The Field Guide
To the Journey
to Success

By: William D Eggers, Deloitte Research and
John O’Leary, Harvard Kennedy School
THE JOURNEY TO SUCCESS
IDEA PHASE

The challenge in the idea stage is to break free of bias and invite new voices into the idea generation and selection process.

**Biggest Danger**

The Tolstoy Syndrome. Also known as confirmation bias, it means looking only at evidence that confirms your view of the world.

**Guiding Principles**

Fight confirmation bias. Embrace the ethos of the scientific method. Don’t ignore data that contradicts your preconceived notions. Actively test your idea with skeptics. Be data driven, and eschew policy making by ideology.

Find the right, diverse people: Look to other fields and disciplines. Subject matter experts should be joined with systems thinkers and other smart people with diverse interests—artists, scientists, and engineers. If your problem is in transportation, ask, How can I involve nontransportation people in my problem? An interdisciplinary team might include management consultants, investment bankers, and anthropologists.

Expand the idea pool. The technologies of Web 2.0 make it easier than ever to tap into the potential of large numbers of “experts”—the customers and workers closest to the problem.

Reach across boundaries. There are no such things as Republican ideas or Democratic ideas. An idea doesn’t care if it came from an economist, a public manager, or a politician.

Find areas of agreement. Can’t agree on a solution? Bring opponents together to agree on data. Make sure you understand the concerns of others. Listen. Role play and articulate the views of others until they know you understand their position.

Shift from position bargaining to interest bargaining. Have stakeholders illustrate their view of what stands in the way of the solution. This will help to surface some of the assumptions and preconceptions people bring with them.

**Tools and Techniques**

Transform data to information. Find skilled professionals who know how to move up the cognitive food chain—from data to information, from information to knowledge, from knowledge to wisdom.

Construct an idea-generating environment. Create opportunities to encourage wild ideas, sketches, and novel scenarios. An approach such as Deloitte Consulting LLP’s “Deep Dive,” for example (search for “Deep Dive” on www.deloitte.com), is a group facilitation technique that combines brainstorming, prototyping, and role playing to help generate solutions for specific challenges. Design firm IDEO also thoughtfully structures ways to foster ideation. (You’ll learn more about the firm in the next chapter; you can also visit www.ideo.com.)

Look for the opposite of an idea. Find someone getting the results you want, and then work backward. Prototype and let “end users” surprise you. Visit the X PRIZE Foundation (www.xprize.org).
**IDEA PHASE (cont’d)**

**Assertive inquiry.** A technique for breaking people out of their preexisting mental models. Participants are encouraged to adopt the worldview of others (at least temporarily) in an effort to discover insights that would have been missed. Explains author Roger Martin: “Its aim is to learn about the salient data and causal maps baked into another person’s model, then use the insight gained to fashion a creative resolution of the conflict between that person’s model and your own.” (Read: The Opposable Mind by Roger L. Martin.)

**Web 2.0.** Seek ideas from customers, staff, and citizens using Web 2.0 technologies. Let the best ideas rise to the top through organization-wide voting and then have leadership select the best of the lot. Use the wisdom of the crowds as a way of testing your predispositions. (Read Wikinomics by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams and The Wisdom of Crowds by James Surowiecki.)

**Get ideas from partners.** Give the problem to someone else to solve. Let your network of partners, both governmental and nongovernmental, help to develop new solutions to old problems. (Read “Connect and Develop: Inside Procter & Gamble’s New Model for Innovation,” by Larry Huston and Nabil Sakkab, in the March 2006 Harvard Business Review, and visit www.pgconnectdevelop.com.)

**Get out of your office.** Change the physical space. Talk to users. If you’re working on recycling policy, go visit a smelter. Talk to the truck driver who delivers scrap metal. Read chapter 1 of Tom Kelley’s book The Ten Faces of Innovation. The chapter argues that good design requires more people to think and act like anthropologists. Use mash-ups. Combine ideas from unrelated fields to create new solutions—free-market environmentalism, for example, to promote acid rain reduction. Another mash-up is Virtual Alabama, which merged Google Earth 3-D visualization tools with emergency response data to create a state-of-the-art disaster response system (www.virtual.alabama.gov). Still another example: applying the process mapping tool of the manufacturing assembly line to public policy—as this book does.

**Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)**

For further reading, we recommend Big Think Strategy: How to Leverage Bold Ideas and Leave Small Thinking Behind by Bernd H. Schmitt; How to Get Ideas by Jack Foster; The Public Innovator’s Playbook by William D. Eggers and Shalabh Singh; and Solutions for the World’s Biggest Problems by Bjorn Lomborg. How We Decide by Jonah Lehrer is a terrific book on the science of decision making that includes an interesting discussion on confirmation bias. For ideas worth spreading, millions of people a month from all around the world visit www.Ted.com, which features wide-ranging talks from the world’s most fascinating thinkers and doers on ideas that could change the way we live.
The challenge in the design stage is to treat it as a design process, not a bill-drafting exercise. It is difficult, but work to bring designers and implementers together.

**Biggest Danger**

**The Design-Free Design Trap.** Bill drafting is substituted for design. As a consequence, policy ideas go straight from the idea stage through the legislature, without being subjected to the exacting design process that occurs in the private sector.

**Guiding Principles**

**Think design, not legislation.** Too often, those drafting a bill are thinking only about what they can get passed. You should also be thinking about implementation and recognize that your “bill” is really a blueprint for the bureaucracy.

**Involve implementers.** Good implementation cannot save a poor design. Policy implementers who faithfully execute a flawed design will end up next to a pile of rubble. By the time the bill is passed, the bureaucrats who will have to actually implement your bill should be your new best friends.

**Don’t confuse good intentions with good design.** No one cares about how high-minded your design is if it doesn’t work in the real world. No Child Left Behind sounds nice, but it failed to produce the anticipated results. Use a variety of design techniques to obtain information about how your idea will work in practice.

**Probe for design weaknesses.** Assign someone to shoot holes in the design at an early stage. If someone isn’t looking for the weaknesses during the design phase, rest assured people will be finding weaknesses in your policy after it is launched—with far more serious consequences. (Think Enron.) Design review makes sense at the building department, and it makes sense at the legislature.

**PROBE for DESIGN WEAKNESSES**
**Tools and Techniques**

**Failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA).** Charge a team with answering the question, “How is this going to fail?” Have someone other than the designers poke holes and search for flaws.

**Prototype if possible.** Fail fast and fail small. Test and retest your design through multiple small-scale trials with real users. Use the real-world unanticipated feedback from prototyping to adjust your design in real time.

**Put on your scammer hat.** Role-play how those affected by your new system might exploit potential design flaws to their benefit. Scammers can come from anywhere. New rules will generate new behaviors. Try to imagine how certain unscrupulous individuals within the affected population might try to exploit the new system for their benefit.

**Develop a robust business case.** Formal articulation of the intended goals, intended benefits, and expected costs of any initiative can help focus the design process and bill drafting. It also helps limit scope creep.

**Do some “preengineering.”** Show how the new system you have designed will work—or not work—in the real world, through flow charting. Use process mapping to uncover duplication, overlap, and needless complexity in design. (It’s just like reengineering except it is done during design.)

**Change the psychic terrain.** If you do all of your designing within the political stew of a legislature—with the associated lobbyists, partisan politics, and horse trading—your design is likely to reflect political imperatives, not design imperatives.

**Stakeholder consultation.** Consult with a diverse range of stakeholders during the design phase. Don’t just talk to the usual suspects who perennially line up on either side of the issue.

**Apply a design skill review.** Do you have anyone who has ever conducted a failure mode and effects analysis? Engaged in a product manufacturability review? Been trained in Six Sigma, statistics, or design for execution? If the answers are no, then you need to figure out how to bring such skills into the policy design and bill-drafting process—whether by borrowing, recruiting, or contracting for them.

**Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)**

For further reading we recommend Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty—a fascinating look at how the inclusion of a single phrase, “maximum feasible participation,” created an implementation nightmare for a major federal program. This book also dispels the notion that our execution difficulties are anything new, and shows the interplay of politics in the design and implementation phases of a major undertaking. Improving Program Design is a useful workbook from the National Performance Review (http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/reports/pddc.html). A great resource on design thinking is IDEO, a leading industrial design firm (www.ideo.com). Read The Ten Faces of Innovation and The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America’s Leading Design Firm by IDEO’s Tom Kelley. Obtain a copy of IDEO’s “Methods Decks,” a collection of fifty-one cards representing diverse design methods used by IDEO (www.ideo.com/work/item/method-cards). Another resource on design thinking is Stanford University’s Institute of Design (www.dschool.stanford.edu).
STARGATE PHASE

The Stargate Trap isn’t something you avoid; it’s something you get through. For this most unpredictable phase in the journey, the challenge is to get through with your integrity intact, your idea recognizable, and a design that can actually be implemented.

Biggest Danger
The Stargate Trap. The biggest dangers are the distorting, and sometimes lethal, effects of the dangerous political terrain of the Stargate itself. You run the risk of the idea never making it through the Stargate or being so distorted that the initiative will never achieve the intended results.

Guiding Principles
Hold on to your integrity. The Stargate is the essence of democracy—both good and bad. The best and worst of democracy are right in front of the Stargate. It is where the statesmen prevent bad ideas from going through but also where all the unsavory characters hang out: the special interests, the log rollers, the horse traders. Avoid the temptation to sacrifice your principles to get something through.

Maintain the integrity of your idea. Don’t sacrifice your principles to get your idea through. There is a temptation to water down an idea to get it through Stargate, but what is gained?

Be ready to champion change. Democracy is designed to limit big change. Work through all the things that could go wrong during the legislative process. Develop strategies to counteract each scenario and be prepared to make a public case.

• Take it to the people: The Stargate is heavily guarded. Those in power are often beneficiaries of the status quo who will resist change. If you can win the hearts and minds of the people, legislators will take heed, and change will follow.

• Steer the debate: The Japanese postal reform drama was staged as a play, “Koizumi Theater.” Koizumi was the producer, the director, the writer, and the star of the play. The Assassins were the heroes, a charming group of characters. The old-guard politicians were the villains. Would the good of postal privatization triumph over the evil of entrenched interests? That was up to the audience, the voters. Koizumi’s exceptional sense of stagecraft helped him to control the conversation from the day he announced the snap election to the day he won a resounding victory six weeks later.

• Don’t rush or force an idea through Stargate before you’ve achieved consensus. If you go to war by executive order—that is, without a declaration or resolution—it can be infinitely harder to execute, because if things get tough, the Congress might abandon you. When Boston implemented busing through a court order, it made things infinitely harder because the executive players weren’t in alignment and weren’t ready to execute the plan.

• Don’t stifle debate. See the Stargate not just as a barrier on the way to getting something done but as a part of the democratic process. In the long run, the civil debate that takes place is critical to being able to achieve what you really want done. It is much more difficult to execute an unpopular exercise, such as the Vietnam War, when there hasn’t been a true democratic commitment.
Tools and Techniques

Articulate your deal breakers. Every dog has fleas, and every law has flaws. What principles are essential? What aspects of reform are negotiable? What are the nonnegotiables that will cause you to walk away from your own bill?

Get “sticky.” Those opposed to the 2005 comprehensive immigration bill had a short, simple message that resonated with voters: we don’t reward lawbreakers in America. Proponents had position papers and economic statistics. Guess who won? (For more information, read Made to Stick, by Chip and Dan Heath.)

Encourage public debate. From the Lincoln-Douglas debates to the less grand NAFTA debate between Al Gore and Ross Perot on Larry King Live, public discourse is the lifeblood of democracy. Require a workability assessment. Require an “implementability” assessment before a bill passes from the political realm to the bureaucratic world. Are the timelines realistic? Is the funding sufficient? In Canada, departments coming forward to the cabinet with new program proposals are required to detail the implementation implications of their proposals (as opposed to simply coming forward with a new program proposal—and funding request—with only a broad implementation plan).

Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)

Study the art of political statesmanship. Read Profiles in Courage, by John F. Kennedy; Path to Power, by Robert Caro; Going Public, by Samuel Kernell (profiles how Reagan pushed through his tax cuts); and The System: The American Way of Politics at the Breaking Point, by Haynes Johnson and David Broder.
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The challenge at the implementation phase is clear: make it happen, on time and on budget, and produce the desired results. A good start is critical, since you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Biggest Danger

The Overconfidence Trap. In the public sector, everything is harder than it seems. Overconfidence—the congenital unrealistic optimism of the political realm—makes the job harder. If you embrace the possibility of failure, you can take steps to reduce its likelihood.

Guiding Principles

Establish clear ownership. Who is the high-level political sponsor? Who is the day-to-day manager? Everybody knew that Derek Turner was in charge of congestion charging. No one knew, at any given moment, exactly who was in charge of what in postwar Iraq.

Make a great first impression. You get only one chance to make a good first impression. Day one of congestion charging in London was serene. Day one of freedom in Iraq meant looting at the National Museum.

Be realistic. Take a hard look at the resources, time, and costs needed to execute the initiative. Fight the political pressure to produce unrealistically rosy projects and time lines. Assign a dedicated team. It is unrealistic to ask people with major current responsibilities to do the job. It either won’t get done or won’t get done right.

Reduce opposition. Mayor Ken Livingstone bought off political opposition with road projects and small changes, like ending the charge at 6:30 at night instead of 7:00 to appease West End theater owners. In contrast, the de-Baathification order and dissolution of the Iraqi Army generated opposition—much of it armed.

Manage expectations. Livingstone set expectations low. In contrast, overly optimistic pronouncements (“Mission accomplished”) from the Bush administration led to disappointment.

Embrace the risk of failure. And take steps to avoid it. Bring a design perspective to program design. To one extent or another, those doing the implementation will have a certain amount of discretion with respect to building a program based on the legislative blueprint provided. Make sure to bring a design perspective when making implementation choices.
Tools and Techniques

Embrace the project management mindset. Gantt charts, Microsoft Project, task lists—you need people with the skills to use the tools that manage implementation. These are some of the key activities of the project management discipline:

- **Task and milestone management**: Set your goals, time lines, and key milestones/achievements.
- **Stakeholder management**: Accurately identify stakeholders and their needs, set expectations appropriately, and work to meet needs and expectations.
- **Change management**: Develop transition strategy and change management to increase program support and adoption.
- **Technical management**: Almost all implementations involve technology. Use what you need, but avoid “gee-whiz” and “bleeding edge” technologies.
- **Risk mapping**: Use this tool use to identify, evaluate, and prioritize a group of risks that could significantly influence the success of a given initiative. By plotting the significance and likelihood of the risk occurring, the map allows you to visualize risks in relation to each other, gauge their extent, and plan what type of controls should be implemented to mitigate the risks.

**Set up a war room.** Take a cue from many successful initiatives and set up a war room to manage your implementation. Avoid the box-checking tendency of many project management organizations. Having a war room like the congestion pricing initiative had forces you to have clear ownership.

**Scenario plan.** Don’t just plan, scenario plan. Maybe nobody’s going to jump off the Tower Bridge, and maybe a storm won’t blow in on Mount Washington. But you need to be ready in case they do. Indiana Jones always expects the unexpected, so should you.

**Segment your customers.** Break up the universe of potential customers into manageable segments with similar characteristics. Done right, segmentation involves data-driven analysis of the customer universe, based on surveys, focus groups, and test marketing that cover almost all aspects of product delivery.

**Chunk your projects.** Government projects are often huge—much larger and more complex than in the private sector. Chunking initiatives into bite-sized pieces reduces risk by making challenges smaller and less complex. It also enhances organizational learning because later phases of a project can learn from the earlier ones. Some tasks, of course, just don’t chunk. You can’t leap a six foot chasm in a series of one foot jumps.

**Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)**

For further reading, we recommend Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It’s Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All, by Aaron Wildavsky and Jeffrey Pressman. A classic in this genre, the authors delve into the complexity of real-world government implementation. We also suggest Executing Your Strategy, by Mark Morgan, Raymond E. Levitt, and William Malek, and Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk, by Peter L. Bernstein—the classic book on the history of risk and risk management. Connecting the Dots by Cathleen Benko and Warren McFarlan is a good resource on project management. Another good resource is the Project Management Institute (www.pmi.org). With more than 250,000 members, it is the world’s largest organization of project managers.
The problem of getting big things done in government isn’t merely a systems problem. It isn’t merely a policy problem. It’s a human problem as well. It is critical to remember that we are asking real people to do difficult things within a challenging environment. If your effort involves changing people’s behaviors, double that. Results are a consequence of the systems of government and the interaction of the people in government with those systems.

**Biggest Danger**

The Sisyphus Trap. People fall into this trap by failing to comprehend the special challenges of the public sector terrain and how human factors—attitude, effort, desire—can make or break an effort. When a program seeks to change people’s behaviors, the Double Sisyphus Trap comes into play.

**Guiding Principles**

Understand the terrain. The public sector hill is steeper than the private sector hill. To make a difference in government means operating within a sometimes bureaucratic system laden with rules, some of them sensible, many of them not.

Focus on the mission. Having an inspiring mission may be the most important competitive advantage in government. As with the Apollo program, mission can inspire people to achieve amazing results. Emphasize the importance of what you are doing. People want to make a difference. Apollo engineers worked long hours because they were passionate about the mission. Any undertaking of any significance requires that the organization be aligned to the mission.

Incentives matter. Self-interest is part of human nature. Performance incentives, award ceremonies, recognition—they make a difference. The lack of built-in incentives and feedback, however, makes it harder to get results in government.

Be cognizant of culture. Think twice before asking an organization to work outside its cultural comfort zone. One mismatch, for example, is when social workers are asked to be “enforcers,” in essence turning in their clients.

Bridge the political-bureaucratic divide. This requires a leader who can interface between the different worlds—the rare person who can translate the bureaucratic language to politicians and tell the political masters when they are off course. These “bridgers” are critical to execution in government but highly undervalued today.

**Tools and Techniques**

The key tools for overcoming the Sisyphus Trap involve people and technology—skillfully managing contractors, your own employees, and relationships with legislators and citizens.

Know the people doing the work. Data is important, but getting to know the people in the trenches will foster a different understanding of the challenge ahead. Get out of the office and work the phones, work the line, work something. Attitude is everything.

Invest in your people, develop your people. Government is notorious for underinvesting in the productive capacity of its workers. Training in the tools of process management and change management is a good start. Programs aimed at developing a deep competency can help groom the “bridgers” needed to bridge the political and bureaucratic realms over time. One example: the British Civil Service’s Fast Stream program where the best and brightest are exposed to a series of intensive job placements designed to prepare them for senior managerial positions.
RESULTS PHASE (cont’d)

Cultural transformation toolkit. Systems you use to manage your workforce have a huge influence on employee attitudes. Civil service systems, union rules, and retirement structures have a huge impact on the public sector workforce and getting big things done. Tools to transform include:

- **Cultural assessment**: This type of survey is distributed widely across an organization to identify the organization’s core beliefs and values—both those currently present and those that are desired.
- **Change readiness assessment**: This tool helps quickly assess organizational strengths and challenges to change with respect to leadership, workforce, structure, and process.
- **Flexible retirement approaches**: Greater flexibility in retirement packages allows workers to choose the time when it makes sense for them to stay or move on, and makes it easier to attract young talent.
- **Project-based flexible staffing**: Skills repositories provide information on the skills and capabilities of employees. These can help managers match skills to employees based on their expertise and availability and help to manage project performance.

Network governance. As both the NASA and Wisconsin stories demonstrate, government executives’ core responsibilities no longer center on managing people and programs but on organizing resources, often belonging to others, in order to produce public value. Unfortunately, governments regularly underinvest in contract oversight, and contractors continually underestimate the complexity of the government environment, especially the cultural challenges. See Governing by Network by Stephen Goldsmith and William D. Eggers for tools and techniques to facilitate networks and complex partnerships.

Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)

For further reading we recommend Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes Are Enacted, by Eric M. Patashnik—a great book that shows how many big reform initiatives are eroded over time during the results phase. To avoid this fate, reformers need to consolidate political support and reconfigure the political dynamic. Two more for your reading list: The Next Government of the United States, by Donald Kettl (his chapter equating the skills needed to succeed in government today to those of a rocket scientist is a must-read for managers trying to achieve big things in today’s networked government environment), and The People Factor: Strengthening America by Investing in Public Service, by Linda J. Bilmes and W. Scott Gould. Other good resources include the National Academy of Public Administration Management Studies Center (www.napawash.org/pc_management_studies/index.html) and Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG; http://www.anzso.gov.au/). A collaborative project of a half dozen universities, this terrific educational institution is dedicated to promoting outstanding public sector leadership and policy.
RE-EVALUATION PHASE

Sometimes, the way things are stand in the way of how they might be. The challenge here is for government to continually evaluate what it does and how it does it. Right now, nobody owns that job. The result is a government that often tries to do too much, while at the same time fails to respond to the changed reality of its external environment, particularly with respect to risk.

Biggest Danger

The Complacency Trap. Needed change doesn’t happen. Don’t let the way things are become a barrier to what could be.

Guiding Principles

Don’t let “what is” prevent you from trying “things that never were.” What exists today can be both a political and a psychological barrier to what could be. It took Katrina to bring real change to the schools in New Orleans.

Improve your focus—do less, better. Constantly reevaluating what government does and pruning nonessential activities is essential to improving how government operates.

Change the default status. By changing the default from keep to eliminate, the sunset process provides an ongoing mechanism for government to rethink how agencies can best fulfill their obligations.

Ask “what if?” When things are going well, the tendency is to assume that they will continue to go well. To counter this tendency, you need a process that actively creates “what-if” scenarios—tiger teams whose job it is to come up with a range of possible disaster scenarios. Don’t wait for a tragedy to address risk.

Tools and Techniques

Idealized design. Try to imagine the ideal way to accomplish your policy goals, irrespective of how you do things today. Then look backward from where you want to be to where you are today and identify the obstacles to getting to your ideal state. (For more info, see Idealized Design, by Russell Ackoff, Jason Magidson, and Herbert Addison.)

Sunset review. This action-forcing mechanism encourages elimination, reform, and merger. (For more info, see www.sunset.state.tx.us.)

BRAC model. A variant of the sunset review, the Base Realignment and Closure model used an independent commission to recommend military base closures. Congress had to vote up or down on a package of proposals within forty-five days. This process helped to overcome parochial political interests in Congress. Similar thinking could be applied to other areas of government. (For more info, see www.brac.gov.)

Look out for the black swans. Periodic risk analyses can help guard against complacency by identifying big-consequence, hard-to-predict, and rare events. Monitoring metrics for unexplained changes can help to uncover such “black swans” and other hidden risks. (Read The Black Swan, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.)

Strategic options analysis. This tool identifies various strategies across a range of potential futures for the organization. (Read Strategy Paradox, by Michael Raynor.)

Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)

Recommended further reading: The Reinventor’s Fieldbook, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik, and “Executing Government Transformation: Case Studies of Implementation Challenges,” by the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Government. The latter is the output of a year-long research project we engaged in with Professor Kevin Bacon and his class, which resulted in a first-rate report analyzing a handful of government redesign cases (http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/pubs/isbn/089940-777-7). Two great Web sites for information on this subject are the National Governors Association Best Practices Center (www.nga.org/center) and Kennedy School Innovations in American Government Program (www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu).
OVERCOMING THE SILO TRAP

The challenge is to see the journey as an integrated whole and to create alignment, a shared sense of purpose among the various participants through the various stages of an undertaking.

**Biggest Danger**

The Silo Trap. Those who fall into this trap mistake part of the journey for the whole by failing to see the journey to success as an integrated process.

**Guiding Principles**

Articulate your goal. What is the problem you are trying to solve? How will you know when you’re finished? Achieve agreement on a desired future state and a shared commitment to create the future. A clear goal to put a man on the moon helped everyone at NASA to focus their efforts to that end. Unclear goals in postwar Iraq led to role confusion and premature celebration.

Define roles. Know your role. Once people are clear on the goal, the players need to understand how their individual contributions will lead to that goal.

Foster alignment. Promote coordinated effort between participants in different parts of the public sector. Unlike a business initiative, in government there is often no overarching “owner” who oversees the entire journey to success. Different parts of the process report to different political authorities: Congress doesn’t report to the president; mayors don’t report to governors.

Plan for the entire journey. Cover every step of the journey to success. One bad idea, a single design flaw, an implementation error—any weak link in the chain can doom an initiative, just as a few weak levees doomed New Orleans.

Practice your handoffs. The blame game is lots of fun, but the real cause of failure often lurks in hidden, systemic causes—the invisible gaps between the people. When things go wrong, recognize that the process and its many handoffs can generate problems as easily as the people doing the work. Toyota says it gets great results from average people by having better processes than its competitors.
Tools and Techniques

SMART goals. A smart leader articulates a SMART goal (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-based), as President Kennedy did when he urged “achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.” Anybody unclear on that?

Visual reminders. These can help link activities to the end goal and bring purpose to employees’ work. Remember the Rosie the Riveter posters during World War II showing a strong female factory worker flexing her muscles? It helped people to visualize every day how women were helping America and its allies to win World War II.

Process mapping. Map the journey early on, with a big box at the end showing the goal—the hoped-for result. Tools like Gantt charts and Microsoft Project can help. Seeing the journey as a single endeavor can encourage the integration of the political and the bureaucratic, of the designers and the implementers.

Systems thinking. Systems thinking helps in understanding how the structure of complex systems influences the behavior of various participants in a process who are exposed to different information. This book applies a systems-thinking mindset to policy initiatives.

Resources (Books, Web Sites, and Other Cool Stuff)

For further reading, we recommend The Fifth Discipline, by Peter Senge (a classic on systems thinking); Business Dynamics, by John Sterman (a good book on how to apply system dynamics modeling to the analysis of policy and strategy, with a special focus on business and public policy applications); Execution Premium, by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton (presents a six-stage management framework to link strategy and operations; the focus of the book is the private sector but public organizations can also benefit from many of the ideas and tools); and The Four Pillars of High Performance, by Paul Light. Another great resource is the Lean Enterprise Institute (www.lean.org/). Lean thinking is all about looking at the whole process from beginning to end. The Lean Institute has great materials on process mapping, defining value, and seeing the whole from the parts. Read their book: Lean Enterprise Value: Insights from MIT’s Lean Aerospace Initiative.