

Protecting Elections and Enhancing Participation: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Protect Electoral Integrity and Enhance Voter Participation

Background

Voting at the federal, state, and local levels is fundamental to American democracy, and citizens must have confidence in electoral systems, processes, and results. Electoral integrity and voter participation are enhanced by (1) ensuring that everyone with a legal right to vote is able to do so; (2) protecting such critical election infrastructure as storage facilities, polling places, and centralized vote tabulation locations; and (3) safeguarding such information and communications technology as voter registration databases, voting machines, and other electoral management systems. The emergence of the Covid-19 crisis, concerns about cybersecurity, and the complex and decentralized nature of our electoral system present challenges to our election system. The next administration will be called upon to address these concerns and ensure public confidence in the election results.

The Challenge: Protect Electoral Integrity and Enhance Voter Participation

The U.S. election system is highly decentralized. Public agencies and administrators have critical roles to play in ensuring fair and safe elections. In most cases, the nation's counties are responsible for actually running our elections. Decentralization and lack of standardization create a number of challenges, but this structure can be a strength from a security perspective.

Recommendations for 2021

1. Strengthen the resources and support to the federal cyber security infrastructure and highlight the importance of this effort.
2. Ensure that adequate funding is provided in order for all federal election duties to be performed well.
3. Ensure that all key election-related positions are filled in a timely manner, with qualified individuals.
4. Seek various legislative requirements that states must meet in regard to future elections of federal officials (various bills have been introduced in previous congressional sessions).
5. Seek to improve the capacity of states by providing needed financial and technical assistance resources. This could include: increasing federal funding to address deficiencies in state and local election systems; expanding the capacity of the EAC to provide technical assistance to state and local election officials; identifying additional steps to better equip states and localities to address cyber security threats identified by the federal government.
6. Develop an action strategy to include state and local governments. This might be accomplished by: convening an intergovernmental working group; and/or creation of a bipartisan commission.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Protecting Elections and Enhancing Participation: An Agenda for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Protecting the Right to Vote](#)

[CDC: Considerations for Election Polling Locations and Voters](#)

[GAO: Election Security: DHS Plans are Urgently Needed to Address Identified Challenges Before the 2020 Election](#)

[CISA: Protect 2020](#)

[Election Assistance Committee: Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Resources](#)



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Modernizing and Reinvigorating the Public Workforce: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Modernize and Reinvigorate the Public Workforce

Background

At the time when the government needs fresh ideas, it struggles to hire young people. With twice as many employees over 60 years old as under 30, the federal government will face future workforce issues. The civil-service system itself is also antiquated with a pay setting mechanism that was developed in 1949 and a Merit System that values compliance with rules more than merit. The route to reform needs to be based on three steps: mission first, principles always, and accountability for both.

The Challenge: Modernize and Reinvigorate the Public Workforce

As governments are increasingly called upon to address complex and interconnected “wicked problems,” their need for leaders, managers, technical experts, and front-line workers in the right jobs with the right skills at the right time has never been greater.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Build interest in public service and government as a career** through a funded campaign initiated by the White House and managed by OPM.
- 2. Develop a modern system of flexible pay and job classification** beginning with an EO that maximizes use of administrative flexibilities to streamline processes.
- 3. Initiate hiring reform that significantly expands the use of streamlined hiring authorities, uses modern assessment processes to identify high-quality candidates, and reduces the number of security clearance requirements.**
- 4. Improve the quality of managers and supervisors in government.**
- 5. Identify talent management in government as a presidential priority.**
- 6. Refocus OPM** with an emphasis on responsiveness and flexibility in Talent Management.
- 7. Identify and implement modern assessment processes,** with a goal of eliminating applicant self-assessment questionnaires within one year.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Modernizing and Reinvigorating the Public Workforce: An Agenda for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Modernize and Reinvigorate the Public Workforce](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Modernizing and Reinvigorating the Public Service](#)

[The Academy: Why Public Service Matters: Now and Always](#)

[GAO Report: Federal Workforce: Key Talent Management Strategies for Agencies to Better Meet their Missions](#)

[GAO Report: Human Capital: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring Efforts](#)



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Advancing Information Policy and Use at the Office of Management and Budget

Academy Election 2020 Project

Select Task Force: Organization of Information Policy and Use at OMB

Background

To quickly address unprecedented challenges at all levels of government, the U.S. government must collect, manage, and disseminate more information from the American public than at any point in its history. OMB, the center of the federal government's information infrastructure, has the potential to revolutionize the ability of agencies and policymakers throughout the different levels of government to gain critical insights of complex problems. To date, for a variety of reasons, that potential has not been fully realized. Unless action is taken to restructure and reprioritize information policy and use within OMB, the President's ability to make the bold, significant changes across government that address the nation's biggest challenges will be severely diminished.

Recommendations for 2021

1. The President should nominate a Director, Deputy Director, and Deputy Director for Management who commit to prioritizing and improving OMB's information policy and use responsibilities.
2. The OMB Director should establish a new position—Assistant Director for Information Policy—to oversee, manage, and coordinate relevant activities across OMB's divisions and offices.
3. Within the first 100 days of the Administration, the Assistant Director for Information Policy should identify OMB responsibilities for information policy and practice and inform the other Executive Office of the President (EOP) components of OMB's roles and responsibilities to the other components.
4. Reinvigorate and continue the trajectory of the Federal Data Strategy, under the leadership of the new Assistant Director for Information Policy.
5. Evidence Act implementation activities should proceed, with a coordinated approach for implementation led by the new Assistant Director for Information Policy.
6. Establish a mechanism through the internal quarterly President's Management Agenda update in which senior leaders from across OMB meet to discuss major management initiatives, including information management initiatives.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Advancing Information Policy and Use at the Office of Management and Budget*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Advancing Information Policy and Use at the Office of Management and Budget](#)

[The Academy: Election 2020: Engaging Americans and Increasing Public Trust](#)

[The Academy: Election 2020: Enhancing Public Governance](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Developing Public Governance and Engagement](#)

The Challenge: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

In the 21st Century, no significant public problem fits entirely within one government agency, or even one level of government, and our federal system presupposes that all levels of government have an important role to play in the democratic process. Effective problem solving usually requires federal, state, and local governments to work successfully together, and often with the private and nonprofit sectors.



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Engaging Americans & Increasing Public Trust: An Agenda for 2021 and Beyond

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

Background

The United States faces a crisis of national confidence in its governance processes. Two multi-year commissions provided recommendations focusing on the citizen-government interface, reforms to political institutions and processes, and emphasis on the role of institutions of civil society as important elements of democratic life. There are currently several models for improving Citizen-Government Engagement including citizen assemblies, deliberative democracy forums, and Bloomberg's "What Works Cities." There are also several examples of practices for meaningful engagement including the National Dialogue on Mental Health and the EPA's local government strategies series.

Recommendations for 2021

1. Establish a White House Office of Public Engagement and Service
2. Update the Open Government Directive.
3. Create reusable platforms/tools for use at the local level.
4. Create platforms and tools that support real-time engagement and co-productions with those outside of government.
5. Organize citizen assemblies.
6. Sponsoring deliberative dialogue forums with members of Congress.
7. Using deliberative processes.
8. Expand use of participatory budgeting at the state and local level.
9. Encourage cross-sector engagement with civil society institutions.
10. Set up institutionalized structures for engagement across local, state, and federal levels of government—creating a "civic layer."
11. Create incentives for individual participation, such as "citizen engagement" accounts, badges, certificates, and bonds.
12. Promote civic education.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Engaging Americans & Increasing Public Trust: An Agenda for 2021 and Beyond.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement Homepage](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Developing Public Governance and Engagement](#)

[Developing Materials for Deliberative Forums](#)

[The Open Government Partnership: Fourth Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America](#)

[OECD: Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions](#)

The Challenge: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

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Enhancing Public Governance: An Agenda for 2021 and Beyond

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

Background

The public's trust in government has been declining for decades and the Covid-19 pandemic highlights weaknesses in our governance structure to work collaboratively across agencies, levels of government, and sectors of society. To restore public trust requires developing new, more effective governance approaches that focus on collaborative governance to address the complex problems facing our society. In this approach, the federal government takes the lead of coordinating and harmonizing the elements of an evidence-based national strategy that is flexible enough to adapt to local conditions.

Recommendations for 2021

1. Use existing opportunities, like supporting veterans who have returned to their communities or preventing and ending homelessness, that can provide a base to build new models of effective collaborative governance.
2. In the long-term, the federal government must test models for a more collaborative governance approach and design and implement customer- and client-centric approaches to selected problems.
3. OMB should direct specified agencies to commit in their strategic planning to a Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goal to improve the delivery and effectiveness of services for individuals and families through collaboration across multiple human service areas.
4. Lead agencies or cross-agency teams for each area of opportunity should design and pilot a community care coordination delivery model that best supports flexible and agile service delivery under varied local conditions.
5. The Administration should establish a mechanism that enables state and local governments and other community experts to participate in designing and planning collaborative approaches.
6. OMB should employ portfolio budgeting, using strategic objectives as the unit of analysis, to guide resource allocation decisions and inform regulatory and administrative reforms to support the strategy.
7. OMB and other central agencies should work together to establish shared knowledge platforms and clearinghouses.
8. OMB and the White House, with state and local partners, should establish a working group to develop a national plan for federal actions to enable all levels of government to strengthen data, analytics, and evaluation capacity.
9. OMB and lead agencies for each area of opportunity should proactively pursue the use of existing program waivers to allow state and local governments to braid and blend funds to create person-centered service delivery models.

The Challenge: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

In the 21st Century, no significant public problem fits entirely within one government agency, or even one level of government, and our federal system presupposes that all levels of government have an important role to play in the democratic process. Effective problem solving usually requires federal, state, and local governments to work successfully together, and often with the private and nonprofit sectors.

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[The Academy: Election 2020: Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement Homepage](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Developing Public Governance and Engagement](#)



Additional Resources (Cont.)

OMB: Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: Home Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

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The United States in an Interconnected World: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Advance National Interests in a Changing Global Context

Background

Although the United States remains the world's most powerful nation, the unipolar moment of the early post-Cold War years has been replaced with a much more diffuse international system and a wider array of complex issues. These complex issues include issues of global health, public diplomacy, democratic institutions, and internal management capacity. Against this backdrop, there are important opportunities to reassert and advance America's global interests, values, and leadership. Should America choose to retreat from leadership on these issues, we face the prospect of a more uncertain, less free, and less prosperous world.

The Challenge: Advance National Interests in a Changing Global Context

Even as public administration and policy issues cross national boundaries more than ever, many Americans and citizens of allied countries are questioning the value of global engagement. Many people are concerned that globalization has negatively impacted their lives and reduced their nation-state's ability to provide protection and promote the general welfare. In this context, many of today's international institutions are under significant stress. Given that major global issues cannot be addressed without effective international collaboration, many international institutions may need to be reformed and modernized.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Establish a U.S. Global Crises Response Corps**, starting immediately with a program focused on health, particularly on Covid-19. This should soon be followed by similar programs on natural disasters, cybersecurity, and other international risks that require coordination across borders.
- 2. Establish a national commission on public diplomacy, cultural exchange, and sustainable development** charged with helping American diplomacy present and represent U.S. values abroad.
- 3. Develop a Presidential-Level sustainable democratic institutions strategy** to integrate efforts from across the federal administration.
- 4. Establish cross-agency standards for monitoring and evaluation** by federal departments and agencies administering foreign assistance as called for in the current Administration's "Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluations of Foreign Service."
- 5. Align U.S. efforts with those of other nations and the private sector to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 16.**
- 6. Increase management capacity** by first exploring greater flexibility in systems for the domestic service—that is, those positions with the Department of State outside of the Foreign Service.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *The United States in an Interconnected World: An Agenda for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: The United States in an Interconnected World](#)

[GAO: Foreign Assistance: Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines Incorporate Most but Not All Leading Practices](#)

[UN: Sustainable Development Goals](#)



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Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity: An Action Plan for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project
Working Group: Foster Social Equity

Background

Food insecurity in children is a major challenge in the United States that has worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, the USDA estimated that 5.3 million children lived in food-insecure households and this is expected to grow due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Directing resources toward young children is a cost-effective way to improve life chances and is an effective strategy for promoting social equity. The federal government, through the establishment of multiple programs, recognizes its role in promoting food security but some additional adjustments will enhance the ability of these programs to promote social equity.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Establish a Cross-Agency Priority goal to improve child well-being** grounded in an evidence-based approach to measure trends in this area.
- 2. Increase Farm to School Funding** to improve the ratio of demand for grants to funding availability and create an accountability tracking system to measure progress towards a more equitable food system.
- 3. Prioritize program goals that leverage resources for children Ages 5 and under** such as the Farm to School grant program and ECE sites and tribal community projects.
- 4. Increase SNAP benefits by 15% for eligible households to help pay for food during the Covid-19 crisis.**
- 5. Establish a coordinated effort described in the GAO-18-41SP Child Well-Being** to coordinate the effort among many federal agencies, track implementation of services and programs, and evaluate the impact in high priority areas.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity: An Action Plan for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity: Promoting Social Equity in an Evidence-Based Policy Environment](#)

[The Academy: A Social Equity Lens for Covid-19: Action: 10 Key Questions](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Social Equity](#)

[The Academy: Public Administrators and the Imperative for Social Equity](#)

[The Academy: Promoting Social Equity Through Civil Rights Education for Public Service: Miles' Law, Different Experiences, But Toward Common Action](#)

[The Academy: Virtual Social Equity Conference Addresses Social Justice Issues and Racial Disparities](#)

[GAO: Child Well-Being: Key Considerations for Policymakers, Including the Need for a Federal Cross-Agency Priority Goal](#)

The Challenge: Fostering Social Equity

Social equity—a key pillar of public administration alongside economy, efficiency, and effectiveness—addresses fairness, justice, and equity within a variety of public contexts. Although the United States has made significant progress in expanding access to opportunities to more of the nation's citizens and residents, we continue to struggle with ensuring the equitable design and implementation of public policies and programs that reduce or eliminate disparities, discrimination, and marginalization.



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Promoting Social Equity in an Evidence-Based Policy Environment: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project
Working Group: Foster Social Equity

Background

Over the past 60 years, significant progress has been made toward promoting social equity in areas such as civil rights, women's rights, poverty reduction, and gender equality. But continued progress remains uneven and, in some cases, has regressed. While equity in the distribution of public services and administration of programs should be the goal of any presidential administration, it is difficult to move programs and practices toward equity through legislative actions alone. Social equity can be advanced by building a strong federal platform that would include increased awareness, rigorous measurement, formal evaluation, and consistent application.

Recommendations for 2021

Implement a White House initiative on social equity evidence led by the Vice President and includes an agenda of four components:

- 1. A social equity evidence review** of rigorous research and evaluation on approaches that have improved social equity and gaps in research that should be filled with new research.
- 2. A social equity data and statistical inventory** of public data and statistical series with periodic (e.g., annual) information on equity and inequity by nation, state, and local areas.
- 3. A social equity Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goal** and the establishment of a core CAP workgroup to assess progress on improving social equity outcomes.
- 4. A social equity measure for assessing programs** that would not only provide a guide for the questions that public administrators need to proactively consider but would also provide a valuable resource for accessing extant data, research, and expertise.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Promoting Social Equity in an Evidence-Based Policy Environment: An Agenda for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Improving Child Well-Being & Reducing Food Insecurity; Promoting Social Equity in an Evidence-Based Policy Environment](#)

[The Academy: A Social Equity Lens for Covid-19: Action: 10 Key Questions](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Social Equity](#)

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Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans: An Agenda for 2020

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work

Background

Today, connecting individuals to meaningful work has societal urgency; it is the means by which we can address growing unemployment, disconnection from the current and future economy, and growing income disparities. Work has both instrumental and intrinsic values and it is important to both individuals and families. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused rapid changes to the world of work and has caused many individuals and communities to experience a sense of dislocation, income inequity and loss, even as the income and wealth of others continues to grow. Although there is no easy fix for the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic has caused, the Administration in 2021 can take steps to stabilize and improve the situation in the short- and long- term.

The Challenge: Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work

Humans have an innate quest for meaning. Our jobs and our work are a principal means for fulfilling that need—they have both instrumental and intrinsic value. Instrumentally, work provides the means by which we make a living and support our families. Work also has important implications for one's personal identity, with much of our self-esteem deriving from it. When the work is perceived as meaningful, people have a sense of fulfillment and purpose that not only strengthens their psychological welfare, but also contributes to other aspects of life and to an individual's overall life purpose.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Make workforce development and opportunity a key part of any infrastructure plans and strategies** by leveraging infrastructure strategies, plans, and funds to create demand and to focus on future needs and sustainability.
- 2. Use collaborative governance models to ensure that workforce development programs can satisfy demand** that is centered on individuals and families rather than the agencies or levels of government that provide the services and recognizes that many employment decisions are made locally.
- 3. Improve connections between job seekers and employers by streamlining the employment pipeline** by coordinating the many existing and developing new educational programs to create a continuous ladder of workforce development from high school to graduate school, or from high school through increasingly demanding technical credentials.
- 4. Expand national service programs**, like the Peace Corps and the Cooperation for National and Community Service, by increasing the number of available positions; enhancing the compensation and benefits; and enhancing cross-sector collaboration in coordinating and delivering these programs.
- 5. Develop a longer-term strategy to enhance social equity and meaningful work** and coordinate social safety net programs with the implementation of long-term workforce development actions.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans: An Agenda for 2020.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans](#)

[The Academy: Round Table on Connecting Individuals to Meaningful Work](#)

[GAO: Employment and Training Programs: Department of Labor Should Assess Efforts to Coordinate Services Across Programs](#)

[GAO: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: States and Local Areas Report Progress in Meeting Youth Program Requirements](#)



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Building a Stronger Fiscal Foundation: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Advance the Nation's Fiscal Health

Background

The United States faces serious current and long-term fiscal challenges at every level of government. The Covid-19 pandemic has already added to, and will continue to add to, the stresses on the fiscal system. In FY 2020, the Congressional Budget Office projects a deficit of \$3.3 trillion and debt to equal 98% of GDP. In the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, it is essential that the government is put on a responsible fiscal path which addresses deficit spending, programs driven by an aging population, and the failure of the revenue base to keep up with growth in debt.

The Challenge: Advancing the Nation's Fiscal Health

The pressure of long-term structural fiscal trends at all levels of government makes it more difficult to invest in the future. With a larger portion of government budgets going to interest payments on previously accumulated debts and legacy entitlement programs, it will be more difficult to find the resources needed to meet future needs.

Recommendations for 2021

1. **Fix a broken federal budgeting process** by adopting a four-year strategic plan where the federal government articulates, anticipates, and budgets for its crisis finance and management roles.
2. Achieve **fiscal sustainability** by flattening the debt growth curve and planning for future shocks by implementing an intergenerational debt relief surcharge and a budget policy of planning for fiscal emergencies.
3. Adopt **investments criteria** that optimize an asset's long-term performance by defining a standardized life-cycle cost analysis, developing comprehensive asset management strategies, and leveraging new technology.
4. **Enhance financial management and controls** by expanding the use of accrual accounting, tightening controls over obligations, and giving federal agencies opportunities to contribute toward fiscal health.
5. Build **fiscally sound intergovernmental partnerships and when the economy recovers**, federal aid can shift from providing funds to leveraging state, local, and private funding.
6. Continued **federal intervention in the economy in response to Coronavirus** through legislation and monetary policy.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Building a Stronger Fiscal Foundation: An Agenda for 2021.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Building a Stronger Fiscal Foundation](#)

[The Academy: When Precedent Isn't a Guidepost: State and Local Budgets in the COVID 19 Era](#)

[The Academy: Virtual Roundtable on Fiscal Health](#)

[GAO Report: THE NATION'S FISCAL HEALTH: Actions Needed to Achieve Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability](#)

[GAO Report: Federal Trust Funds and Other Dedicated Funds: Fiscal Sustainability is a Growing Concern for Some Key Funds](#)



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Building a Stronger Fiscal Foundation: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Advance the Nation's Fiscal Health

Background

The United States faces serious current and long-term fiscal challenges at every level of government. The Covid-19 pandemic has already added to, and will continue to add to, the stresses on the fiscal system. In FY 2020, the Congressional Budget Office projects a deficit of \$3.3 trillion and debt to equal 98% of GDP. In the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, it is essential that the government is put on a responsible fiscal path which addresses deficit spending, programs driven by an aging population, and the failure of the revenue base to keep up with growth in debt.

The Challenge: Advancing the Nation's Fiscal Health

The pressure of long-term structural fiscal trends at all levels of government makes it more difficult to invest in the future. With a larger portion of government budgets going to interest payments on previously accumulated debts and legacy entitlement programs, it will be more difficult to find the resources needed to meet future needs.

Recommendations for 2021

1. **Fix a broken federal budgeting process** by adopting a four-year strategic plan where the federal government articulates, anticipates, and budgets for its crisis finance and management roles.
2. Achieve **fiscal sustainability** by flattening the debt growth curve and planning for future shocks by implementing an intergenerational debt relief surcharge and a budget policy of planning for fiscal emergencies.
3. Adopt **investments criteria** that optimize an asset's long-term performance by defining a standardized life-cycle cost analysis, developing comprehensive asset management strategies, and leveraging new technology.
4. **Enhance financial management and controls** by expanding the use of accrual accounting, tightening controls over obligations, and giving federal agencies opportunities to contribute toward fiscal health.
5. Build **fiscally sound intergovernmental partnerships and when the economy recovers**, federal aid can shift from providing funds to leveraging state, local, and private funding.
6. Continued **federal intervention in the economy in response to Coronavirus** through legislation and monetary policy.

Additional Resources

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Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change

Background

As a nation, we have made significant progress reducing air and water pollution, managing waste materials, and preserving threatened species. In the early 1970s, Congress enacted the modern environmental legal system that delivered these changes from which we currently benefit, and now we must determine how best to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Given the litany of disasters in late summer 2020—including wild fires, hurricanes, and rising sea levels and temperatures—it is more important than ever that we rise to the occasion. All of these disparate disasters are related to climate change and changing ecosystems, and the nation needs to take more aggressive measures to address them.

The Challenge: Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change

As the nation's industry and population grow, it is critical that the public, nonprofit, and private sectors effectively steward natural resources and protect the environment for ourselves and future generations. America's natural resources—including our public lands—are a rich heritage that have made enormous contributions to our economy, health, environment, and society.

Recommendations for 2021

1. Optimize and expand federal research and demonstration on climate solutions and technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Embrace natural infrastructure as a key contributor to climate research.
3. Coordinate and expedite renewable energy siting decisions to accelerate decarbonization of the power sector, including a focus on siting on degrading lands.
4. Undertake a national effort to enhance forest health to build resilience to wildfire, enhance natural carbon storage, and strengthen habitats.
5. Improve federal coordination across federal agencies with states, tribes, and local governments.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 Paper, *Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change: An Agenda for 2021*

[The Academy: Election 2020: Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable: Steward Natural Resources and Address Climate Change](#)

[The Academy: New Systems of Governance are Needed to Address Climate Change](#)

[GAO: Climate Resilience: A Strategic Investment Approach for High-Priority Projects Could Help Target Federal Resources](#)

[GAO: Climate Change: Analysis of Reported Federal Funding](#)

[GAO: Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks](#)



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Enhancing Water Delivery and Waste Water Systems in the United States: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Create Modern Water Systems for Safe and Sustainable Use

Background

Across the nation, America needs collaboration from all levels of government to address the pressing issues of climate change and create new water plans to ensure safe drinking water and efficient distribution of water to industry, agriculture, and the general public. Clean water across every community is essential to improving Americans' health, achieving social equity, and for developing the economy. Leadership at the federal level is necessary to ensure the standards for clean water are applied at the state and local level and to accelerate the adoption of new technologies and tools.

The Challenge: Create Modern Water Systems for Safe and Sustainable Use: Climate change, aging infrastructure, and dated governance and management structures have combined to undermine the safety and sustainability of America's water systems. In recent years, many parts of the country have experienced drought, leading states to limit the amount of water that can be used for agricultural purposes.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Collaborate with other levels of government** to make short- and long-term decisions for water delivery and waste water systems and to take advantage of the experience that other levels of government bring.
- 2. Connect issues of water quality and water supply to national infrastructure challenges**, mainly the aging water systems.
- 3. Incorporate water in social equity goals** and set goals for community and demographic access to clean sanitation and drinking water, establish an intergovernmental strategy, and track the nation's progress.
- 4. Strengthen the water supply and water treatment workforce through an overall water workforce initiative for current and future needs.**

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *Enhancing Water Delivery and Waste Water Systems in the United States: An Agenda for 2021*

[The Academy: Election 2020: Enhancing Water Delivery and Waste Water Systems in the United States](#)

[The Academy: Roundtable on Creating Modern Water Systems for Safe and Sustainable Use](#)

[EPA: EPA Proposes 2020 Financial Capability Assessment for Water Services in Disadvantaged Communities](#)

[GAO: Water Infrastructure: Technical Assistance and Climate Resilience Planning Could Help Utilities Plan for Potential Climate Change Impacts](#)

[GAO: Alternative Drinking Water Systems: Use by Very Small Communities, Related Cost Savings, and Technical Assistance Provided by EPA and USDA](#)



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Data Privacy and Security: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Ensure Data Security and Privacy Rights of Individuals

Background

In the digital age, where Americans are producing huge amounts of data on a daily basis, they need assurance that all sectors will keep their personal data private and safeguarded from abuse. However, the data security infrastructure is vulnerable to exploitations, hacks, and breaches and these threats, although widely recognized, have gone largely unaddressed.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Create a presidential commission on privacy and security** that engages the US population in a long-term dialogue on data privacy and security.
- 2. Create a workforce advisory commission on cybersecurity and privacy** that addresses the urgent and growing skills crisis in the IT workforce for data privacy and security.
- 3. Develop and implement a policy framework to protect data security and individual privacy** that enacts standards to protect consumer online data and a comprehensive national data privacy law to protect consumers and foster innovation and economic growth and builds on the large-scale initiative, the Cyberspace Solarium Commission.
- 4. Build on current efforts in the Cross-Agency Priority goals related directly to privacy and security: IT Modernization and Data, Accountability and Transparency.**

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Data Privacy and Security: An Agenda for 2021.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Data Privacy and Security](#)

[The Academy: Ensuring Data Security and Individual Privacy](#)

[The Academy: Is it Time for a National Digital Bill of Rights?](#)

[The Academy: Virtual Roundtable on Data](#)

[The Academy: How Government Gets it Right on Privacy](#)

[The Academy: Could the Government Help Use Protect Our Data?](#)

[U.S. Cyberspace Solarium Commission](#)

The Challenge: Ensure Data Security and Privacy Rights of Individuals

In the digital age, the American people knowingly and unknowingly produce huge amounts of data on a daily basis, and governments at all levels increasingly rely on digital systems to manage their internal operations and deliver public services. Through widespread e-commerce, ubiquitous GPS maps, and regular social media interactions, the public transmits their sensitive financial, health, and other personal information through online platforms.





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Artificial Intelligence: An Agenda for 2020

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Make Government AI Ready

Background

The public sector in the U.S. is at the beginning of a long-term journey to develop and harness AI tools. Although AI in the public sector can yield numerous benefits—including improving customer service and efficiency—it also raises concerns about bias, security, and transparency. In 2020, AI is being driven by advancements in algorithms; increases in computing speed and power; abilities to digest information, store and retrieve data, and to “self-learn”; and advancements in artificial speech recognition. While AI continues to move forward, a majority of Americans agree that these advancements need to be carefully managed.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Build trustworthy AI** by establishing a single, authoritative, and recognized federal entity that focuses on AI’s social, cultural, and political effects and leverages existing investments to create guidance and solutions.
- 2. Use ethical frameworks to identify and reduce bias in AI** by demonstrating a federal government commitment to ethical principles and standards in AI development and use.
- 3. Build intergovernmental partnerships and knowledge sharing around public sector uses of AI** by developing an interagency and intergovernmental mechanism that addresses the need to share practices between different levels of government, incentivizes and stimulates broader AI adoption, and addresses gaps in readiness to build an AI workforce for all levels of government.
- 4. Increase investments in AI research and translation of research to practice** by increasing public access to federal government data, increasing by at least 50% investment into unclassified AI research, ensuring the protection of privacy at the individual level, and removing biases from programming to ensure equitable treatment.
- 5. Build and AI ready workforce** by providing funding to support the growth of an AI competent federal workforce, develop policies and fund incentives that encourage the AI R&D to use multidisciplinary teams, and support studies to increase understanding of current and future national workforce needs for AI R&D.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Artificial Intelligence: An Agenda for 2020.

[The Academy: Election 2020 Paper: Make Government AI Ready](#)

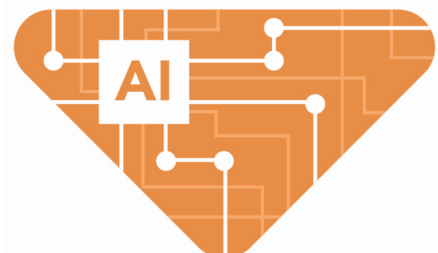
[GAO Report: Artificial Intelligence: Emerging Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications for Policy and Research](#)

[White House Memorandum: Guidance for Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Applications](#)

[DOD Release: DOD Adopts Ethical Principles for Artificial Intelligence](#)

The Challenge: Make Government AI Ready

Artificial Intelligence (AI) allows computerized systems to perform tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence: analytics, decision support, visual perception, and foreign language translation. AI and Robotics Process Automation (RPA) have the potential to spur economic growth, enhance national security, and improve the quality of life. In a world of “Big Data” and “Thick Data,” AI tools can process huge amounts of data in seconds, automating tasks that would take days or longer for human beings to perform.



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