**CINO**

**Quote:**

"People often feel that they are in a box where the lid is closing. It is hard to execute on ideas in a hierarchical system full of red tape." ***Bryan Sivak, former CTO of HHS [Place: Why CINO] [****Sivak, B., in-person interview by Science and Technology Policy Institute, January 29, 2015]*

**Intro:**

Whether leadership is tasked with confronting emerging, novel challenges or improving the efficiency of decades-old service delivery processes, Federal agencies can substantially benefit from the appointment of a Chief Innovation Officer (CINO) to serve as a catalyst for change. A CINO serves as a beacon for innovation, working to harness, foster, execute, and manage innovative ideas.

CINOs can be valuable assets for actualizing an agency’s priorities, from leading agency-wide initiatives; addressing employee engagement and culture change; tapping employee ideas in innovative ways; and in some contexts, leading efforts to change core underlying processes and improve performance and efficiency. Appointing a CINO can return persistent, high-value benefits for agency leadership. Appointing a person whose top priority is to focus on innovation and relentlessly drive it forward can amplify any senior leadership’s capacity for realizing an agency’s mission.

In times of tight budgetary constraints, chief innovation officers act as catalysts for transforming an agency’s operations. “[CINO’s] look across the board and figure out how to do things better, faster, and tie it into the overall management structure,” said Bryan Sivak, former CTO and entrepreneur in residence at the Department of Health and Human Services. [[Quoted in Stinson, J., “Chief Innovation Officers: Do They Deliver?,” Pew, February 2015]](http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2015/2/06/chief-innovation-officers-do-they-deliver)

CINOs are force multipliers. These innovators teach and enable others, and they cast a spotlight on staff doing or wanting to do innovative work. One CINO described his role as an evangelizer for innovative tools and empowered Federal employees to effect change by learning and working through their struggle points. [Gerdes, C., phone interview by Policy Design Lab, July 1, 2016.]

The role of a CINO is inherently flexible with sometimes ambiguous boundaries. To use a football metaphor, CINOs can be a bit like a “free safety” position, with their portfolios defined around an agency’s priority needs. In broad terms, CINOs can:

* Reframe problems in order to change thinking patterns;
* Connect people and break down silos;
* Celebrate innovative work within an agency, which encourages more of it.

**Why:**

A CINO can help disrupt traditional ways of doing business and institute more effective approaches. In doing so, CINOs nurture the entire ecosystem of innovation within their agencies. They’re positioned to take on difficult organizational management challenges like information silos, closed process systems, or simple resistance to change.

Appointing a CINO signals an agency’s commitment to innovation and provides an actual mechanism for execution. We know that it’s not enough to talk about innovation; it’s essential to commit to activities that apply innovative thinking. To explicitly and seriously embrace innovation, an organization needs to put it in the context where it returns the highest value. A senior point person is essential. “Innovation can't be an ’other duty as assigned,’ or an add-on -- it needs to be somebody's job,” argues Chris Gerdes, CINO for DOT. [Gerdes, C., phone interview by Policy Design Lab, July 1, 2016] Appointing a CINO to senior level leadership demonstrates that commitment and also makes it easier for new approaches to be embedded within core processes. CINOs also help to “de-risk” innovation, using smart risk management and guiding departments through the transition between old and new processes.

**How:**

There’s no single playbook for how to define a CINO role; senior leaders have created and scoped this role in a variety of ways that best address their agency’s needs. In all cases, though, it’s important to have a clear understanding of a CINO’s mission, role, and authority within an agency, in order to attract the most qualified candidates and to enable them to succeed. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to promote operational innovation by designating an innovation “home” in key functional roles such as human resources (HR), legal, and acquisition. [[Crosslink operational innovation content]] In other contexts where the top priorities involve technology integration and deployment, a Chief Technology Officer (CTO) may also be a suitable leadership “home” for an innovation portfolio. In other instances, agencies designate their Chief Information Officers (CIO) as the lead for identifying and implementing innovative activities. Varied CxO arrangements for CINO roles may best fit agencies’ organizational structures and missions (see the box below).

**Case Study:**

**Bryan Sivak – former CTO, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**

[Case study derived from Sivak, B., phone interview with Policy Design Lab, July 27, 2016, **and** Sivak, B., in-person interview by Science and Technology Policy Institute, January 29, 2015]**]**

**Background:**

Bryan Sivak served as Chief Technology Officer between 2012 and 2015. Prior to that, he was the CINO for the State of Maryland, CTO of the District of Columbia, and a founder of software companies InQuira and Electric Knowledge.

**Key accomplishments:**

Sivak entered and built on the work of predecessor Todd Park and Susannah Fox has since taken on this role. Todd had built the Health Data Initiative and shaped other specific programs, which Sivak picked up and built into a formalized structure. Sivak launched the [HHS IDEA Lab](https://www.hhs.gov/idealab/) to house some of the early programs established under Park. The IDEA Lab functions as a wrapper for all innovation activities within HHS and works to create a space for employees to pilot, test, and grow innovative ideas. It is designed to solve cross-cutting departmental issues that significantly improve HHS’ business processes, products, services, or use of technology. [[crosslink Innovation Labs content]] Sivak launched several new programs that sit within the IDEA Lab including the [HHS Ignite Accelerator](https://www.hhs.gov/idealab/ignite-accelerator/) and Entrepreneurs-in-Residence program, The HHS Ignite Accelerator functions as a way for staff to infuse startup approaches to their problem-solving and improve programs. Innovative ideas are crowdsourced from employees, and the promising ideas are then funded as pilots. The [Entrepreneur-in-Residence](https://www.hhs.gov/idealab/eir-program/) program brings external talent into HHS for a tour-of-duty. [[crosslink V7 EIR case study and Accelerator content]]

**How he led innovation:**

Sivak, in part, saw his role as helping to “reignite the flame” that initially brought people to work for the government. [Sivak, B., in-person interview by Science and Technology Policy Institute, January 29, 2015]His goal was to help empower them to instill change and to make them feel value and freedom again. “Many who have been in government for a while feel that they are ‘stuck in a box with the lid closing,’” he observed. [Sivak, B., in-person interview by Science and Technology Policy Institute, January 29, 2015].This may stem from a culture of responding to new ideas with a “no,” where potential solutions are met with reservation and a list of reasons why the problem is impossible to overcome. This attitude is lethal for employee motivation and goes against many people’s intrinsic values (a sense of value, freedom, and skill development). [Sivak, B., phone interview with Policy Design Lab, July 27, 2016.]Sivak emphasized measures that agencies could employ to concurrently change culture and processes: [Sivak, B., phone interview with Policy Design Lab, July 27, 2016.]]

* **Realigning incentives:** Organizations needs to be realigned to spark innovation, as the current incentive system encourages people to follow processes. Straying from the process in an attempt to innovate risks reprimand for not following an agency’s prescribed policies and procedures. This can oddly divorce outcomes from accountability—after all, if the project fails they can disavow responsibility since the individual in charge followed the predetermined procedure.
* **Help employees feel valued for creativity and performance.** Give credit to high-performing or creative employees. Instead of taking credit for the work of their employees, managers should defer successes to them. This incentivizes employees for going above and beyond, and also reflects well on the manager who oversaw their work.

**Read more:** [[Crosslink HHS deep dive]]

**Read More:** [Q&A with HHS CTO Bryan Sivak: Disrupting Government Culture](http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/qa-hhs-cto-bryan-sivak-disrupting-government-culture)

**Listen:** [Implementing a department-wide innovation strategy](http://govinnovator.com/bryan_sivak/): GovInnovator interview of Bryan Sivak

**Next Steps/Checklist:**

**Relevant Policies:**

**Additional Resources:**