

Government Trends 2024

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Crossing boundaries to transform mission effectiveness

Government agencies are collaborating with other entities and the private sector to solve wicked problems, achieving a 10x boost in mission effectiveness.

Big problems like homelessness or climate change extend beyond the boundaries of any particular branch of government. These wicked problems require cross-boundary collaboration—between multiple government agencies, the private sector, nonprofits, and the communities most directly impacted, and sometimes across geographies, states, and even the globe.

For instance, homelessness is a cross-boundary problem. There are many reasons for homelessness, and no one government agency has a simple fix. Attempts by government and civic organizations to help often yield benefits, but they can be difficult to scale.

Coordinating among different organizational cultures, funding structures, and missions is no easy task. It requires systems thinking, looking at the relationships between people and organizations with competing priorities, and understanding the “structures” that underlie complex situations.¹ But cross-boundary missions can lead to dramatic, “10x-level” outcomes:

- Between 1990 and 2003, the Human Genome Project mapped the human genome—a groundbreaking achievement with massive benefits for biological research, medicine, and pharmaceuticals. Investing roughly US\$3 billion, the US

Department of Energy and the National Institute of Health tapped into a network of universities and research centers in 20 countries to achieve this invaluable feat.²

- Since 2011, the city of Houston, Texas, has reduced homelessness by 64%, thanks to a collaborative effort of more than 100 organizations working together on a shared goal.³
- India’s Mission Shakti program aims to empower women through local partnerships by providing employment opportunities and financial security. The program has successfully created over 7 million female entrepreneurs.⁴
- The US Department of Health and Human Services reports that the government has invested more than US\$100 billion in US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) till date to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This investment has resulted in the prevention of millions of HIV infections and saved over 25 million lives.⁵

Few problems respect organizational boundaries. A prime example of this is recidivism, where the successful reintegration of an individual back into society involves a multitude of organizations. Interventions may begin during incarceration, with in-prison counseling,

education, and work experience. Upon release, the individual may require additional support from the government, such as mental health services, substance-abuse counseling, housing, or job training. Helping released individuals find social connections and jobs in the community may involve nonprofits, churches, and businesses. No single agency—not even the government alone—can address all these tasks.⁶

Complex challenges are often best addressed by working across different organizational boundaries. However, collaboration between government agencies is not always easy, as funding streams, legislative authority, and operational hierarchies tend to encourage silos that isolate agencies.⁷ Governments are developing mechanisms to break down these barriers and collaboratively tackle thorny problems.

Breaking trade-offs

Traditionally, lowering costs would mean compromising on quality or slowing down speed. Similarly, achieving improvements in quality would result in higher expenses. To accomplish a 10x boost in performance, leaders must break the constraints of traditional trade-offs. This may involve leveraging technology to minimize the cost of serving clients, partnering with organizations that already offer a service, or relinquishing complete control—and credit—to collaborate. Sharing responsibilities across bureaucratic boundaries can make room for exponential growth. Governments can catalyze innovation and access additional resources to address a problem by tapping into a network.⁸ Consider these approaches that break the “iron triangle” (cost, speed, and quality) model of service delivery trade-offs:

- **Financial incentives:** Initial seed or matching funding from the government can attract nonprofit, academic, and corporate investment, multiplying each dollar’s impact.⁹
- **Skills marketplace:** Specialists in some specific topics may not be readily available within the public sector, especially in just one department. Collaborative efforts gather a range of key skills that can be difficult (and expensive) to hire.

- **Trust amplifiers:** The government can reach wary constituents by collaborating with organizations that have preexisting trusting relationships.
- **Multiplier effects:** A network increases in value with every new participant. Creating a network of stakeholders can start a virtuous cycle. Depending on the problem, it may even be possible to build a self-propelling market that drives toward a solution on its own momentum.

Convergence: A key to 10x change in mission effectiveness

Several tools and tactics can improve cross-boundary collaboration. Certain innovations like cloud-based data-sharing, common application programming interfaces, and new funding models make it easier for partners to steer distinct organizations toward common goals. Other tools like data analytics, ecosystem mapping, nudges, and artificial intelligence will help teams achieve those goals.

Leaders will find an impressive menu of tools to tailor to their specific problems. The public sector now has access to tools that, when used wisely, can make collaboration easier and more effective.

- **Employer-designed training + talent matchmaking + wraparound support = Skilled workers with higher wages (see the Network2Work example below)**
- **Birth registration mobile app + interagency data-sharing = Easy birth registration (see the Singapore LifeSG example below)**
- **Skills training + partnership with banks + access to social networks = Boost in female entrepreneurship (see the Odisha Mission Shakti example below)**

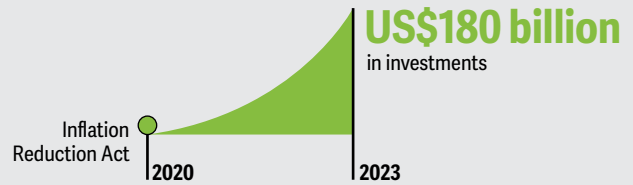
Trend in action

Governments are using several approaches to converge around cross-cutting problems. They are achieving better outcomes through three main strategies:

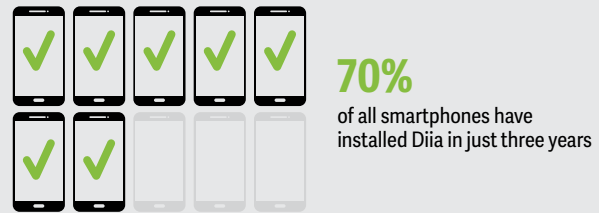
Figure 1

By the numbers: Crossing boundaries to transform mission effectiveness

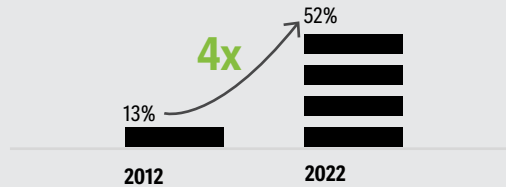
Since the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2020, the private sector has witnessed an uptick in investments, with more than US\$180 billion flowing into clean energy manufacturing projects.



Ukraine's Diia is an integrated digital ecosystem with 70 government services. It has 21.7 million users and is installed on over 70% of all smartphones in just three years.



The government of India's Digital India program has led to a 4x increase in internet penetration.



72% of respondents said **that cross-sector collaborations** help achieve mission outcomes.

A fifth of federal executives are involved in more than 10 collaborations



Sources: Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, "Inflation Reduction Act Spurs Breakthrough in Domestic Wind Production," December 14, 2023; Alesia Didenko, Anastasiia Humeniuk, Olena Koval, and Kateryna Hanenko, "Going digital as Ukraine's new black," UkraineNOW, accessed February 28, 2024; Romita Majumdar, "52% of Indian population had internet access in 2022, says report," The Economic Times, May 3, 2023; Deloitte Center for Government Insights, "The role of cross-sector collaboration in federal agencies," Deloitte, April 2023.

Tapping into boundary-breaking partnerships: Innovative partnerships bring together all stakeholders needed to address a complex problem—whether from different agencies, levels of government, the private sector, academia, or nonprofits. This sometimes means the objectives of programs need to be adjusted to catch up to new, shared definitions of success. One key boundary to break is who should be involved in helping to develop solutions. This so-called “co-production” involves engaging those experiencing a problem in designing a solution.

Using data and technology to focus shared efforts: Governments are building a robust digital infrastructure with data-sharing capabilities, enabling better collaboration among individuals and agencies working on the same problem.

Governance, measurement, and policy shifts to break down silos: Through shared governance, goal-based funding, and other policy shifts, the back-end structure of government can support coordination between stakeholders. When success is designed from multiple perspectives, solutions can address all aspects of a problem and avoid a “one-size-fits-all” definition of success.

Tapping into boundary-breaking partnerships

Myriad problems faced by the government are not confined to the boundaries of individual government agencies. They arise from market forces, dynamic relationships, and entrenched habits. Solutions then require multiple actors to collaborate across a range of disciplines, both within and outside government.

By breaking down silos and encouraging interconnectivity, many governments have achieved 10x improvements on these complex problems.

United Arab Emirates’ Government Accelerators program brings together private and public sectors for innovative solutions

In 2016, the United Arab Emirates launched the Government Accelerators program led by the former assistant director general for Strategy and Innovation at the prime minister’s office. The program focuses on cross-boundary issues and brings together teams comprising participants

from various government agencies, the private sector, and academia.

These teams work on 100-day challenges to develop potential solutions with a sense of urgency, exercising full autonomy to experiment without interference from leadership. On the 50th day, the teams are expected to show progress, and on the 100th day, they present results with ideas to sustain and scale impact. The program’s approach has yielded impressive results, with participating teams successfully addressing diverse issues such as road safety and newborn services.

One team aimed to reduce traffic deaths on the country’s high-risk highways, and the team comprised local officials, road engineers, police, and ambulance drivers. It developed a solution that included road redesign, highway radar, social media awareness campaigns, and faster first-response strategies. At the end of the 100-day challenge, the accelerator team had reduced traffic deaths by 63%.

In 2021, the success of the United Arab Emirates’ Government Accelerators inspired the World Health Organization to adopt a similar model to speed up the achievement of its strategic goals.¹⁰

Building a strong workforce development ecosystem: The importance of reskilling and coordination among key players

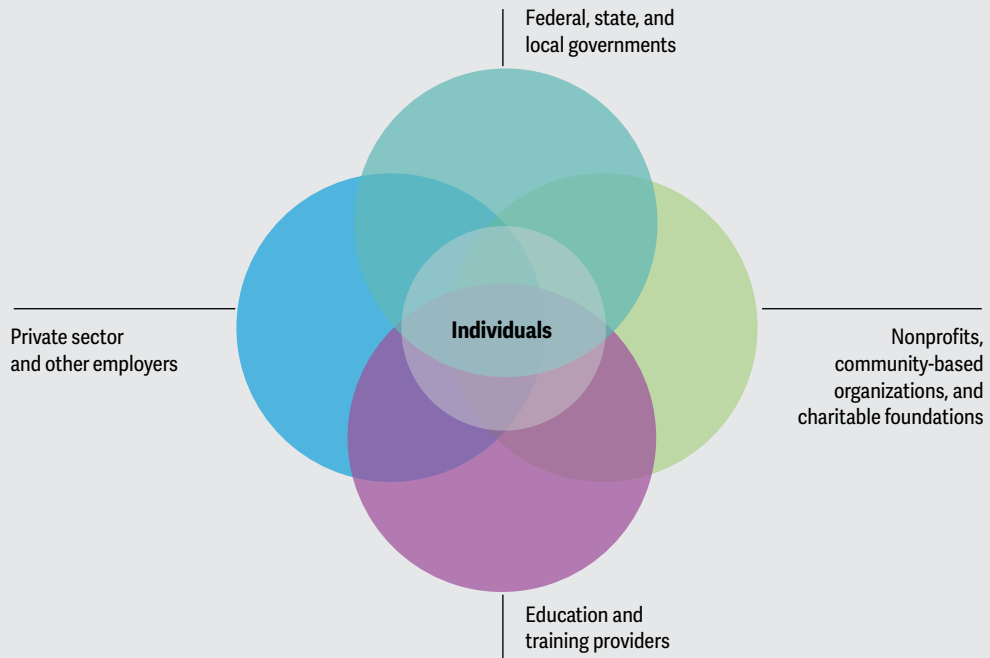
Workforce development occurs in a dynamic ecosystem (figure 1). Each participant—including job seekers, training providers, and employers—has different roles and motivations. It can be challenging to align their incentives to ensure job seekers are trained for in-demand jobs. As technology changes, what is in demand will change as well. Artificial intelligence may be able to write code for an electric vehicle’s 220V charger initialization but can’t physically install the charger. Differentiated training, including those in future trending skills, is critical to equip a wide range of workers.

Coordinating between different players in the labor market has helped regions boost skills and match job seekers with employment. In Charlottesville, Virginia, the nonprofit Network2Work plays the matchmaker role between local employers and job seekers.¹¹ Network2Work coordinates with local employers to

Figure 2

Collaboration is crucial for a strong workforce development ecosystem, and Network2Work has fully embraced this principle

Key participants in the workforce development ecosystem



Source: John O'Leary, Nicole Overley, and Amrita Datar, "Rethinking the workforce development ecosystem: Grow the economy by bridging the skills gap," *Deloitte Insights*, August 8, 2023.

HOW CROSS-SECTOR EFFORTS CAN AMPLIFY 10X IMPROVEMENTS

Big challenges require collaborative solutions. Networks can amplify outcomes by connecting leaders with needed skills, funds, and ideas.

- **Seed money:** The Smart Columbus program, a smart city initiative to improve quality of life, was kick-started when it secured a grant from the US Department of Transportation. These funds became the nucleus for a regional effort that expanded with a grant from the nonprofit Paul G. Allen Family Foundation for US\$10 million, as well as the engagement of numerous civic and business groups and multiple government participants.¹³
- **Prizes:** Prizes and challenges can also tap into networks. The XPRIZE organization sponsors competitions to encourage technological development. Since 1994, it has launched 28 challenges in various fields, including space, food insecurity, and climate. These prizes have attracted 35,000 innovators from around the globe.¹⁴ The XPRIZE challenge has resulted in close to 900 patents and accelerated innovation in multiple industries.¹⁵ Government agencies can also sponsor challenges. In 2021, the US Department of Education launched a US\$1 million digital learning challenge to modernize, accelerate, and improve teaching tools.¹⁶
- **Partnerships:** In 2022, Congress passed the CHIPS Act, which authorizes about US\$52 billion to boost American semiconductor research and manufacturing to reduce reliance on foreign providers (figure 2). This is meant to ensure a broad, collaborative effort that included the participation of the private sector. The CHIPS Act incentivizes private players to manufacture in the United States through government investment in research, manufacturing, and workforce development. This approach allows governments to form critical relationships with manufacturing companies, and it also has a significant dollar multiplier effect. Companies have already invested an additional US\$220 billion.¹⁷

Figure 3

CHIPS Act spurs private investment and job creation in US semiconductor industry

70

new semiconductor ecosystem projects have been announced across the United States

US\$220 billion

worth of private investments announced across **22 states**

44,000

new high-quality jobs announced in the semiconductor ecosystem

Source: Robert Casanova, "The CHIPS Act has already Sparked \$200 billion in private investments for U.S. semiconductor production," Semiconductor Industry Association, December 14, 2022.

identify job needs, while community leaders identify suitable individuals to receive job training at Piedmont Virginia Community College. The organization also provides wraparound support such as childcare, transport, and health care to ensure the success of the newly hired. On average, program graduates more than doubled their income.¹² The success of Network2Work in the Charlottesville area has led to an expansion of the program to other parts of Virginia.

Using data and technology infrastructure to focus shared efforts

Data and technology can help focus the efforts of disparate actors as they work on a difficult, boundary-breaking challenge. By serving as a critical conduit to information, they can encourage the cooperative effort of different players addressing a challenge and spur contributors toward eventual true co-creation.

India Stack boosts financial inclusion through technology

In 2010, India sought to improve financial inclusion for its citizens, particularly among the poor and marginalized. Only one in three citizens had a bank account, and fewer than 50% had a nationally recognized ID to present to bankers.¹⁸ India built a technological foundation for dramatic improvements with India Stack—a digital financial platform that includes digital identity, government benefits, and a financial transactions engine. Over 500 million new bank accounts were opened, more than half of which were opened by women. Additionally, banks' cost to conduct e-KYC has plummeted from US\$23 to US\$0.1.¹⁹ Today, more than 75% of all retail transactions in India go through India Stack.²⁰ Over the last decade, almost 90% of Indian citizens signed up for a digital ID.²¹ By working together, India's government and the banking industry transformed the way financial transactions occurred.

India Stack comprises application programming interfaces, digital products, and frameworks that enable large-scale data-sharing, digital payments, and e-identity. It is owned by various Indian government agencies and subsidiaries.²² (To learn more about India Stack, read our [CX trend](#).)

Enhancing customer experience through life event service delivery: The success of Singapore's LifeSG app

Across the globe, from the United Kingdom to Estonia to Singapore, governments are adopting a life event service delivery structure, which can dramatically enhance a citizen's customer experience.²³ In this structure for organizing government services, a life event—such as a job loss, birth of a child, or death of a loved one—proactively triggers service interactions with multiple government agencies. Without life event services, individuals must navigate various government agencies for a single life change. The United Kingdom, for instance, found that, to register a death officially, the bereaved needed to notify government entities from federal pensions to local tax authorities up to 44 times.²⁴

Life event services can be challenging for governments to implement due to the involvement of multiple government agencies, but the results can be dramatic.

The LifeSG app, an upgraded version of the app formerly known as “Moments of Life,” was introduced in Singapore to assist new parents in handling paperwork related to newborns. By streamlining the process, the app reduced the time needed to register a birth from an hour to just 15 minutes. Since 2018, 70% of Singaporean births have been registered using the app.²⁵ The app has expanded beyond birth notification to cater to the diverse needs of the entire population. In an interview with GovInsider, Gabriyel Wong, director of Moments of Life, said, “We are always looking to onboard service journeys that are intuitive to citizens.”²⁶ With over 1.2 million downloads, LifeSG aims to simplify life by providing one app with a unified interface for over 100 government services.²⁷

Governance, measurement, and policy shifts to break down silos

To tackle cross-boundary problems, leaders need to reevaluate leadership mechanics, including governance, policy, and performance measurement, to foster collaboration.

Odisha's Mission Shakti program leads to a dramatic boost in female entrepreneurship

The government of Odisha—a state in eastern India with a population of 41 million—launched the Mission Shakti program in 2001 to empower women by expanding employment and financial security. (The term “shakti” means “power” and, in Hindu philosophy, is often associated with feminine creative powers.) The government recognized that women faced three critical barriers to entrepreneurship: lack of skills, limited access to networks, and difficulty in securing institutional finance. Women often relied on informal high-interest loans from unscrupulous lenders, and the government sought to address this issue with this initiative.

Mission Shakti partners with nationally known skill development institutes, including nonprofits and academic institutes, to help women upskill. Women are organized into self-help groups to strengthen their networks, a form of co-production that involves them in developing solutions. Further, these groups form block-level federations that provide institutional support for everything from marketing products to lobbying. A strategic partnership between the Mission Shakti

organization and the banking sector ensures that the self-help groups have access to institutional credit. To improve the creditworthiness of members, Mission Shakti provides seed money to each eligible self-help group. It also provides a revolving fund of 2.5 million rupees to the self-help groups to strengthen capacity and provide financial autonomy.²⁸

Mission Shakti self-help groups grew from about 40,000 in 2001 to 600,000, covering 7 million women in 2021.²⁹ The program has transformed the lives of its members across both rural and urban parts of Odisha. For example, according to the 2022 annual report, the Maa Vaibhav Laxmi self-help group, which does woodwork, including making nameplates, souvenirs, and key chains, earns a monthly profit of 35,000 rupees to 40,000 rupees. Likewise, the Debasis self-help group set up a semi-mechanized pickle unit that makes about 800,000 kilograms of pickles annually. The group has an annual turnover of six million rupees with a

monthly profit of 50,000 rupees to 60,000 rupees.³⁰ Mission Shakti program's robust governance has brought all the stakeholders together, making such a significant impact possible.

Collaborative efforts lead to over 60% decrease in homelessness in Houston

Since 2011, Houston has remarkably reduced homelessness by 64%. This success was the result of the coordinated effort of more than 100 organizations aligning on goals and working together to achieve them. As part of the effort, a cross-sector data platform gave all providers access to critical information. Sylvester Turner, the former mayor of Houston, emphasized that collaboration was instrumental in achieving this success. "Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate," Mayor Turner noted on a Deloitte podcast. "No one group can do this by itself."³¹

My take

Reducing homelessness in Houston through collaboration

In 2011, Houston and its surrounding counties found themselves struggling with the sixth largest homeless population in the United States. However, through concerted efforts and a pioneering approach, the city has emerged as a national model in combatting homelessness, achieving a commendable reduction of over 60% in its homeless population.³²

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, a collective effort known as “The Way Home” was founded. This collaboration, comprising more than 100 organizations, included several governmental agencies from various cities and counties, leaders from multiple large and small businesses, major philanthropic organizations, and dozens of nonprofit entities focused on serving individuals experiencing homelessness. With the help of technical assistance from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, this group first established its overarching principle—prioritize permanent housing and supplement it with comprehensive support services. The outcome has been substantial, with over 30,000 individuals having been placed in permanent housing since 2012.³³

What sets Houston apart is not only the “housing-first” strategy but also the establishment of a big tent and comprehensive public-private ecosystem comprising businesses, philanthropists, nonprofits, faith groups, and local, state, and federal government agencies—all dedicated to confronting this complex issue. Coordinated by a “lead agency,” the nonprofit Coalition for the Homeless, these 100 organizations are organized into two key components: A diverse and engaged 501(c)(3) board oversees the nonprofit’s governance and sustainability, drawing representatives from the business, government, and nonprofit communities. While the Coalition for the Homeless is responsible for building collaboration among the entities of The Way Home, the Continuum of Care Steering Committee, composed principally of government funders and adjacent system leaders, is responsible for building capacity for housing and services funding for homeless individuals and families.

This collaborative process requires the Coalition for the Homeless to have ongoing and daily interactions with various government administrators who are often fearful of running afoul of complex regulations. The work of building collaboration and building capacity is never complete. Having a strong nonprofit lead agency, independent of any one governmental entity, focused on building collaboration and capacity allows The Way Home to develop comprehensive cross-boundary effectiveness.

Data plays a pivotal role in the system’s decision-making processes. Our Homeless Management Information System is a robust tool that meticulously tracks and analyzes the services rendered to the homeless population. Transparency in our operations is paramount, and high-level data is accessible on our website for public scrutiny.

However, our achievements have not been without hurdles. Persistent issues in our systems, such as the release of individuals from correctional facilities without adequate support, housing discrimination, and a fragmented mental health infrastructure, underscore the systemic challenges we continue to navigate. Further, the difficulty in finding, using, and braiding dozens of state and federal funds with their restrictive regulations and seemingly impossible timelines compound the insecurity of our homeless response system and, thus, our clients.

The work that is being done in Houston and its surrounding counties is both fiscally and morally responsible and proves that government, with the collaboration of its partners outside of government, can be effective and efficient. However, the funding for such programs should be enhanced and made less onerous to use. By prioritizing funding proactive measures to address homelessness, we can decrease future health care and criminal justice expenses and, more importantly, promote positive societal change.



Mike Nichols,
former president
& CEO, Coalition
for the Homeless
of Houston/Harris
County³⁴

What the 10x future holds

- **Bridgebuilder organizations:** As governments converge to solve wicked problems, expect more bridgebuilding activities that handle coordination between different agencies. For example, the US Army and Air Force have formed the Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control oversight group to combine data and assets for greater synchronization of effort.³⁵
- **Shared funding:** While “shared funding” models are not widespread at scale, the future could see an increase in “issue-focused funding” instead of department or program funding—to support multiple agencies in combined efforts. For example, to advance clean energy nationwide, the Australian federal government established the Rewiring the Nation initiative with AU\$20 billion in funding to transform the country’s electric grid.³⁶
- **Blurred lines between public and private:** Governments are increasingly partnering with private sector participants to pool resources and capabilities. Government incentives can help nudge businesses to embrace social and environmental responsibilities and adopt purpose-driven business models that can help deliver public solutions.

Steps governments can take now

Recognize your organization’s limitations: Sometimes, we all need a helping hand. Recognizing when a problem may be bigger than a single organization is a key first step.

Challenge orthodoxies: Reconsider “how we do things here,” and revisit historical policies that hinder the scope of cross-sector collaboration. Consider moving from a model that funds just one program to a shared funding model.

Focus on outcomes: Shift the focus from processes to outcomes. Define clear objectives, and measure success based on the impact on citizens. Remember that success measures can and should be tailored to organizations’ unique contributions to the coalition of partners tackling the problem.

Embrace digital: Embrace digital technologies and the power of human accelerators like AI to improve overall efficiency, freeing up key stakeholders to focus on the toughest part of the challenge. More and more, the routine aspects of coordinated service delivery can be sourced to “multimodal” cognitive automation tools like AI models trained on working processes across organizations.

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About the authors

John O’Leary

jpoleary@deloitte.com

John O’Leary is a senior manager with Deloitte Services LP and is the State and Local Government research leader for the Deloitte Center for Government Insights. Prior to joining Deloitte, he served as the vice president of communications and executive reporting with State Street Bank. O’Leary previously served in multiple senior leadership roles for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and was a distinguished research fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is the co-author of the 2009 Washington Post bestseller, *If We Can Put a Man on the Moon*.

Aaron Silverman

asilverman@deloitte.com

Aaron Silverman is a strategy leader with nearly 20 years of experience helping public sector organizations anticipate and respond to critical transformational challenges. He has worked with state and federal diplomatic, citizen services, security, and law enforcement stakeholders to design and execute transformative, integrated service models that deliver on the mission.

Lydia Murray

lymurray@deloitte.com

Lydia Murray is a managing director with Deloitte Consulting LLP’s Government & Public Services practice. Her work focuses on technology to address issues of housing insecurity. Prior to joining Deloitte, she served for 20 years in senior roles in local government, including chief information officer for Cook County. While at Deloitte, she took a six-month sabbatical to serve as the interim executive director of Lincoln Park Community Services.

Emma Cooper

elcooper@deloitte.co.uk

Emma Cooper is a partner in Deloitte’s Human Capital practice and works with public sector clients to deliver transformational change. With more than 20 years of experience consulting in the public sector, she is passionate about helping senior leaders transform their organizations and the services they provide to the public.

Sushumna Agarwal

sushagarwal@deloitte.com

Sushumna Agarwal is a research specialist with the Deloitte Center for Government Insights, Deloitte Services LP. She researches workforce issues at the federal, state, and local government levels and her primary focus is on applying quantitative techniques to enable data-driven research insights.