Series on World-Class Government

The Onboarding of New Political Appointees

Lilith Christiansen
Paul R. Lawrence
Mark Stein
Kaiser Associates, Inc.

Mark A. Abramson
Leadership Inc.

Foreword

On behalf of Kaiser Associates, Inc., we are pleased to release the first in our new series on world-class government. The series is based on the premise that world-class government is indeed possible and that there are many best practices from public, private, and nonprofit organizations that can be applied in the federal government.

As our first paper in the new series, we selected the timely topic of onboarding new political appointees in the new administration. We feel it is crucial that the new administration quickly develops an onboarding program to prepare new appointees for the challenges of managing in government. This report presents a series of recommendations for actions needed to implement an onboarding program.

The report builds on prior research by my Kaiser Associates colleagues. Mark Stein and Lilith Christiansen conducted extensive research on onboarding for their book *Successful Onboarding: A Strategy to Unlock Hidden Value Within Your Organization.* Our new Kaiser colleague Paul Lawrence recently co-authored *Succeeding as a Political Executive: 50 Insights from Experience*, which is based on interviews with Obama Administration political appointees. Paul and his co-author Mark Abramson found that nearly all those interviewed expressed a need for better preparation prior to assuming their new positions.

In this report, we highlight the Department of State's method as a best practice for onboarding. By finding best practices in this and all sectors, there are many models for effective onboarding from which the new administration can draw upon. We trust that this report will be helpful in implementing an onboarding program for new appointees in 2017.

Joseph Gurney
Leader, Public Sector Practice and Senior Vice President
Kaiser Associates, Inc.
joe.gurney@kaiserassociates.com

Table of Contents

ii Foreword

iv Report Abstract

1 Part I — Introduction: The Need to Prepare Political Appointees

5 Part II — Best Practices in Onboarding Political Appointees: The Department of State

10 Part III — What We Learned About Implementing Onboarding for New Appointees

12 Part IV — Recommendations on Implementing Onboarding for New Political Appointees

18 Key Contact Information

19 About the Authors

Report Abstract

FINDINGS

Finding One: Based on interviews with 65 high-level appointees in the Obama Administration over the last seven years and follow-up interviews and research, we found few examples of organized, sustained efforts to provide onboarding to political appointees.

Finding Two: Nearly all of the political appointees interviewed during previous research felt that they needed onboarding support, which they did not receive.

Finding Three: The time period between the nomination of an appointee and his or her confirmation should be used to start the onboarding process.

Finding Four: A sustained, organized effort to onboard all political appointees will face several distinct challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: Each department should create a unit dedicated to providing onboarding support to new political appointees.

Recommendation Two: The Deputy Secretary of each department should be responsible for oversight of the onboarding of all political appointees.

Recommendation Three: The onboarding unit, overseen by the Deputy Secretary, should develop an individual onboarding plan for each new political appointee. Onboarding services should be offered on a rolling basis.

Recommendation Four: Onboarding activities should begin shortly after the White House submits an appointee's nomination to Congress and continue throughout the first year of service.

WHAT SHOULD POLITICAL APPOINTEES KNOW?

The information needs of political appointees are great and include:

- **The Basics** (How do I become an employee of the federal government?)
- **The Essentials** (What are the rules of government that I need to know?)
- **The Job** (What do I need to know about my job?)
- **Becoming Effective** (How do I succeed in my job?)

Part I

Introduction: The Need to Prepare Political Appointees

PREMISES OF REPORT

This report is based, in part, on interviews with 65 top-level appointees in the Obama Administration from the start of the administration in 2009 to its final year in 2016.[1] Many of these appointees were interviewed multiple times to track their "learning curve" and to understand the challenges of managing in the federal government. Additional interviews were conducted in September and October 2016 with federal officials knowledgeable about the onboarding of political appointees.

In addition to the interviews, three literature reviews were conducted. The first review examined literature on onboarding in the private sector. The second review examined academic research on the political appointments process and previous efforts to prepare new appointees. The third review examined recent reports on the federal government's activities in the area of onboarding senior executives.

Based on the interviews and research, the authors decided to prepare this report calling for better preparation of new political appointees as a new administration takes office. We believe that an onboarding program for new political appointees will greatly enhance the effectiveness of new appointees in implementing the priorities and programs of a new administration.

This report is based on the following three premises:

- **Political appointees do not receive adequate preparation for assuming their new positions.** This premise is based on the results of the seven-year longitudinal study of political appointees, cited above, in which nearly all of the appointees interviewed expressed a clear need for more preparation. The need for adequate preparation is crucial because of the relatively short tenure of many appointees. Given the reality that many appointees will not get confirmed until the third or fourth quarter of 2017, many will, at best, serve no more than the final three years of the first term. Considering that, it is crucial to speed up the learning curve of appointees in order to enhance their effectiveness during their tenure.
- **There are best practices in onboarding in the private sector that can be deployed to better prepare new appointees.** In the private sector, great effort is devoted to onboarding new executives (as well as junior staff) who are joining an organization. In advocating the use of private sector onboarding practices in government in their report "Making Senior Government Service More Attractive," Business Executives for National Security (BENS) writes, "Corporate America views executive onboarding as a key enabler of corporate success and strives to ensure that its leadership is prepped and ready to assume the demands of the job as rapidly as possible. Private sector best practice is to

1. For additional information on the interviews, see Paul R. Lawrence and Mark A. Abramson, *Succeeding as a Political Executive: 50 Insights from Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

establish comprehensive, thorough onboarding processes focused on providing relevant information in a structured methodology…."[2]

- **By implementing onboarding activities for new appointees, the new administration will significantly benefit from the enhanced effectiveness of its new appointees.** Given the need to move quickly on executing the new administration's agenda shortly after the inauguration, new appointees must rapidly learn about their new organization and managing in government. By devoting sufficient resources to onboarding new appointees during the first year of the administration, new appointees will be more effective in their new positions to execute the administration's policies and programs.

WHAT IS ONBOARDING?

In the context of the federal government, onboarding is often confused with "orientation" programs for new appointees, but onboarding is much more. In short, onboarding is an ongoing series of activities aimed at providing new political appointees with the information, insights, and perspectives they need to become effective executives in government. In contrast, orientation is usually a one-time event (ranging in length from a half day to a full day) with no follow-up or additional ongoing activities. While a "White House Orientation" program (an event planned and sponsored by the White House Office of Presidential Personnel) has long been advocated by the public management community, this one-time orientation activity has been sporadically held by past administrations and often held (if at all) late in the first year of an administration. Even when held, we have found that a half-day or full-day session cannot provide new appointees with all the preparation they need in a timely fashion.

While there are many definitions of onboarding, we will use the following definition in this report: "Strategic onboarding is a systemic and designed approach over the first year of an appointee's tenure that will prepare him or her for success. The goal of strategic onboarding is to have new appointees become productive in a short amount of time."[3] In the private sector, onboarding often refers to acquiring, accommodating, assimilating, and accelerating new leaders into the organization's culture and business. In the context of the federal government, onboarding includes providing information in a variety of areas, as well as providing insights on how to be an effective manager.

THE NEED FOR ONBOARDING: THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY TO ONBOARDING NEW POLITICAL APPOINTEES

Insights and Recommendations from the Public Management Community

The case for an effective onboarding program was made by Professor James Pfiffner as part of the political appointee project conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration in the 1980s. Pfiffner proposed the following scenario:

> Is this a plausible scenario? A major enterprise in the United States regularly hires new senior executives for positions with enormous management and policy development responsibilities. But, oddly, 60 percent of the people it hires are not currently in the same line of work as the enterprise, and 20 percent have never been in that line of work before. … Once hired, they immediately assume the authority and responsibilities of their new positions, but only one in five receives any formal orientation to the new environment or new duties.
>
> No major corporation would operate this way, nor would a university or law firm. Indeed, in all of American society, there is only one enterprise that treats so carelessly the recruitment and orientation of its top executives: the United States government.[4]

2. Business Executives for National Security, *Making Senior Government Service More Attractive,* Washington, DC: May 2015.
3. This definition is adapted from Mark A. Stein and Lilith Christiansen, *Successful Onboarding: A Strategy to Unlock Hidden Value Within Your Organization* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010)
4. James P. Pfiffner, "Strangers in a Strange Land: Orienting New Presidential Appointees," in G. Calvin Mackenzie, *The In-and-Outers: Presidential Appointees and Transient Government in Washington* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), Page 141.

The public management community has long advocated more preparation for political appointees. In 1989, the Volcker Commission wrote:

> …[A]ll presidential appointees must receive adequate orientation to office. Such orientation should be provided during the hiatus between nomination and confirmation, focusing on the substantive policy and administrative responsibilities each appointee faces, the ethical conduct expected of public officials, and the positive role that career officers can play.[5]

Over 20 years (and four administrations) later, the Partnership for Public Service identified the same set of concerns in 2010. The Partnership wrote:

> Too little attention is paid—and insufficient resources are devoted—to preparing and training political appointees. Many political appointees are policy experts, but the success of those policies may depend on how well they are able to manage and lead the career civil servants who most carry out the mission. The new leadership needs to prioritize selecting and preparing its team to govern.[6]

Insights from Political Appointees Themselves

During the seven-year study cited earlier, interviewees reflected that onboarding was needed to better prepare them for their new positions. Interviewees recalled:

> "I wish there had been an orientation program. I could have used a one-week seminar. That would have been very helpful. The orientation would tell us how to navigate in Washington, including working with the Hill."
>
> — *Dennis Hightower, former Deputy Secretary, Department of Commerce*

> "I felt like an outsider. I had only been in this building twice before. I felt that I was largely on my own. Didn't get a lot of guidance. I think I needed a boot camp about Congress: Hill 101. I also needed to understand the budget process, human resources, and procurement."
>
> — *John Porcari, former Deputy Secretary, Department of Transportation*

In addition to the interviews cited above, a survey of political appointees came to the same conclusion. A National Academy of Public Administration survey in 2008, the last year of the George W. Bush Administration, confirmed that nearly half of all political appointees reported that they received no orientation. Of those who did receive orientation, 33 percent rated the orientation's effectiveness as only somewhat (17 percent), not very (12.5 percent), or very poor (3.1 percent). In this same survey, over 80 percent said it was "important or very important" to receive onboarding. Most respondents reported they thought that additional orientation or continuing education was necessary for their effectiveness.[7]

The Federal Government Has Recognized the Importance of Onboarding Members of the Senior Executive Service

During the same time period in which there appeared to be little interest in the onboarding of new political appointees, there was increasing interest in government in the onboarding of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). In 2010, the Office of Personnel Management, the Senior Executive Association, and the Partnership for Public Service convened over 100 individuals to discuss the importance of, and challenges to, onboarding federal senior executives. The conference resulted in a 2011 report called "Hit the Ground Running: Establishing a Model Executive Onboarding Program."[8] The

5. Report of the National Commission on the Public Service, *Rebuilding the Public Service* (Washington, DC: 1989), page 21.
6. Partnership for Public Service, *Ready to Govern: Improving the Presidential Transition* (Washington, DC: 2010), page ii
7. G. Edward DeSeve, *Speeding up the Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government and the National Academy of Public Administration, 2009)
8. United States Office of Personnel Management, *Hit the Ground Running: Establishing a Model Executive Onboarding Program* (Washington, DC: October 2011)

report presented a framework and steps for onboarding members of the Senior Executive Service, but it only briefly acknowledged the need to consider the onboarding needs of political appointees.

The federal government's increased interest in SES onboarding has had several clear results. First, the Office of Personnel Management established an Executive Onboarding Wiki on the OPM website to assist agencies in providing onboarding to Senior Executive Service members. Second, the president issued an executive order in December 2015 on strengthening the Senior Executive Service. The executive order contained the following mandates:

- **Establish a Formal Executive Onboarding Program.** The new program should be informed by OPM's Enhanced Executive Onboarding and Government-Wide Executive Onboarding Framework. This shall provide critical support and guidance to executives through their first year of service in new positions, consistent with guidance to be issued by OPM no later than 60 days after the day of this order. Onboarding shall be provided for career *and* non-career SES, SL, and ST employees, and for SES-equivalent positions.
- **Require Executive Ownership of Strategic Recruitment and Hiring.** Department Deputy Secretaries, or their direct designees, will track and monitor SES vacancies and recruiting efforts on a regular basis, dramatically increasing senior leadership and attention for recruitment and hiring. This action significantly enhances the role and responsibility of the Deputy Secretary in overseeing the department's executive corps, which includes both political executives and career executives.

Since the executive order was issued, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Peace Corps, and the Office of Personnel Management have conducted pilot executive onboarding programs for members of the Senior Executive Service. Work is now underway to implement the executive order in other federal departments and agencies for their SES members. To our knowledge, little work has been done to develop executive onboarding for new political appointees across government.

Part II

Best Practices in Onboarding Political Appointees: The Department of State

INTRODUCTION

As noted in the previous section, we searched for onboarding activities within the federal government which could serve as a model for other departments and agencies. Based on our research, we found that the Department of State devoted significant resources for onboarding and had assigned lead responsibility to the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) within the department. The goal of State's onboarding program, through both its formal and informal activities, is to set up new Ambassadors for success. Preparing new Ambassadors does not start on the day they walk into their new office, but rather many months prior to their swearing in and assumption of duties.

PREPARING AMBASSADORS TO SERVE

The Process

All United States Ambassadors, career and non-career, go through five distinct phases of preparation prior to landing in their country of appointment. The phases are:

- **Phase One**: The Vetting Process
- **Phase Two**: The Pre-Nomination Phase
- **Phase Three**: The White House Announcement
- **Phase Four**: The Confirmation Hearing
- **Phase Five**: After Confirmation

Phase One: The Vetting Process

The first phase is behind-the-scenes work to get candidates selected, agreeing to serve, and then thoroughly vetted by the White House and the Department of State. Prior to formal nomination, candidates' names are not disclosed, as it is possible for a candidate to not pass the vetting process. Should this happen, neither the candidate nor the White House wants to be embarrassed by having to withdraw a name publicly.

During Phase One, the candidate may choose to educate him or herself about the country of appointment and its relationship with the United States through various reading resources. There is no formal preparation offered at this time.

Unique to the diplomatic community when choosing Ambassadors is a diplomatic courtesy process called Agrément. Agrément requires that before a country appoints a new chief of diplomatic mission to represent it in another country, the proposed appointee must first be deemed acceptable to the receiving country. The agreement by the receiving country is signified by it granting its Agrément to the appointment. It is rare for an Agrément to be refused, but it can happen.[9] The White House cannot forward an Ambassador's nomination to the United States Senate for confirmation (Phase Three) until the Agrément is completed.

Phase Two: The Pre-Nomination Phase

After vetting is complete but prior to nomination, candidates can be formally introduced to key personnel *only* within the Department of State. These meetings and consultations are where Ambassadors' education and

9. http://www.ediplomat.com/nd/glossary.htm

POLITICAL APPOINTEES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Department of State has nearly 400 political appointees. These appointees include:

- Over 250 Presidential Appointments with Senate Confirmation (PAS). PAS appointees include:
  - Over 190 Ambassadors, the focus of this paper. Approximately 70 percent of Ambassadors come from within the career ranks of the Foreign Service. The remaining 30 percent of Ambassadors come from outside of government and often are referred to as non-career Ambassadors. Both career Foreign Service officers and non-career nominees all require Senate confirmation.
  - The additional 60 plus PAS appointees include the Deputy Secretaries, the Under Secretaries, the Assistant Secretaries, and the Deputy Assistant Secretaries.
- Approximately 45 non-career members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), which includes Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Office Directors.
- Over 100 Schedule C appointments, many of whom serve as special assistants to political appointees.

The primary focus in this section will be the onboarding of Ambassadors.

onboarding begins. These consultations are crucial in helping the candidate lay the groundwork for a successful tenure as Ambassador.

Consultations normally begin with key staff in their regional bureau. Initial meetings are scheduled with the Assistant Secretary or the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Deputy Assistant Secretary who is responsible for their particular country. Additional meetings are scheduled with other personnel in the regional bureau that Ambassadors will interact with during their tenure. The goal of these consultations is to begin establishing relationships with Washington experts on the region and experts in that particular country who can provide guidance and counsel to the Ambassador.

Additional briefings with key officials inside the Department of State, but outside the regional bureau, are also scheduled. These consultations broaden the base of contacts in Washington and provide information on issues that are less regionally focused but still important. These briefings help to educate the candidate on United States policy toward their country of appointment; the political environment both in Washington and in the host country; key issues at the post they need to be aware of; key players in the host country's government; as well as information on budget, intelligence issues, and key personnel.

The regional bureau will assign an individual to the candidate—typically a Foreign Service officer within the regional bureau—who knows the candidate's country in some detail. The individual assigned serves as a primary point of contact for the candidate, helping him or her navigate the internal bureaucracy, schedule internal meetings, get building passes and diplomatic passports, and answer general questions they may have about the country. Other personnel who cover the financial and administrative elements of their post from Washington are also made available to candidates to help with the administrative tasks and requirements.

At any time during Phase Two, candidates and their spouse and family members may take advantage of resources at the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center to learn specifics concerning their new posting. The Foreign Service Institute is the Department of State's training center for the foreign affairs community, located on a campus in Arlington, Virginia. The Transition Center has a library of current information about schools, medical resources, household moving, cultural sites, and more. Its internal websites and video library also provide a wealth of information.

Also during Phase Two, candidates choose a date and register for the three-week Ambassadorial Seminar, which is the formal training course provided by the Foreign Service Institute that all candidates are required to take (see page 8 for a discussion of the Seminar). Various factors influence the decision of when candidates participate in the Ambassadorial Seminar. It is clearly preferable for the nominee to attend the Ambassadorial Seminar prior to confirmation hearings, but in practice it doesn't always work out this way. It should be emphasized that most candidates attend the seminar in the time period between nomination and confirmation. Candidates who have registered for the Ambassadorial

Seminar are contacted ahead of time by FSI staff in the Leadership and Management School to help them prepare for their attendance, as there is pre-work required.

Phase Three: The White House Announcement

After the host country informs the Department of State that they accept the suggested candidate as their next United States Ambassador (the Agrément), the next step is for the White House to release a formal announcement and for the candidate's nomination to be sent to the United States Senate.

Once this information is released publicly and posted on the White House website, the candidate may hold consultations with officials in other government agencies that may be represented at their post. The most common government agencies represented overseas are the United States Agency for International Development and the Departments of Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, Homeland Security, Defense, and Justice. Representatives of the United States military are also represented at overseas posts.

At this stage, the candidate may also contact the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at his or her prospective post who will serve as their Deputy. A good relationship with the DCM is critical to a successful tour of duty, so beginning the process of getting to know each other is important. The DCM also plays a critical role in getting the post ready for the new Ambassador and orienting the Ambassador after arrival.

Phase Four: Confirmation Hearings

Confirmation hearings are a critical element in any candidate's preparation process, and it is the responsibility of the regional bureau and the Legislative Affairs Bureau to prepare candidates. While the regional bureaus are the experts on the substantive policy issues, the Legislative Affairs bureau maintains relationships with congressmen, senators, and their staffs. They stay informed on legislative issues that affect the foreign affairs community, and the Department of State specifically, and monitor key legislation and legislators who care about foreign affairs issues. They also understand the dynamics and process of a Senate confirmation hearing.

Candidates are provided thorough briefing books by the regional bureau, counseled on which topics may be of interest to particular senators, and they hold mock hearings, often called "murder boards," to practice and prepare them for questions that might come their way. If candidates don't take their preparation seriously and "bomb" their confirmation hearing, this can cause their appointment to be significantly delayed by the Senate, potentially resulting in a candidate withdrawing his or her nomination.

Phase Five: After Confirmation

Assuming that the confirmation hearing goes well, the Senate then votes on accepting the nomination. This is normally a proforma piece of Senate business where multiple nominations from various government agencies are approved. This can happen soon after a successful confirmation hearing or be delayed for a variety of reasons, depending on the Senate legislative calendar.

After Senate confirmation, the role and title of Ambassador is not yet transferred until after the individual is sworn in. The Ambassador nominee (who is not yet sworn in) may hold outside briefings and consultations with diplomats in Washington from their country of assignment, NGOs, diplomatic groups, and other interest groups. The goal of these consultations is to learn about partnership opportunities that may exist to advance United States interests. These consultations are at the discretion of the nominee, upon advisement by their regional bureau.

After confirmation, the new Ambassador is assisted with setting up his or her swearing-in ceremony, often held on the eighth floor of the department's headquarters (the Harry S. Truman Building). This ceremony is the culmination of a long journey, so friends, family, and former colleagues are often invited to be present and witness the swearing in. After taking the oath of office, which is often administered by the Secretary of State or another high-ranking official, the newly minted Ambassador prepares for the learning process that begins upon arrival at his or her post.

ACTIVITIES TO ONBOARD NEW AMBASSADORS

The Ambassadorial Seminar

The Ambassadorial Seminar is a three-week required course provided by the Foreign Service Institute for all incoming Ambassadors. It is facilitated through the Leadership and Management School and led by former Ambassadors who serve as course mentors, along with FSI trainers. The seminar consists of a two-day preparation session for non-career candidates and three weeks of onboarding activities for both career and non-career Ambassadorial nominees.

Two-day preparation session. Prior to the three-week Ambassadorial Seminar, non-career candidates are encouraged to attend a two-day Non-Career Ambassadorial Seminar that is designed specifically for non-career candidates. The intent of this two-day seminar is to provide them with information on the operations of the State Department generally, and a U.S. Embassy specifically. This information helps them start the three-week Ambassadorial Seminar on a more level playing field with their career Foreign Service counterparts. Many candidates are new to the federal government, so this two-day workshop helps address many of the basic questions they might bring as outsiders. Candidates are encouraged to bring a list of questions, concerns, and knowledge gaps that they would like addressed both during the two-day seminar and the three-week Ambassadorial Seminar.

Week One. The first week of the course is held at an out-of-town offsite location and facilitated by course mentors, FSI staff, and external contractors. Being out-of-town provides the opportunity to step away from the distractions of an office and learn both formally and informally. The content focus is on leadership, with the goal to provide an opportunity for reflection on leadership skills, styles, and expected challenges. Secondarily, the offsite provides the chance to build relationships within the cohort that can be used to provide support with one another once they are in the field. Learning happens both in a formal classroom setting and informally over conversations at and after dinner.

Week Two. The second week of the seminar takes place in downtown Washington, DC, at department headquarters. The second week focuses substantively on policy and the specific roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the Ambassador. The schedule is filled with guest speakers who hold some of the highest-level jobs within the Department of State, including the Secretary of State if his or her schedule permits. Participants will get briefings from and will have the opportunity to ask questions of selected principals with essential expertise and experience, and who support the learning objectives of the seminar.

The week is also interspersed with a variety of short presentations from guest speakers on topics the departmental leadership team believes will be of interest to Ambassadorial candidates. External speakers from the United States military and law enforcement community are often included to highlight the interagency culture at the post and how they engage with the Ambassador. For many of the substantive topics presented during week two, participants may schedule a follow-up one-on-one consultation with the principal to get country-specific information. This consultative process can take place either before or after the Ambassadorial Seminar.

Week Three. The third week of the seminar focuses on preparing the candidate for success during the first 90 days. Participants prepare an entry strategy and plan for their first week and month, and they outline goals they want to accomplish during the first 90 days. Experienced public affairs trainers provide two days of public speaking and public affairs instruction. Additional speakers discuss pitfalls to avoid and the importance of security.

Other Onboarding Activities for Ambassadorial Candidates

Required training courses. Prior to their confirmation and departure to post, all non-career candidates are required to take two other courses that cover ethics and security overseas. An ethics course is offered through an online learning portal at FSI; it provides information on ethical boundaries that candidates need to be aware of and behaviors to avoid at all costs. Because Ambassadors are also responsible for the safety and security of their staff overseas, it is important that they be informed of safety measures, threats, and resources. A two-day overseas security course prepares them for these challenges. Both of these courses can be scheduled at a time prior to confirmation, either before or after the Ambassadorial Seminar.

Optional training courses. Once the White House announces the nomination of a candidate, nominees may take advantage of a variety of short courses offered at the Foreign Service Institute. Topics such as cross-cultural communication, explaining America, working in an embassy, and communicating with Congress are just a few. Language training is also available to candidates through the School of Language Studies.

Because the role of the Ambassador's spouse can be a significant one at an overseas post, the FSI Transition Center also offers an optional one-week training course for Ambassadors' spouses. This course is normally conducted during the first week of the Ambassadorial Seminar while the Ambassador candidates are at their offsite. This course provides a great opportunity to learn from former Ambassador spouses about the role, protocol, use of the residence, pitfalls, and opportunities. Spouses also build important relationships with each other than can be useful for support during their time at post. Spouses may also attend selected sessions of the remaining two weeks of the Ambassadorial Seminar based on their interest. While optional, most non-career spouses find this course valuable, both for providing information and the opportunity to network with State Department families.

Reading. During the Ambassadorial Seminar, candidates are provided a briefing book with post-specific information about their country of assignment. During the second and third weeks of the Ambassadorial Seminar, candidates are introduced to a collection of books and other written resources, which they are welcome to take for their own learning. A bibliography of resources is also provided.

Site visits. Another onboarding opportunity for Ambassadorial candidates, separate from the State Department, is made available through an invitation from the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) located in Tampa, Florida. Candidates who accept the invitation are flown down from and back to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington. They are provided a variety of briefings related to the work of SOCOM and how Ambassadors might take advantage of SOCOM resources. This trip is elective, but for those candidates whose country or region maintains a United States military presence, this briefing may be very useful.

SECTION SUMMARY

There is a series of key takeaways from our case study of the Department of State's Ambassador onboarding programs:

- Participation in the Ambassadorial Seminar is mandatory. Thus, participation in onboarding activities is very high, and it is nearly universal for new non-career Ambassador appointees.
- There are several units within the Department which are designated to participate in the onboarding of new appointees.
- The Department effectively uses the time period between nomination and confirmation for onboarding its new Ambassador nominees.
- The Department does not rely on a single orientation event to fulfill its onboarding needs. Instead, the Department offers a variety of onboarding activities to all new appointees starting with the time period after vetting (Phase Two) and before the official announcement of the nomination (Phase Three).
- The preparation of a nominee's entry strategy during week three is crucial to their success in the new position.

Based on our case study of the Department of State, we believe that the Department clearly meets our definition of strategic onboarding as a systematic and designed approach over the first year of an appointee's tenure to prepare the new appointee for success.

Part III

What We Learned About Implementing Onboarding for New Appointees

Based on our research, we developed four findings regarding implementing onboarding for new political appointees in government.

Finding One: Based on interviews with 65 high-level appointees in the Obama Administration over the last seven years, follow-up interviews, and research, we found few examples of organized, sustained efforts to provide onboarding to political appointees.

While some political appointees do attend various political appointee orientation sessions, including those offered by the White House and non-profit organizations, many appointees do not receive any onboarding other than briefing books prepared by their staffs in their own organization.

While each department has an Office of White House Liaison which serves primarily to work with the cabinet secretary in the selection of political appointees and to process their paperwork once they have been nominated and confirmed, these offices do not provide ongoing onboarding support to political appointees after confirmation. These offices tend to be sparsely staffed and focus primarily on managing the paper flow surrounding nomination and confirmation.

Finding Two: Nearly all of the political appointees interviewed felt that they did not receive the onboarding support they needed.

The majority of those interviewed felt that they were "on their own" to learn about their new agency, their department, and government in general. A typical response came from one appointee who recalled, "I have had two presidential appointments and I did not receive any formal or informal orientations in either position."

While new appointees do receive numerous briefings, the briefings tend to consist primarily of information on their own agency, such as the agency's current budget and staffing, as well as major issues facing the agency. In addition, most political appointees attend weekly departmental staff meetings, but these meetings seldom serve a team-building or a broader onboarding purpose. As noted above, some appointees attend formal orientation sessions, but these are held sporadically and there is no guarantee that every political appointee will participate in such orientations.

Finding Three: The time period between an appointee's nomination and his or her confirmation should be used to start the onboarding process.

It has become conventional wisdom that nominated appointees must stay away from their new department in the time period between nomination and confirmation. Other than meeting with department officials to prepare for confirmation hearings, we found little interaction between appointees and their new department prior to confirmation. For the most part, appointees were left to their own devices to prepare for their new position.

It is important to note that the Department of State uses the time period between a candidate's presidential nomination and Senate confirmation for the three-week mandatory Ambassadorial Seminar (see Part II of this report). Upon investigation, there appears to be no legal prohibition preventing more effective use of this time period.

Finding Four: A sustained, organized effort to onboard all political appointees will face several distinct challenges.

Challenge One: Political appointees do not all arrive at the same time. We found that political appointees arrive at different times throughout the first year and into the second year of a new administration. Thus, there is a consistent flow of new appointees who may have missed onboarding activities held for the first round of appointees. Departments and agencies need to plan for the ongoing arrival of new appointees.

Challenge Two: Each appointee has different onboarding needs, depending on their previous experience. Making the task of onboarding somewhat more challenging is the fact that each political appointee brings a different level of experience to their new position. While some will have had previous government experience, others will not. Each appointee will have a different set of onboarding needs that departments and agencies will need to accommodate. All new appointees, however, would benefit from customized onboarding activities.

Challenge Three: New political appointees will face severe time constraints after their confirmation that will impact their ability to participate in onboarding activities. After confirmation and swearing in, the new appointee is “off to the races.” It is challenging to schedule them for onboarding activities after they start in their new position, but it can be done with advance planning. This challenge also emphasizes the importance of increasing the number of onboarding activities conducted during the time period between nomination and confirmation.

Part IV

Recommendations on Implementing Onboarding for New Political Appointees

Recommendation One: Each department should create a unit dedicated to providing onboarding support to new political appointees.
This office could be an expansion of the existing Office of White House Liaison units or the designation of a unit within the Office of Chief Human Capital Officer to provide staff support to the Office of White House Liaison. This unit should report to, or work closely with, the Deputy Secretary. We believe the unit needs to be fully dedicated to onboarding, rather than assigning onboarding tasks as an auxiliary activity to an existing human resources team.

Recommendation Two: The Deputy Secretary of each department should be responsible for overseeing the onboarding of all political appointees.
The executive order described on page 4 gave the Deputy Secretary (usually designated as the Chief Operating Officer of the department) additional responsibilities to track and monitor Senior Executive Service vacancies and recruiting efforts. As the number two political appointee in the department, it seems appropriate to also assign the Deputy Secretary responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the onboarding of the department's political appointees.

Recommendation Three: The onboarding unit, overseen by the Deputy Secretary, should develop an individual onboarding plan for each new political appointee. Onboarding services should be offered on a rolling basis.
As noted earlier, each new political appointee will have different onboarding needs. In consultation with each new appointee, the onboarding unit should develop an individual onboarding plan for each appointee. For instance, an individual with prior experience as a congressional staff member would not need a briefing on Congress, whereas a new political appointee from outside government would clearly find such a briefing both helpful and essential.

In addition, the onboarding unit will have to contend with the rolling nature of the arrival of political appointees. The onboarding unit should create a monthly (or bimonthly) cohort of new political appointees who will receive onboarding and orientation activities in small groups. The creation of such cohort groups should continue throughout the second year of the new administration. The Department of State Ambassadorial Seminar discussed in Section II is a good example of the rolling schedule for new appointees. The Ambassadorial Seminar is conducted throughout the course of the entire administration, including the second term if the president is reelected.

Recommendation Four: Onboarding activities should begin shortly after the White House submits an appointee's nomination to Congress and continue throughout the first year of service.
As seen in the Department of State Ambassadorial Seminar, such activities can clearly take place during the crucial period between nomination and confirmation. In this time period, it is possible for the nominee to have time to participate in onboarding activities. After confirmation, the demands on the new appointee become much greater and he or she will find limited time to participate in onboarding activities.

Recommendation Five: New political appointees should receive information on what we have termed the basics, the essentials, the job, and becoming effective.

The information needs of political appointees are great. Their information needs can be clustered into the following categories:

- **The Basics:** How do I become an employee of the federal government?
- **The Essentials:** What are the rules of government that I need to know?
- **The Job:** What do I need to know about my job?
- **Becoming Effective:** How do I succeed in my job?

The Basics: How do I become an employee of the federal government?

There are a host of basic activities that need to be done on day one and day two. Although appointees will clearly need to be briefed about getting on the payroll and signing up for health insurance and other benefits, there is much other work to be done during week one. Several appointees noted that they had not received any advance information on the basic question of, "Where do I park?" Other appointees commented on the difficulty of getting around in a new building. Many of the interviewees stated that a basic tour of their new building would have been helpful. Interviewees recalled:

> "I came with five other individuals… We were all new and none of us had been here before. My impression of the Department was pretty overwhelming. I didn't know where to sit, who else was here, or where I should park."
>
> — *Anthony W. Miller, former Deputy Secretary, Department of Education*

> "It's the old story about finding your parking spot. I came to the U.S. Geological Survey from an institute where we had 230 employees to an organization with nearly 9,000 employees. You can get lost in this building. It must have been designed by the CIA. You need friends to find your way around here."
>
> — *Marcia McNutt, former Director, U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior*

The basics also include getting an e-mail address, computer, and mobile phone. New political appointees need guidance as to what type of communications are appropriate on a personal e-mail account and a government e-mail account. Guidance is also needed on the use of office mobile phones and personal mobile devices. Historically, the mundane topic of federal record-keeping has received little attention and it is likely that few political appointees receive adequate briefings on this increasingly important topic.

In recent years, society has seen the rise of social media. Many government agencies now have active Twitter, Facebook, and other social media accounts. The use of social media by individual political executives is new terrain. Clear guidance will be needed on the personal use of social media accounts for new appointees.

Another aspect of the "basics" is to provide a new appointee with assistance in finding housing, both temporary and permanent. Regarding temporary housing, little assistance is provided to new appointees who are coming from out of town on short notice. New appointees coming from the private sector probably received onboarding support in their previous position, which likely included information on housing.

David J. Kappos, former Director, United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce, recalled:

> I was confirmed at 11:00 a.m. on a Friday and I was supposed to start work on the following Monday. I had to leave my family on short notice. There was no time to plan on where to stay. But I managed to get to DC, find a hotel, and start on that Tuesday.

Onboarding support with temporary housing would have been helpful to Kappos. The concept of providing housing support is not a foreign concept to the federal government. When career employees and members of the military are relocated, there are offices throughout government to assist them. As seen in the Part II case study of the Department of State, new political appointees and their families have access to information and staff assistance when moving to a new location.

The Essentials: What are the rules of government that I need to know?

After the basics, the next set of information needs centers around the "rules" of government. These rules are important because mistakes in following them frequently can get a new (or even an experienced) appointee in trouble. Government is clearly rule-driven and there are clear procedures to be followed in undertaking the business of government. Thus, the proposed onboarding office needs to determine the best way to deliver information on the following:

- Ethics rules
- Procurement rules
- Personnel rules
- Travel rules

Briefings on the essentials can be provided during the time period between nomination and confirmation, which we have argued is not used effectively. If the above information on the rules is not provided prior to confirmation, it should receive high priority and be delivered within the first month of an appointee's tenure. Information about the rules is best provided directly by the department or agency in which the new appointee is located because many of the rules are department or agency specific.

There is much evidence, in addition to anecdotes, that political appointees do not receive adequate onboarding for the essentials. One of the essentials is to gain an understanding of the extensive number of rules and regulations governing ethics in government. In the 2008 survey of political appointees by the National Academy of Public Administration discussed earlier, survey respondents said that ethics rules were the single most important area in which they needed to be knowledgeable.[10] In their 2016 study, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) reported that approximately one of five of those who responded to the agency questionnaire said political appointees received no training on merit system principles, and an additional 20 percent did not now what training political appointees received regarding the merit systems.[11] Based on this disappointing finding, MSPB recommended that all political appointees needed to be well informed on the practical implications of merit principles. MSPB wrote that appointees need to fully demonstrate their full support to the federal merit system given their influential leadership role.

The essentials are not just "good to know" bits of information. The lack of understanding of these rules can get a new appointee in serious trouble and prevent him or her from accomplishing priority objectives. The goal of the proposed onboarding unit is to avoid the "nobody told me" response by new appointees after they have inadvertently violated a rule. Such rule violations range from accepting a gift larger than allowed by federal ethics rules to telling friends about a future procurement to spending more than allowed on travel. In regard to travel, there is a long list of previous political appointees who saw their tenure in government prematurely end due to violation of travel rules, including the mixing of personal travel and business travel.

The need for a deep understanding of the essentials is very well summed up by a former political executive:

> (New appointees) have to understand what Washington is like, they have got to understand what a bureaucracy is like. They have got to understand that they come to Washington to do great things… but while you are doing great things, you have to understand about personnel; you have to understand about the budget process; you have got to understand about all these things that drive your train while you are cogitating about how to save the world…[12]

A final point about the need for understanding the essentials is the difference between the public and private sector. Many business executives often have a difficult time transitioning to the public sector where they no longer control the hiring and firing of individuals, as well as the ability to manage their organization's budget by shifting funds when needed. The failure to fully understand these differences can often cause

10. DeSeve.
11. Merit Systems Protection Board, *The Merit Systems Principles: Guiding the Fair and Effective Management of the Federal Workforce* (Washington, DC: September 2016)
12. In Pfiffner, page 142.

DELIVERY MECHANISMS FOR ONBOARDING OF NEW POLITICAL APPOINTEES

There are a variety of delivery approaches to communicating needed information. The job of the proposed onboarding unit for political appointees will be to match the information needs of new political executives with appropriate communication delivery mechanisms.

BRIEFINGS

This is a traditional approach which can either be delivered as one-on-one briefings or group briefings. Each new cohort of appointees could receive joint briefings on what we have termed "the essentials."

SMALL GROUP SEMINARS

Instead of the briefing format, which usually includes one-way communication with a Q&A format, the seminar format is more collegial and aimed at peer group learning. This format is especially effective in bringing together former political appointees with new appointees to discuss lessons learned in meeting the challenges of managing in government. The seminars emphasize discussions around a table, rather than receiving a presentation from a speaker or speakers.

TRAINING SESSIONS

During the first year of a new administration, the White House has historically hosted various types of orientation sessions. These sessions have varied in length, number of attendees, and frequency. Sessions have ranged from one half-day to a day-and-a-half in previous administrations. While highly worthwhile, they should be viewed as one component of a larger onboarding program. In addition to the White House, various nonprofits offer training sessions on specific topics.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

As discussed in "*Who* Should New Appointees Know?" on page 17, a key onboarding activity is setting up meetings for the new appointee with key individuals within the department, other departments, Congress, and relevant stakeholders. In the Department of State, these meetings are called "consultations" and scheduled by Department of State staff.

SITE VISITS

This is a very useful approach to showing appointees their new department or agency in action. One previous appointee recalled to us:

> I was lucky. We had four new Assistant Secretaries in the Department of the Army who were confirmed all about the same time. The historian of the Army gave us a session on the history, culture, and organization of the Army. Then we hit the road to see all the things that the Army does. We visited bases, including Fort Leavenworth, Fort Bragg, and Fort Benning, and met all the important Army brass. These visits improved our knowledge of the department very quickly and also served as bonding experience for our group of new appointees. When we returned from the trip, we all felt like we were ready to do our job and could work effectively together.

As part of its onboarding opportunities, Ambassadorial nominees are invited to visit the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) located in Tampa, Florida. As discussed in Part II of this report, the trip is elective. Candidates who accept the invitation are flown to and from Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, and they are provided a variety of briefings related to the work of SOCOM and how Ambassadors might take advantage of SOCOM resources.

SOCIAL EVENTS

While it is easy to overlook the importance of social events, they provide political appointees with the opportunity to get to know each other in a setting other than a weekly staff meeting. These events should also include the new appointee's spouse or significant other.

major problems for a new appointee and dramatically decrease their chances for succeeding in government.

The Job: What do I need to know about my job?

After a new appointee has been adequately prepared on the basics and the essentials, the greatest amount of information needed by a new appointee is about the job itself. Providing this set of information will take time and should be organized by a specific schedule for onboarding. This set of crucial information can be summed up by asking "How does this building operate?" This component of onboarding should include the following:

- **Understanding the department and the federal government:** How is the department and agency organized? What is the mission and history of the organization? What's the organizational culture? What are the department's operating procedures? How do we interact with the White House? What's the role of the Office of Management and Budget and how often will I be interacting with them? How do I interact with the career civil service?
- **Understanding the tools of the job:** Does the agency have a strategic plan? How does the budget and appropriation process operate?
- **Understanding goal setting and strategic challenges:** How do I set clear goals for myself and my organization? How do I determine what I am expected to accomplish? What are the strategic challenges facing me in accomplishing my goals and objectives?
- **Understanding the major issues facing me:** What are the White House priorities for my organization? What changes are constituencies seeking? What new policies are constituencies advocating? What changes are Congress seeking?
- **Understanding Congress:** How does Congress impact my agency? Which committees and subcommittees will I have to work with?

The federal government can indeed be a daunting place for those who have not previously served in government. A good illustration of the complexity of government is the budget process. New appointees will come in at various points during the government's three year budget process. To those who have not been in government previously, the role of Congress in overseeing and appropriating agency budgets will indeed be unclear and somewhat mysterious. Briefing on the tools of government should occur during the appointee's first month in office or during the period between nomination and confirmation.

In the 2008 NAPA survey of political appointees, respondents reported that the following were "important or very important" in their effectiveness and would be similarly important to their successors:

- How the executive branch works: 97 percent
- Budget process: 94 percent
- How Congress works: 92 percent
- How the White House is organized and makes decisions: 91 percent

Becoming Effective: How do I succeed in my job?

While much of the information needs discussed in this section can be transmitted primarily by briefings, group meetings, and training sessions, the transmittal of advice on becoming effective is more of a challenge. We have found that the most effective way to transmit this set of knowledge is through seminars or meetings with former political appointees who have "been there." These individuals are very willing to share their experiences with new appointees. Former appointees can discuss what worked for them and what did not work. For a new appointee running an agency, it would be helpful for the onboarding unit to schedule group or individual meetings with those who have previously served as agency heads in prior administrations.

The challenge of transmitting advice for becoming effective is that it is not fact-driven or based on a set of existing rules. Becoming effective is much more behavioral and attitude driven. Nearly all previous political appointees would advise new political appointees to effectively use the career civil service and demonstrate a trusting attitude toward their career colleagues. New appointees must also work to build effective teams in their organizations.

In academic literature, "becoming effective" is best described as tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is contrasted with explicit knowledge, which is formal and codified knowledge. Tacit knowledge is difficult to transfer to another person by means of written instructions or briefings. We have seen, however, tacit knowledge effectively communicated by the sharing of experiences in a collegial learning environment.

Craft knowledge is another term used for tacit knowledge. Small group seminars with former political appointees is an effective way to discuss the "craft" of

WHO SHOULD NEW APPOINTEES KNOW?

While the focus of onboarding has historically been on the more traditional orientation type of activities, a less common—yet equally important—activity is setting up meetings with individuals that the new appointee should meet face-to-face. While such meetings are likely to occur over the first year of a new appointee's tenure, they should be speeded up and conducted more systematically. Meetings should include:

- Key administrative offices in the department, such as the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, and Chief Human Capital Officer
- Key members of the Senior Executive Service and other significant individuals in the department
- Key officials in other departments and agencies who the new appointee's agency will be interacting with during interagency activities
- Key government-wide officials, such as the Director of the Office of Personnel Management and the Administrator of the General Services Administration
- Key agency stakeholders outside of government

The proposed new onboarding unit should prepare a list of the names of the above individuals and set up the meetings as soon as possible. Some meetings might be group meetings with a cohort of new appointees from the department.

managing in the federal government. Craft knowledge is frequently conveyed by "war stories" in which former political appointees convey what went right and wrong during their tenure in government.

In many trades, craft knowledge is also often passed on via apprenticeship programs. While we are not advocating apprenticeship programs for new political appointees, there is great potential value in making well-respected previous appointees available to new appointees either in one-on-one sessions or group seminars.

In the Ambassadorial Seminar, the "craft of diplomacy" is conveyed by present and former Ambassadors. It is important to note that the Department of State's Ambassadorial Seminar is taught, in part, by former Ambassadors who also serve as "Course Mentors" for the entire three-week seminar. During that time they are available for individual meetings with new Ambassadors. There is a tradition in the Department of State of former Ambassadors serving as ongoing resources and mentors to new Ambassadors.

KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lilith Christiansen
Vice President
Kaiser Associates, Inc.
1615 L Street, NW
13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 454-2063
lchristiansen@kaiserassociates.com

Mark Stein
Senior Vice President
Kaiser Associates, Inc.
1615 L Street, NW
13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 454-2060
mstein@kaiserassociates.com

Paul R. Lawrence
Vice President
Kaiser Associates, Inc.
1615 L Street, NW
13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 456-2016
plawrence@kaiserassociates.com

Mark A. Abramson
President
Leadership Inc.
409 Princess Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(571) 527-0138]
mark.abramson@thougthleadershipinc.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank our Kaiser Associates colleagues for their assistance on this report: Doug Chartier, Sarah Hagerman, John Wilhelm, and Allie Wise.

We would also like to thank Gene Kendall, a former Department of State employee who served as the Foreign Service Institute's lead trainer and course manager for the Ambassadorial Seminar from 2010 through 2015, for his assistance on Section II of this report through a series of interviews.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lilith Christiansen is a Vice President at Kaiser Associates and co-leads the firm's Organization Development consulting practice. She has led numerous Onboarding Organization Design, Change Management, Strategic Planning, and Employee Program Redesign projects for leading global organizations in both the public and private sectors. Christiansen coauthored (with Mark Stein) *Successful Onboarding: A Strategy to Unlock Hidden Value Within Your Organization,* was a contributing author of *ATD Talent Management Handbook (2015),* and has written articles on onboarding and other talent management topics for Human Resources Executive Online, Talent Management Magazine, and Investor's Business Daily. She has presented on the topic of onboarding through The Conference Board, Human Capital Institute, and the Treasury Executive Institute. Christiansen holds an MBA from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

Paul R. Lawrence is a Vice President at Kaiser Associates, focusing on the public sector. Lawrence has 25 years of experience working closely with government leaders. Prior to joining Kaiser Associates, he was a Principal in the Advisory Services practice of Ernst & Young, a Vice President with Accenture, an Executive Director with the MITRE Corporation, a Vice President with IBM Business Consulting Services, and a Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers. He is a co-author (with Mark A. Abramson) of *Succeeding as a Political Executive: 50 Insights from Experience, What Government Does: How Political Executives Manage*, and *Paths to Making a Difference: Leading in Government*. Lawrence earned his master of arts degree and PhD in economics from Virginia Tech. He earned his bachelor of arts degree in economics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and graduated as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Mark Stein is a Senior Vice President at Kaiser Associates. With a business degree from The George Washington University School of Business in 1990, and subsequent professional service experience as a foundation executive, Mark entered the management consulting industry in 1995. He has since led hundreds of corporate strategy, investment analysis, and organization development engagements for leading multinational corporations. He is a co-author (with Lilith Christiansen) of *Successful Onboarding: A Strategy to Unlock Hidden Value Within Your Organization*. Stein has spoken at numerous organization development and onboarding conferences, including those sponsored by IQPC and the Conference Board. He also led the Kaiser Associates team that redesigned Booz Allen Hamilton's onboarding program, which won an ASTD Excellence In Practice Award in 2010.

Mark A. Abramson is President of Leadership Inc. Abramson has served as Executive Director of the IBM Center for the Business of Government, President of the Council for Excellence in Government, and a senior program evaluator in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services. He is the co-author (with Paul Lawrence) of *Succeeding as a Political Executive: 50 Insights from Experience, What Government Does: How Political Executives Manage*, and *Paths to Making a Difference: Leading in Government*. He received a master of political science degree from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and a bachelor of arts from Florida State University.

KAISER
ASSOCIATES

ABOUT KAISER

Founded in 1981, Kaiser Associates, Inc. is an international strategy consulting firm that provides clients with unique insight to drive critical decision making and solve their most pressing problems.

Kaiser Associates provides public sector clients with proven frameworks and strategies to redesign operations, automate processes, and optimize workforces to better serve their constituents. Kaiser Associates combines customized benchmarking and relevant commercial best practices with proven management frameworks to transform government organizations. Our rigorous approach to primary and secondary research identifies how clients can enhance value and increase efficiency across finance, technology, human capital, and administrative functions using both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Kaiser Associates, Inc.
1615 L Street, NW
13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 454-2000
kaiserassociates.com