**Transforming Public Institutions Session 1 - Wednesday, July 9, 2025**

**Quick recap**

The meeting opened with introductions and discussions about the Academy's mission to transform government through policy evaluation and institutional reform. Participants explored challenges in governance, including the need for fundamental redesign of government structures and addressing issues like wealth concentration and public education failures. The group concluded by discussing potential solutions such as regional government reorganization, the importance of trust in government, and the need for effective communication of science to the public, with plans for a follow-up session in late September.

**Next steps**

* Academy Leadership: Position the Academy to actively promote and pursue reform initiatives rather than just dialogue
* Academy Team: Develop a framework for implementing regional governance structures based on the discussion and feedback received
* Academy Team: Create a focused approach to address specific public administration challenges rather than broad systemic issues
* Academy Team: Continue development of the extreme weather resilience hub concept
* Academy Fellows: Send feedback and reactions about the meeting discussion to John Kirlin, Mark Pisano, and Rich Callahan before the next session
* Academy Leadership Team: Schedule and send invitations for the next session planned for late summer
* Academy Team: Create a web page to post the AI-generated meeting summary

**Summary**

**Meeting Attendance and Technical Setup**

James Christian opened the meeting, expressing gratitude to attendees and thanking Mark and Jane Pisano, John Kirlin, Rich Callahan, and the Academy team for their contributions.

**Government Transformation Academy Mission**

James-Christian outlined the Academy's mission to transform government by evaluating policies, assessing programming, and advising on corrective actions to build more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. He emphasized the need to move beyond reform to transformation, highlighting the importance of equipping the Academy with the necessary tools and mechanisms to address societal challenges. John Kirlin discussed the Academy's broad charter and the focus on public governance institutions, which shape collective decision-making and action. Rich introduced the session's objectives, including exploring challenges in governance and inviting insights from Academy fellows to contribute to ongoing efforts.

**Government Design for Post-Trump Era**

The group discussed the need to reconsider government design in light of post-Trump era changes, with Attendee1 suggesting that the nation's structure may be 150 years behind times and requiring fundamental redesign. Attendee2 proposed five key areas for new government design: clarifying purpose, establishing accountability, promoting desired performance, delegating power, and developing institutional culture. The discussion highlighted concerns about democratic despotism and the impact of social media on divided worldviews, with Attendee3 emphasizing the need to address these challenges while maintaining constitutional principles.

**Institutional Reform and Wealth Generation**

The group discussed institutional reforms and the need to link them to fundamental questions, with John Kirlin presenting a framework of inputs, outputs, and outcomes to make sense of the issues. They explored voter dissatisfaction across democratic nations and the constraints of public finances, with Kirlin emphasizing the importance of designing institutions to generate wealth and address resource limitations. The conversation touched on the Declaration of Independence and the need to reframe approaches, with suggestions to consider splitting up the US as a potential solution to current institutional challenges.

**Addressing Oligarch Influence and Reform**

Attendee4 discussed the growing anger in the United States due to wealth concentration and lack of opportunity, attributing it to the influence of a few wealthy individuals. He emphasized that addressing these underlying issues is crucial for reform efforts in government institutions. Attendee5 agreed with Attendee4’s analysis, citing a book from Singapore that highlights the problem of oligarchs exploiting populism. Attendee2 provided examples of government failures in Minnesota, such as low reading proficiency among children and poor environmental quality, suggesting that blaming the oligarchs alone is insufficient.

**Government Reform and Regional Solutions**

The group discussed government failures and potential solutions, with Attendee2 emphasizing the importance of information and education as renewable resources for building a future. John Kirlin highlighted the poor performance of the public education system, particularly affecting central city schools. Attendee6, a political science professor, suggested examining the structures of government and considering the potential reorganization of the Federal Government into regions. Attendee7 proposed that NAPA should identify itself with promoting and pursuing reforms, while Attendee8 supported exploring regional governments as a way to address common problems that neither local, state, nor federal governments seem to be able to handle effectively.

**Government Innovation and Accountability Trends**

The group discussed government transformation and innovation, with Attendee9 emphasizing the importance of government effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability, while Mark presented examples of emerging substate institutions and permissive legislation in states like Maryland and California. They noted a 4,000% increase in multi-purpose districts and highlighted how homeowners' associations, business development districts, and other entities are taking on traditional government services. The discussion touched on the need to better measure outcomes and promote performance in government operations.

**Trust and Risk in Government**

Attendee11 emphasized the importance of trust in government, highlighting that people trust those who follow through on their promises. She suggested focusing on local government to address issues and proposed the concept of "hubs" as a strategy to pilot changes in specific areas. Attendee12 discussed the need to understand changing risk preferences in extreme weather events and shared examples of successful state and local approaches to managing such risks. The group agreed on the importance of addressing the "why" behind government actions and the need to communicate science effectively to the public.

**Academy's Leadership in Public Reform**

James-Christian praised the insightful discussion and emphasized the need for the Academy to position itself as a leader in promoting reform and addressing public administration challenges. He highlighted the importance of focusing on actionable steps, considering regional and intergovernmental structures, and recognizing the ongoing transformation in the field. John Kirlin announced plans for a follow-up session in late September and encouraged participants to provide feedback via email to John, Mark, and Rich before the next meeting.