jobs to be done' of the federal workforce. This provides data that allows the government to better identify and define roles so that they can be filled with the proper talent. Efforts should be made to use certifications, particularly for specialized roles that are consistent with the industry or profession the employee is engaged in to establish baseline competency upon which to tailor development to the environment within which they will be operating and allows for rapid re-skilling as new challenges arise to be solved.

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[6] PMI (2013). The Impact of PMOs on Strategy Implementation.
[7] https://www.brightline.org/about/

Government is using professionals, such as attorneys, accountants, data scientists, IT professionals and project managers to execute its functions. This has grown over the past 50 years and will continue to grow in to the future[8]. In these professions, certification along with continuous learning and development are hallmarks. As the data from the MSPB shows, program analysis and management analysis represent significant portions of the federal workforce. Many of these individuals have engaged with PMI for certification, skill development, networking, conferences or other resources.

Creating and maintaining a talent strategy is integral to success. This starts with a formal partnership between human resources (HR) and business leaders who raise the challenge of strategic alignment via an executive sponsor. The more advanced program management offices (PMOs) build on the leadership- and culture-oriented foundation created by the executive level permeating throughout the organization to ensure that talent has the appropriate qualifications, skills, and knowledge. PMI surveys[9] have focused on a pathway that involves the following:

1. Establishing the Need

One of the first tasks for designing and implementing a talent management strategy for project practitioners is to understand the size and scope of your organization's current community, the development systems, and how these fit into the context of the project portfolio. Start by defining the roles, competencies, skills and behaviors required to deliver mission and programs. Next, define who the talent strategy should include. Ask the following:

What level of management capability is needed to successfully deliver the mission?

Which professional certification(s) and/or credential(s) should the project community have?

What talent does the organization need in 3, 5, and 10 years?

2. Assess the Current State

After the need is established, conduct an internal personnel inventory to assess the skills and competencies of those whom you have identified as your current pool of program managers. This includes getting an accurate headcount. However, it is not uncommon to find that qualified individuals may not be included in the HR systems and additional input is needed.

- When the talent is identified, ask the following questions:
- What distinguishes top talent from good talent within the organization?
- How can the organization highlight features as an employer of choice?

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[8] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Policy and Evaluation, *Issues of Merit,* August 2018, p.5 at https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1540524&version=1546183&application=ACROBAT, retrieved September 5, 2018

[9] PMI (2014). Spotlight on Success: Developing Talent for Strategic Impact.

In addition, PMI's research shows a number of additional traits that lead to success:

- Using simulation during the recruitment or evaluation process helps to test candidates' reasoning when handling complexity and dealing with risk management.
- Placing more emphasis on classifying projects and identifying the competencies, skills, and behaviors necessary for success
- Instituting informal approaches to mentoring, driven more by the mentee than the organization or the mentor[10]

Many organizations opt to work with training and education providers that pair experienced practitioners with expert educators to develop and deliver top-quality learning opportunities. Nearly all organizations collect post-training surveys for immediate feedback, regardless of the educational platform.

On-the-job learning is the cornerstone of developing skills and is valued in many organizations more than any other form of development. This approach gives talent the chance to hone skills while gaining the credibility needed to effectively perform the duties of the job. Many top-performing organizations apply a "70-20-10" approach, which allocates 100% of all learning and development activities as follows:

- 70% - Workplace learning and performance support
- 20% - Social learning (including informal coaching and mentoring)
- 10% - Structured learning

In addition, we have seen strong evidence that organizations are more successful by offering recorded, web-based education for basic skills and learning. Then adding face-to-face training to help select personnel develop more interactive or specialized skills. Ideally, a curriculum should include multiple learning streams to ensure there are options appropriate for all learning styles.

It is key that GEAR Center looks at the learning and development needs for the workforce of the future as well. PMI continues to see trends in industry that have shifted learning to a variety of mediums that are "snackable," "modular," or "bite-sized." This has resulted in innovative approaches by both industry and academia to shape the concept of "lifelong learning" as they see it. This includes skills-based hiring vs. traditional credential/degree-based hiring programs as recruitment strategies, which may be as forward leaning as targeting high school graduates absent 4-year degrees. For example, IBM overtly cites hiring roughly 25% of its workforce without an undergraduate degree due to confidence in its skill development and learning programs to grow the individuals with passion for solving their organization's problems into the role. This will in turn allow for a "platform mindset" to launch e-learning solutions as needed and recognized by those responsible for leading and shaping the workforce of the future.

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[10] https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/thought-leadership/developing-talent-for-strategic-impact.pdf, p 3 accessed August 7, 2018.

As Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* said, "Great vision without great people is irrelevant." The GEAR Center presents an exciting opportunity for the government to collaborate, learn and invest in its workforce. The people of an organization is its most vital resource.

PMI stands ready to work with the Administration on the development of the GEAR Center. If you have any questions, please contact Jordon Sims (202-772-3598 | jordon.sims@pmi.org) or Tommy Goodwin (202-772-3592 | tommy.goodwin@pmi.org) from PMI's Washington, DC office.