New Ways to Manage Series

Understanding Innovation:

What Inspires It?

What Makes It Successful?

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Staff Correspondent
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On behalf of The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report by Jonathan Walters, "Understanding Innovation: What Inspires It? What Makes It Successful?"

We wish to thank Gail Christopher, executive director of the Institute for Government Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, for suggesting this study to The Endowment. She thought it would be useful to analyze the characteristics of the more than 300 Innovations in American Government award winners since the Innovations program was created in 1986. We were pleased to recruit Jonathan Walters, staff correspondent for *Governing* magazine, to undertake the study. As a journalist, Walters has had the unique opportunity to interview many Innovations award winners over the years.

The Walters report builds on other research reports supported by The Endowment in recent years. Earlier this year, The Endowment published Sandford Borins's report, "The Challenge of Innovating in Government," which also studied the Kennedy School Innovations in American Government award winners, as well as two other international innovation award programs. Another 2001 report, "Creating a Culture of Innovation: 10 Lessons from America's Best Run City" by Janet Vinzant Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt, examined how Phoenix, Arizona, created a management culture that encourages and fosters innovation among all employees.

This report substantially increases our understanding of what drives innovation in organizations and the elements of successful innovations that have stood the test of time and have been replicated in other government organizations across the nation. We trust that this report will be a useful resource for all government managers and leaders who wish to foster innovation in their organizations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public sector innovation may be considered an oxymoron, but for 15 years the Ford Foundation and John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University have been identifying innovative public sector programs at the state, local, federal, and tribal government levels through the Innovations in American Government Awards program, funded by Ford and administered by the Kennedy School. What the initiatives identified through the program tell us is that despite government's well-deserved reputation for being unfriendly to new ideas and change, government has actually proved to be remarkably—even resiliently—innovative.

But where does innovation come from? What drives people to innovate? And in a political world where program survival is often a matter of having the right political patrons—rather than program results—what characteristics make for sustainable, replicable, results-based innovation?

In analyzing the hundreds of initiatives identified through the Innovations award program, certain key "drivers" of innovation sift out. They are:

- Frustration with the status quo

- A response to crisis

- A focus on prevention

- An emphasis on results

- Adaptation of technology

- An inclination to do the right thing

But the attrition rate for good ideas in government tends to be high. Initiatives tend to come and go based on such variables as what resources are available, what the politically popular initiatives of the day are, whether an idea has a well-connected advocate, and so forth.

Yet the initiatives identified by the Innovations program have shown remarkable powers of survival and replication. Of the 150 winners identified by the program from 1986 to 2001, only 14 are defunct, and seven of those date back to pre-1990. Meanwhile, scores of those winning ideas have been picked up and replicated nationally and even internationally. And so clearly the programs identified by the Ford Foundation and Kennedy School offer solid lessons to would-be innovators when it comes to designing successful—that is resilient and replicable—innovation.

What characterizes programs with those kinds of powers of survival and replication?

- They are simple in concept.

- They are relatively easy to execute.

- They yield quick results.

- They don't cost huge amounts of money to implement.

- They have broad appeal (and few or no entrenched enemies).

- They are not tied to one political party or person.

There are, of course, exceptions to all these rules. But in analyzing winning programs, it is remarkable how many have one, some, or all of the preceding characteristics.

But while it is useful to analyze what drives innovation and what characterizes successful innovation, ultimately such initiatives are all about the direct action of people, people who are tired of being part of systems that are focused more on preserving turf, longevity, and resources than on achieving results.

Introduction:
An Inclination to Innovate

As has frequently been noted by those who follow government, the public sector in the United States has never been known for its inclination to innovate. The list of disincentives to those brave souls who may be tired of the status quo and interested in new ways of conducting the public's business is long and familiar. Items on that list range, on the one hand, from a general culture of risk avoidance and a lack of rewards for those who try to innovate, to the political timelines and political pressures that work against long-range efforts at basic change, on the other. And on and on the list typically goes, and legitimately so to be sure.

Many of those obstacles are discussed in "The Challenge of Innovating in Government," published by The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for The Business of Government. In that report, Sandford Borins, professor of public management at the University of Toronto, culls lessons about innovating in the public sector by analyzing winners from three programs set up to recognize government innovators. The one domestic program—the Ford Foundation/Kennedy School Innovations in American Government Awards—is the focus of this report; the other two programs are international.

As part of his analysis Borins investigates two aspects of innovation: He looks at the characteristics of innovative organizations and he analyzes the form that innovation takes (more on both of these in a moment). The goal of this report is to build on Borins's observations by focusing exclusively on the Innovations in American Government Awards program. The two questions this paper will delve into

based on lessons gleaned from the Innovations award winners are very straightforward:

- What inspires innovation?

- What makes it successful?

The Ford Foundation and Kennedy School's Innovations in American Government program has produced a bountiful list of programs and people who are trying to change what government does and how it does it. Since 1986—with a one-year hiatus in 1989—the program has recognized 150 "winning" programs, which have each been awarded $100,000. In addition, the program has recognized 207 "finalists," which are now awarded $20,000. Winners and finalists come from all levels of government—local, state, federal, and tribal— and across all program and policy areas, from education to criminal justice.

In the process of identifying prize-worthy innovators, the program has sifted through thousands of applications. There have undoubtedly been many innovative programs not selected that were worthy of awards (and many others worthy of being set aside). This year the Ford Foundation endowed an Institute for Government Innovation at Harvard's Kennedy School. The Institute will administer the Innovations in American Government program, as well as serve as the hub of a global network for government innovation, linking the Innovations program with five other Ford-funded award programs for American Indian tribal government and governments in Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, and South Africa. In linking programs devoted to recog-

nizing innovative government, the Institute hopes to become the preeminent portal to information on innovation and innovative programs in government worldwide.

In answering the questions of what inspires innovation and what makes it successful, this paper focuses heavily on the award-winning innovations themselves; that is, it scrutinizes the ideas that proved to have the power to change government operations for the better. Borins's cut at innovation, on the other hand, focuses more on identifying characteristics of innovative organizations, recognizing pathways to innovation, and investigating where in organizations innovative ideas seem to come from. Specifically, Borins identifies seven characteristics of innovative organizations along with five "building blocks" of innovation. In the "Who Innovates" section of his report, he also uses hard numbers to illustrate what those of us who follow innovation have known for a long time: that innovative ideas spring up from all over the place—both inside and outside of organizations, and from the middle, bottom, and top layers of an organization. Innovation, it turns out, has little regard for title.

It's worth focusing for a moment on Borins's list of the seven characteristics of innovative organizations, however. It's useful because it's not hard to read the inverse into each of those characteristics when thinking about the typical state, local, or federal department (and in considering how remarkable the people who push innovation in government—whatever their title—really are). Innovative public sector organizations, according to Borins, typically evince the following virtues:

- They support innovation from the top (timidity from the top, especially around election time, is all too typical in U.S. government).

- They reward individuals who push change (public sector risk takers are often punished).

- They specifically dedicate resources to innovation (discretionary cash for experimentation is rare in the public sector).

- They harbor a diverse workforce (public sector personnel systems are notorious for their inflexibility in allowing managers to hire on the basis of organizational synergy).

- They evince a basic organizational curiosity ("but we've always done it that way" is the common rallying cry in government).

- Bureaucratic layers are closely connected (an obvious contradiction in concepts in government).

- They exhibit a general inclination to experiment (see all six previous parentheticals).

Add to all that the fact that politicians at every level frequently seem to be enamored of the "solution du jour" versus "what actually works" when it comes to tackling public problems. Witness the stampede to embrace military-style boot camps for offending youth, or the universal inclination to adopt across-the-board hiring freezes and budget cuts as a way to balance budgets, as evidence of elected officials' remarkable ability to ignore policy and administrative reality, all the while missing the opportunity to really innovate.

All that being said, there's clearly something very curious going on in U.S. government when it comes to innovation, something that has been going on for a very long time. Despite the formidable forces arrayed in opposition, there are people at all levels of government—local, state, and federal— who do figure out new ways of doing things. In fact, given the constraints and disincentives, given the entrenched attitudes and the frequently countervailing political imperatives and timelines, one could argue that government in the United States has proved to be remarkably, even resiliently, innovative. In the face of overwhelming odds, innovative ideas continue to bubble up out of government— from the smallest local government to the most bloated federal bureaucracy—pushed by everyone from frontline staff, to middle management, to lofty politicos, to outside agitators.

In going through the list of initiatives identified by the Innovations program, one could certainly quibble about how innovative some of them really are. As Borins notes in his paper, real sticklers make a distinction between "invention," which is the creation of a new idea, and "innovation," which is the adoption of an existing idea by a new organization. But while some of the winners might seem repetitive of previous winners (programs aimed at early childhood education and alternatives to incarceration, for

example, have been regular staples of the Innovations program), it's impossible to argue that they don't, collectively, represent a rich body of work worth mining for lessons in new ways of addressing how government does its myriad and often very difficult jobs.

Borins starts some of that mining in his February 2001 report. Besides using award winners to pin down key characteristics of innovative organizations, he also uses them to identify what he calls the "building blocks" of innovation. He might as easily have called them "modes" of innovation. The five he teases out are:

- Changing whole systems (federal welfare reform would fall into this category)

- Using information technology

- Pursuing process improvement

- Enlisting the help of the private or voluntary sector

- Empowering communities, citizens, or staff

Between the two papers—this one and Borins's—there is no doubt ample room for multiple alternative analyses of the lessons that award-winning innovation programs in the public sector have to offer; this topic can be sliced and diced in a lot of ways. But together it is hoped the two papers will contribute at least a bit more to the understanding of what elements go into creating, sustaining, and replicating innovation in government. In the process, it is also hoped that the papers will inspire those who care about government—both those working inside and outside of government—and who *are* tired of the status quo to perhaps think about pushing government to do the public's business in a new way.

Analyzing Innovations and Innovators: A Note on the "Science" of Change Management

The observations and conclusions in this paper are based less on the rigorous social-political science of innovation (if a "science" of innovation can even be said to exist) than on observations accumulated through years of close observation of innovation in government. The author has spent more than two decades covering management and change management in government, generally, and 13 years covering the Innovations in American Government Awards program, specifically.

Since 1988, the author has covered the Innovations awards intensively, reading hundreds of applications and site visit reports for programs (more than 200 in the last five years alone), while conducting hundreds of interviews with principals of winning programs, outside experts, critics, and other analysts. Such interviews have been bolstered by numerous visits to the scenes of innovation themselves, ranging from housing projects in Chicago to government office buildings in Atlanta. Sometimes these visits were arranged specifically as part of award-winner coverage; sometimes they were for separate stories on particular state and local programs and initiatives for *Governing* magazine or other publications.

Also contributing to this paper is a recent set of surveys sent out by the Institute for Government Innovation to all winning programs from the past 15 years asking about program sustainability and replication. Those surveys have also been augmented by follow-up phone interviews with representatives of particular programs.

What Inspires Innovation?

There are good reasons why someone might be reluctant to want to lead change in a public sector setting; it's widely regarded as a high-risk, low-reward enterprise. In her essay, "The Mysteries of Innovative Government," which accompanied *Governing*'s coverage of the 1991 Innovations in American Government award winners, *Governing* founding editor Eileen Shanahan quotes none other than the dark prince of government machination himself, Nicolo Machiavelli, as he muses about pushing change in government. Considering how some of the more creative innovators go about getting the job done, it's probably not inappropriate that Mr. Machiavelli has his say here: *"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."*

Why the skittishness around change? There are lots of reasons, but one of the most obvious is that one consequence of trying to do things in a different way is sometimes mistakes and failure. And as William D. Eggers and John O'Leary point out in their book *Revolution at the Roots: Making Our Government Smaller, Better, and Closer to Home* (Free Press, 1995), making mistakes in a public sector setting can have some unsettling consequences. "No public manager," note Eggers and O'Leary, "wants to drink his morning cup of coffee reading a headline describing his latest screwup in 12-point type."

With such perils in mind, the questions are worth asking:

- What triggers innovation in U.S. government?
- Where does it come from?

Don Kettl, professor of public affairs and political science at the La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, notes that better ways of doing things don't tend to just spring up in government; they need a push. "New ideas don't tend to get adopted simply because they would be easier, better, smarter, or cheaper," said Kettl. "They almost always need some kind of driver."

In poring over the hundreds of programs recognized by Ford and the Kennedy School through its Innovations awards program, six drivers of innovation ultimately sift out. Some of the programs certainly fit into more than one of the categories, reflecting the complexity of the innovation picture. But in looking at all the winners, each was the result of one or more of the following:

- Frustration with the status quo
- A response to crisis
- A new emphasis on prevention
- A new emphasis on results
- Adaptation of technology
- A moral imperative

The obvious question is the extent to which identifying these categories can help potential innovators get their organizations—or another organization—to start moving off the dime. The hope is that in highlighting what inspired—or allowed—winners to make change, others might more readily identify opportunity when it comes along—or maybe they will flat out try to create it themselves. At the very least, in reading about the origins of innovation, it might bolster would-be innovators' resolve to carry on the good fight, Messrs. Machiavelli's, Eggers's and O'Leary's observations notwithstanding.

Driver One: Frustration with the Status Quo

When Stephen Goldsmith was elected mayor of Indianapolis he posed a straightforward question to his public works department: "How much does it cost to fill a pothole in Indianapolis?" Nobody could answer the question, and that would start the city down a whole new path when it came to delivering city services.

Goldsmith's curiosity was born of a suspicion that certain city work could be done much more effectively and efficiently than it currently was if opened up to competitive bidding. But with Indianapolis being a heavily unionized town, the likelihood that the new mayor would be able to buck entrenched labor interests and start putting things like fleet and street maintenance out to competitive bid seemed highly unlikely.

It took Goldsmith's resolve, coupled with enlightened—and by no means weak—labor leadership in a fiscally constrained environment, to create the Competition and Costing Program, which netted the city an Innovations award in 1995. Under the program, a host of basic city services—like street repair—were opened up to the bidding process whereby city departments would compete with the private sector for the work. It's worth noting that as part of the deal that Goldsmith struck with his labor unions in pushing the new order, middle management would actually end up taking the hardest hit, not frontline labor. Labor successfully argued that superfluous layers of management would make certain city operating units non-competitive when stacked up against lean, mean private sector outfits. Goldsmith agreed and bureaucracies were flattened.
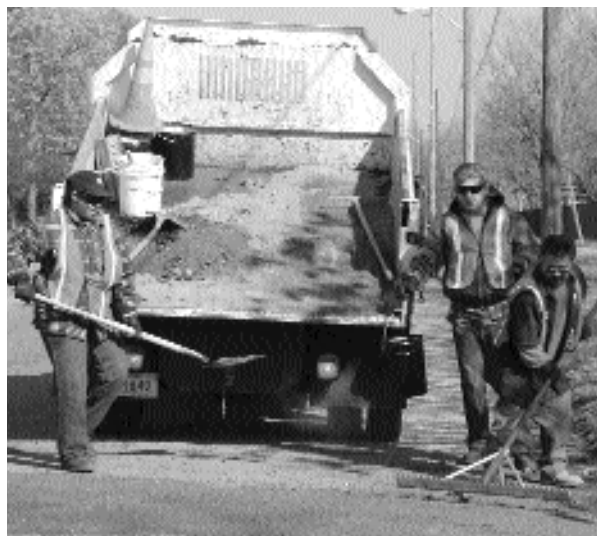
Competition and Costing Program, Indianapolis, Indiana

One might naturally conclude that the Indianapolis example bolsters the "strong leadership" argument as critical to successful innovation. No rational person would argue that strong leadership isn't a huge help when it comes to making big organizational change. But it's not a prerequisite to change; there are ample examples of the same sort of frustration and dissatisfaction exhibited by Goldsmith bubbling up from sources outside of leadership positions and inspiring—even requiring—big change.

Take, for example, Georgia Civil Service Reform, a 2000 finalist. It wasn't David Osborne's observation in *Reinventing Government* that "the only thing more destructive than a line item budget system is a personnel system built around civil service" that inspired Georgia to dump civil service. Nor was it any exhortation by then-Governor Zell Miller to his troops that they should march toward a more private sector model of personnel administration. It was fundamental frustration among the various government departments with the unresponsive, byzantine central personnel office that ultimately led to the change.

Among the most frustrated and least satisfied of the central personnel office's "customers" was the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). GDOT had been unhappy with the civil service system for a while, but one incident in particular sent the department over the brink. To get ready for the 1996 Summer Olympics, GDOT requested

some new job titles in areas of transportation that would be critical to the smooth flow of traffic during the Atlanta games. In particular, GDOT wanted to create a roving band of tow truck drivers who could roam local streets and highways and quickly remove disabled vehicles to prevent traffic backups. When GDOT asked the state civil service department for permission to create the new job titles necessary to do the work, the word came back that it probably wouldn't be able to approve the titles until after the games were over. Frustrated, GDOT officials actually went to the legislature and won a special exemption to state civil service law so they could create the positions without having to go through the central personnel office. It was the hole in the dike that predicted the entire personnel system's eventually being washed away.

There's no arguing that Governor Miller was instrumental in then pushing the plan for dismantling Georgia's civil service system. But his efforts would have gone nowhere had it not been for the deep frustration and eager testimony of disgruntled department officials. A quote in a 1997 *Governing* story on the sunsetting of civil service in Georgia captured the depth and breadth of that grassroots frustration. "My dream is that ultimately there is no position in the department covered by civil service," said Department of Natural Resources Director Lonice C. Barrett. Barrett's dream—shared by many managers in the state—is now coming true: Under Georgia's new system, individual agencies have the sole responsibility for finding and hiring people, and all state employees hired after July 1, 1996, exist outside of civil service as "at-will" employees.

Frustration doesn't only impact governmental systems or departments from the outside. There are dozens of examples from the Innovations program annals where insiders have become so impatient with business as usual that they push change. And as it turns out, insiders as change agents have a special kind of power inasmuch as there are some systems that are so convoluted and complex, only those on the inside really understand what it would take to fix them.

The Child Care Management Services program, a 1993 Innovations award winner from Texas, is a perfect example of that kind of change. The program was an attempt to streamline and coordinate

Innovations in American Government Award Winners

To obtain more information about each of the winners profiled in this report, visit the Innovations award site at: www.innovations.harvard.edu/prog.htm

all state and federal child welfare programs, an effort that was pushed by a small handful of persistent inside bureaucrats who were seeing firsthand the dissipated—even harmful—effect that multiple, fragmented services were having on single mothers with kids. It ultimately took five years (and the creative use of technology, it should be noted) to create a more seamless system of one-stop shopping for all child care services. It wasn't perfect, but it was certainly better. It was also prescient. As with a number of Innovations award winners from the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Texas program predicted the wholesale "block grant" approach to social services that would come with federal welfare reform in 1996.

Another 1993 winner, Government Action on Urban Land—from Cuyahoga County in Ohio—was likewise the result of internal frustration, in this case with the long process required to condemn code-deficient and tax-delinquent property. The basic problem: the impact on cities of ramshackle buildings owned by absentee landlords, which were serving as little more than safe harbors for criminals and targets for arsonists. Such buildings have long been the bane of urban redevelopers for two reasons. First, they serve to discourage anyone who might actually be interested in pursuing improved housing or commercial life in a blighted neighborhood. Second, they frequently get in the way of urban redevelopment projects that depend on acquiring the large parcels of property necessary for viable redevelopment projects.

But, again, it makes sense that it was insiders both in the city of Cleveland and in Cuyahoga County's community development and legal arenas who pushed the change, because they were the ones who really understood the problem in terms of the administrative and legal complexities that had for so long stymied a solution. It took insiders to

design a system for quickly *and legally* seizing tax-delinquent or chronically code-deficient property.

"We frequently see innovations being driven by people who've been in a system for a long time," said Gail Christopher, executive director of the Institute for Government Innovation. "They have a drive born of years of frustration, and a wisdom about the complexity of the problems that make them particularly adept at mapping out and pushing change."

Insiders don't always act alone, of course. While taking the clear lead in pushing change, they frequently reach to outside stakeholders to collaborate in making that change. Those kinds of combinations seem to be particularly important when it comes to dealing with very volatile, emotional, and long-standing conflicts—particularly in the regulatory arena. The 1998 award-winning Northern New Mexico Collaborative Stewardship Project out of the U.S. Forest Service is one where insider frustration with business as usual in combination with stakeholder dissatisfaction finally built to the point where the system moved in a new direction.

The collaborative was inspired by long-standing conflicts around the timber claims of local residents, logging companies, and environmentalists in the Camino Real Ranger District in northern New Mexico. The conflict had resulted in almost complete gridlock around logging, and even threats of violence. And so District Ranger Crockett Dumas quite literally climbed on horseback to begin making door-to-door contact with all the combatants. In Dumas's case, he was diplomat enough to bring all the parties together to work out logging plans that satisfied—at least more or less—all parties. And while his brand of multiple-party/combatant collaboration has proved effective in other situations and settings, it is a style of innovation that seems to depend as heavily on the personality of the insider pushing the change as it does any set formula for resolving such long-standing and emotionally charged conflicts.

Massachusetts, which has had three award-winning environmental programs (in 1991 the state won for the Blackstone Project, in 1999 for its Toxics Use Reduction Program, and its Environmental Results Program was a 2001 finalist), frequently employs

Rehabilitation Subcode, State of New Jersey

this insider-outsider approach to resolving long-standing conflicts and to developing more strategic ways to regulate.

The Blackstone Project was initiated by agency insiders in the state's Department of Environmental Protection who were tired of the old-style, fragmented, disjointed, end-of-the-pipe approach to permitting and inspections. The program proved to be a successful experiment in prevention-focused, one-visit, multi-media inspections of companies permitted to discharge pollutants. Using cross-trained inspectors armed with the ability to offer extensive technical assistance in prevention strategies and technologies, the program relied heavily on the regulated community for support and cooperation (and certainly in the business community, Massachusetts environmental regulators had a set of frustrated outside stakeholders). The program even seemed to satisfy its toughest customer, the environmental community. A spokesman for the National Toxics Campaign Fund at the time cited it as a model in the then-incipient national push toward pollution prevention.

It's not uncommon, however, for the dissatisfied party pushing change to come from outside government altogether. In 1999 New Jersey won an Innovations award for developing a new and separate set of more flexible building codes to be applied in the case of rehabbing older structures. The initiative was a direct response to the significant frustration among builders who were interested in rehabbing existing commercial buildings, but who

found retrofitting 50- to 100-year-old structures to stringent new codes to be hugely expensive and impractical—and of virtually no added value from the standpoint of public safety. Those builders, not incidentally, had strong allies in the local government officials who wanted to see derelict—and frequently historically and architecturally significant— buildings brought back to life, as well.

Seattle's Community Voice Mail for Phoneless/ Homeless Persons, a 1993 winner, was likewise born of outside stakeholder frustration with the status quo. The idea for voice mail for people with no homes or phones came out of a small, not-for-profit social services provider in Seattle that realized homeless people were missing out on jobs because there was no way for prospective employers to reach them. They took their idea to the city, and the city turned it into a formal program.

But probably the best example of the "outside gadfly as change agent" among the Innovations award winners is Norma Hotaling, a former prostitute who had clearly run out of patience with how traditional criminal justice systems were dealing with prostitutes and their customers. To Hotaling, the law enforcement status quo around soliciting amounted to nothing more than a revolving-door world where neither women nor their customers were offered any real positive alternatives other than to go back to the same behavior that had put them in trouble with the law in the first place. And so she approached the San Francisco district attorney's office with an idea: Treat both the women and customers involved in prostitution as people who need help, not as criminals needing punishment.

To its credit, the San Francisco prosecutor's office listened, working with Hotaling on developing the First Offender Prostitution Program, under which men caught soliciting for the first time are offered the chance either to go to court or to attend classes taught by, among others, ex-prostitutes—classes that highlight the fundamental harm that the sex industry has done to women, men, families, and personal and public health. Instead of jail time, prostitutes were offered counseling, medical care, and help getting their lives together. The program proved to be remarkably effective, particularly in getting male customers to stop re-offending. The First Offender program won its Innovations award in 1998.

Driver Two: Responding to Crisis

The change described above tends to be driven by years of pent-up frustration. It's not an acute event that drives such change so much as it is a building realization that a particular way of doing business isn't working very well—and hasn't been for a while. By contrast, there is a whole different class of innovation that is inspired by some acute event that quickly turns people to a new way of doing business.

It's no revelation that crisis creates opportunity to innovate—or in many cases outright forces it. Arguably, U.S. Forest Service Ranger Crockett Dumas's foray into the field described above was in some part crisis driven. Things had gotten so bad in his district that it was clearly time to try something radically different.

In looking over 15 years' worth of innovative programs, it is clear that acute crisis is a powerful driver of fast change. In *Innovating With Integrity: How Local Heroes Are Transforming American Government* (Georgetown University Press, 1998), Sandy Borins cites three Innovations identified programs as having obvious roots in immediate disaster:

- Seattle's comprehensive push toward recycling (the Seattle Recycling Program, a 1990 winner), which had been inspired by environmental conditions at two of its landfills that were so horrendous they had to be shut down.

- An Arizona program to find and close abandoned mines spurred by the accidental death of a young man who'd fallen into a mine.

- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's adoption of a geographic information system (GIS) to manage environmental crises in its waterways after a disastrous oil spill near Jacksonville in 1987.

As Borins points out in his book, a significant number of Innovations award winners had some element of acute crisis underpinning their creation—in fact, he puts it at as high as 30 percent. It's obvious why crisis is such a powerful catalyst. "People within a public sector organization may know that its performance is not up to par, but this problem becomes a crisis only when it is manifestly visible to the public," writes Borins. The professor is to be

credited for his artful understatement. As any good politician who has watched some tale of disaster as it unfolds on the 6 o'clock news will tell you, crisis demands an immediate and highly visible response, whether it's the right response or not.

But in reviewing the Innovations award winners, it's clear that crisis, disaster, and bad news have inspired some fairly creative and coherent efforts to fix things. Without putting too fine a point on it, such programs tend to fall into two categories: programs inspired by crisis and designed to fix a problem, and programs developed to blunt the consequences of inevitable (usually natural) disasters. In fact, a number of the 2001 Innovations programs fall into these two sub-categories of crisis-driven innovation.

One of them is A Secret Safe Place for Newborns, developed by the Mobile County, Alabama, District Attorney's Office. The Safe Place initiative—a 2001 finalist—came about as the result of truly sad events—a series of six infant and toddler homicides in 1998. Prompted by a local reporter's suggestion that desperate parents—mothers in particular—be offered the option of safely giving a newborn away without fear of prosecution, the DA's office decided to try the idea. While a recent front page *New York Times* article ("Few Choose Legal Havens to Abandon Babies," Aug. 31, 2001) raises questions about the ultimate effect of such programs (35 states now have so-called "safe haven" laws, according to the article), the DA's office in Mobile County, at least, reports no homicides and only one unsafe abandonment since adopting the new policy. Whatever the ultimate effect of the Safe Place program, its intent is clear: to forestall future tragedy.

Likewise, a 2001 award winner, the National Center for Patient Safety, developed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, was inspired by crisis: Experts estimate that preventable medical errors lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries a year. In 1997 the VA started encouraging staff at all VA hospitals to voluntarily and confidentially report medical mistakes in order to hone in on possible system flaws leading to injury and death. The theory was that bad systems, not careless people, are mostly responsible for mistakes. As a result, the VA has been awash in new reports of mistakes and near misses, allowing it to adjust and hone a variety of systems to make hospital stays considerably safer.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration won a 1995 Innovations award for its worker safety pilot program launched in Maine, precipitated by a high per capita incidence of worker death and injury. Under the Maine Top 200 Experimental Targeting Program, especially dangerous industries were targeted for special attention—inspections and cooperative efforts to improve working conditions. Again, the idea was inspired by bad news and aimed at fixing problems once and for all.

It's worth noting that all three programs—A Safe Place, the Center for Patient Safety, and Maine Top 200—have strong elements of prevention and results driving them. Indeed, the VA program could easily fit into the "results-driven innovation" category below because of its wholesale push to change bureaucratic thinking based on improving results. But, clearly, it was a crisis in the medical world that prompted the program.

Then there are those Innovations award programs that were set up to actually blunt the impact of inevitable disaster, similar to the disaster that spurred Florida's GIS system, mentioned above. Oklahoma's 2001 award-winning OK-FIRST initiative fits this model, and also includes a strong element of technology and prevention. OK-FIRST is a weather early-warning system that pulls together a variety of forecasting technologies (some primitive, like human observation, some quite advanced, like Doppler radar) and through a statewide website puts all that information at the fingertips of public safety officials. They can then use it to do things like evacuate towns that appear to be in the path of developing (or developed) tornadoes or close down roads in imminent danger of flash flooding. State officials have credited the system with saving numerous lives already, particularly from tornado damage.

PulseNet, a program developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and a 1999 Innovations award winner, can also be included in this sub-category of crisis-driven innovation aimed at blunting the impact of inevitable disaster. It's a technology-based system that aims to rapidly identify the type and source of significant food poisoning outbreaks so that those suffering food poisoning can be quickly and correctly treated, and the source of the poisoning identified

PulseNet, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

and shut down. The system was developed in response to the cases of widespread food poisoning—however sporadic—that periodically hit various regions of the country. Since its creation, the system has been credited in several instances with keying in on and closing down the source of potentially serious listeria and salmonella poisoning outbreaks before they caused serious harm.

In 1996, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) won an Innovations award for Consequence Assessment Tool Set (CATS): Disaster Damage Prediction and Mapping, a comprehensive system for disaster pre-planning in areas that are at chronic and high risk of trouble at the hands of nature, including earthquakes and hurricanes. It is interesting to note that the essential methodology used by FEMA was adapted from pre-plans it had developed at the behest of the Defense Department for dealing with the aftermath of nuclear war. Call it a peace dividend.

Driver Three: Focusing on Prevention

Change in response to crisis is, of course, all too typical of government, given its reputation for being reactive rather than proactive. Which is why Borins's estimate that 30 percent of all Innovations award winners are crisis inspired isn't all that surprising.

There is another class of Innovations award winner, though, that does have at its core the whole notion

of prevention. But even in the case of efforts aimed at nipping some problem in the bud, frequently they're not launched until the problem has first taken a good bite out of government or the public.

Prevention is not an easy track for government to take. As a focus on results has begun to infuse (at least rhetorically, if not always in fact) public policy and administration in the United States, a typical lament among public sector policy makers, budgeters, and managers is that it's hard to measure what hasn't happened. It is, therefore, difficult to justify spending public resources on prevention absent some way to judge the effects of such spending.

It's not an argument that everyone—or even most people—buy, but it still manages to get in the way of funding for preventative programs, nonetheless. It would be much more honest of public officials to simply admit the political difficulty involved in spending money on programs where the goal is for nothing (bad) to happen—a prospective, less-than-flashy, and sometimes downright invisible result.

In *Revitalizing State and Local Public Service: Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Citizen Confidence,* edited by Frank J. Thompson (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), authors Michael Sparer and Lawrence D. Brown spend an entire chapter on one of the most expensive government programs in history—Medicaid, which provides health care to the indigent. It's a program that has long been the subject of heated debate about the value of early intervention as a way to reduce costs. Allowing government to spend hundreds of dollars up-front on something like quality pre-natal care potentially forestalls the need to spend thousands of dollars on intensive—or chronic—intervention later on. Using such an argument, Medicaid money might quite wisely be spent on something like lead paint abatement in apartment buildings. Instead, Medicaid has become one of the most convoluted, rule-bound, and as mentioned above, expensive programs in the history of U.S. government, and costs continue to escalate.

As Sparer and Brown point out, there is a long and impressive list of forces arrayed against innovating in Medicaid, from bureaucratic infighting and paralysis, to political wrangling, to legitimate legal

and fiscal concerns. And so far, the whole program has proved so large and politically charged as to defy real reform.

Yet the Innovations program offers numerous, albeit more modest, examples of government willing to invest now to save later, both in the area of health care policy and outside of it.

In 1986, for example, St. Paul, Minnesota, was recognized for its Block Nurse Program, which was designed to provide quality, home-based care to the elderly to avoid much more expensive institutional solutions. In 1996, Florida won for its Healthy Kids Program, an effort to extend health insurance to all children in a single state. Healthy Kids was a clear precursor to the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) passed by Congress in 1997, which is aimed at significantly expanding health insurance coverage for youngsters nationwide.

As with health, education has always been a category that invited prevention-based strategies, the prototype probably being Georgia's Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program, a 1997 winner, aimed at allowing every child in the state access to early education. The approach is based on the long-standing maxim that investing money in education now pays off handsomely in better socialization, higher achievement, and lower costs (indeed, more productive tax-paying citizens) down the road.

Dozens of Innovations winners in other policy areas have prevention at their heart, particularly in the criminal justice and social services areas. Case Management for At-Risk Children, a 1986 winner, takes a comprehensive social services approach to youthful offenders as a substitute for the more typical punitive strategy on the theory that kids sitting in juvenile detention are not getting the kind of help they need to improve their lives. Again, the idea is that investing in an admittedly more expensive range of interventions now will keep troubled kids out of deeper trouble later, which lowers ultimate costs to society, fiscal and otherwise.

In 1987, Illinois won an award for Parents Too Soon, described as "a comprehensive, statewide effort to stem teenage pregnancy through health, social, and educational services for males and females ... to

raise awareness about the consequences of becoming parents at a very young age." Efforts aimed at reducing teen pregnancy have since become a staple of state and local government across the United States, and, according to state and national public health statistics, are now paying off in significantly reduced teen pregnancy rates.

The city of Boston won an Innovations award in 1997 for Operation Ceasefire, an aggressive, preemptive approach to gang violence involving a host of players, from the police department to the faith-based community, in an effort to identify and defuse gang trouble before it sparks. The program's focus on stopping trouble before it ever starts proved so effective that Operation Ceasefire programs have sprung up all over the country.

Environmental protection, too, seems to invite a more proactive approach to public policy and administration. In 1999 the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection continued its string of Innovations awards with its Toxics Use Reduction Program, an effort to work with manufacturers on new and creative ways to prevent pollution in the first place, rather than treat it at the pipe during discharge. "Our basic thinking," noted Gina McCarthy, assistant secretary in the state's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, "was, with all the technology advances and all the Yankee ingenuity at our disposal, is it really necessary to create all this pollution as part of the production process?"

It's a sentiment that sums up the ethic behind quite a few of the Innovations program's prevention-based winners—that is, applying a little inventiveness to treating the problem at the front end is ultimately much cheaper and much more effective than treating it at the back end.

Driver Four: Emphasizing Results

As mentioned above, some argue that prevention-focused programs can be a tough sell because it's hard to measure what hasn't happened (and therefore makes it hard to argue for or justify expenditures). On the other hand, an increasing number of award-winning programs are based on the whole notion that government programs and initiatives ought to be much more soundly based on results that can be measured. Indeed, much of the re-inventing government literature revolves around

what advocates describe as a profound new shift in focus for government: from an obsession with process to the pursuit of results.

It's an intoxicatingly simple-sounding approach to doing the public's business. An entire chapter in *Reinventing Government* is devoted to the topic: "Results-Oriented Government: Funding Outcomes, not Outputs." In it, Osborne and Gaebler argue eloquently for this new focus for government policies and programs, and offer a host of examples of results-driven government transformation. The authors predict big changes like welfare reform (based on their observation that the old way of doing the public assistance business wasn't working), and they compliment the Fund for The City of New York on more down-to-earth work like monitoring the Big Apple's spending in relation to its performance in some key and highly visible areas such as street cleaning.

This author argues (less eloquently, to be sure) for the same shift in government thinking in *Measuring Up: Governing's Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses and Other Public Managers*. Except that in *Measuring Up,* an entire chapter is devoted to the reasons why government can't possibly shift its focus to results. That chapter, "Eight Reasons Why You Can't Do Performance Measurement and Then the One Reason Why You Have No Choice," outlines a list of excuses that public officials frequently turn to for why they can't pursue results-based government. Those reasons range from a fear of being held accountable for results—bad ones—over which they might have little or no control, to trend fatigue, characterized by a deep cynicism toward any new management bromide being hyped by higher-ups. Both chapters, in their own way, discuss the cluttered path leading to results-based government.

Of course, all the Innovations winners are arguably about "results." In some cases Innovations award winners sell themselves specifically as being exemplary because they have focused government on tracking results, generally. In other cases, winning programs simply represent a new way of conducting business based on that age-old adage: "If the old way of doing something isn't working, then try something new"—preferably something that actually works.

The best example of the former is the Oregon Benchmarks program, a 1994 winner, which represented an ambitious and explicit effort to collect and monitor data on results—the theory being that doing so would then drive policies and programs to change in ways that make them more effective. Under Oregon Benchmarks, the state developed a whole set of measures by which to judge the progress and success of Oregon, its citizens and its government, in a host of socioeconomic, health, and public safety categories—from the health of residents to their annual incomes. The Oregon Benchmarks program has had its ups and downs, but there's no arguing that it helped set off a revolution in how state, local, and even the federal government, at least, talk about what they do.

A couple of other noteworthy Innovations program finalists were also aimed at changing governmental behavior by monitoring results. In 1998 and 1999 Florida was a finalist for its Environmental Performance Measurement System, which collected statewide data on everything from air to ground-water quality as a way to gauge the need for and effect of cleanup efforts, and perhaps retarget resources based on need and impact. Also in 1999—a big year for results-based finalists—Philadelphia was recognized for its Program Development and Evaluation System for Juvenile Offenders, a long title for a program essentially aimed at tracking juvenile offenders to see if any patterns could be deciphered around their individual backgrounds, on the one hand; and which government or government-funded interventions seemed to have the most (or least) success in steering kids straight, on the other. Again, both the Florida and Philadelphia programs were specific efforts to collect data on results that could then be used to assess and presumably steer programs, policies, and resources.

The other subset of results-based award winners are those aimed less at monitoring results than achieving them. The now nationally renowned Project Match, which won its Innovations award in 1988 for its new approach to welfare to work, is the archetype. Project Match is just as much about results as Oregon Benchmarks, just at a different level (call it results with a small "r" versus Results with a big "R").

Project Match, which started out as a demonstration program funded by the Illinois Department of Public Aid, won national recognition for its patient and enlightened—but clearly hard-nosed—approach to breaking the cycle of welfare dependence. The basic motivation for Project Match was the realization that welfare as we knew it wasn't working very well; that moving single women from welfare to independence (or at least less dependence) would take a lot more than simply writing checks and then hoping people would get on their feet. It would take time, considerable effort, repeated failure, and multiple support services.

Project Match was a clear harbinger of the Wisconsin Works program, a 1999 winner, which had its roots in 1987 reforms that essentially took the theories behind Project Match and formed them into a statewide welfare-to-work strategy. Both programs predicted the sweeping 1996 welfare reforms that would come out of Washington.

The 1995 Innovations award-winning Hamilton Terrace Learning Center—an alternative high school for troubled teens and welfare mothers, developed in the Caddo Parish School District in Louisiana—was likewise an experiment in helping break the cycle of welfare dependence inspired by the fact that past strategies to help welfare recipients achieve educationally just weren't yielding good results.

Environmental cleanup is another area that seems to have inspired a host of small "r" results-based Innovations award winners. In 1994 Minnesota

Wisconsin Works, State of Wisconsin

won for its Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup program, through which state officials worked with developers in cooperative, nonpunitive ways to get contaminated land cleaned up, back into productive service, and back on the tax rolls. Minnesota's is one of a host of "brownfield" programs that have been recognized by the Innovations program for a shift in focus on (some would say "obsession with") regulation and process toward facilitation and ground-level results.

But, again, every one of the Innovations finalists and winners is ultimately about results. The Innovations application hits hard on accomplishments, asking specifically for the "single most important achievement of your program or policy initiative to date," and then asking for the "three most important measures you use to evaluate your program's success." If you don't have good data on results, it becomes very hard to make the Innovations award cut.

Driver Five: Adapting Technology

A frequently asked question by those observing the results-based governance phenomenon is why a focus on results seems to have all of a sudden infused public sector thinking. What magic has taken hold that now has government obsessing about results? In fact, the idea of applying meaningful performance measures to what government does has been around for generations. What has allowed it to take root so quickly of late is that the technology necessary for comprehensive and thorough tracking and analysis of data on results has only just recently been developed—and is now evolving with incredible rapidity.

But the technology revolution has had a powerful influence across all of government, not just in how it measures what it does, but in how it actually gets its myriad of jobs done. Which is why adapting new technology to old jobs is an increasingly pervasive theme among the applications received by the Innovations awards program. In its own breakdown of categories of winners—including "social services," "environment," and "justice system"—the awards program has created a separate category altogether for "technology."

In fact, these days the program is so flooded with applications that involve adapting technology to

the business of government, it's becoming tougher and tougher for judges to sift out real innovation from straightforward—even if appropriate and effective—adaptation of technology to the basic work of government.

It can also be tough to judge whether some innovation occurs because of technology or whether technology is simply part of the new program. Arguably a program like Oklahoma's OK-FIRST could be easily shifted into the "technology-inspired" category of innovator. Yet the program at its core is really about rapidly responding to inevitable crisis.

Which is why the category of technology-driven innovation, like crisis-driven innovation, can also be divided in two. There are those programs, like OK-FIRST and the aforementioned CATS and PulseNet, that represent good ideas that rely on technology to work. Then there are those innovations that are more purely technological in their makeup. Thirteen years ago, the Innovations awards program recognized Vermont for what was arguably one of the earliest attempts at so-called "e-government." The state hooked up hundreds of libraries by computer, allowing single-source electronic access to all their collections—or at least to listings of what materials were in their collections.

Since then the list of technology-specific innovations recognized by the program has been rapidly expanding. Two alone have been handed out in the Los Angeles area, both of them for technology-dependent programs aimed at reducing traffic. In 1992 the city of Los Angeles won an award for its Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control program, a high-tech, sensor-driven system for keeping cars, trucks, and buses moving throughout downtown by altering the pattern of stoplights according to traffic flow and congestion. (The program also contributed one of the more colorful terms of art to the traffic control lexicon. When congestion got particularly horrible on a specific stretch of road, officials would execute what they called "a royal flush"—a string of green lights along a single transportation corridor aimed at emptying out a serious backlog of idling vehicles.) The very next year, Los Angeles County won for its Telecommuting Program, whereby thousands of county employees were granted permission to stay home and work via telephone, fax, and the Internet on days when it made sense.

Among other programs that have technology at their core: In 2000, Perry High School in Perry, Ohio, won for Perritech, a school-based computer repair and consulting firm staffed entirely by students. And in 2001, the ultimate in e-government is recognized as a finalist by the Innovations award program: FirstGov. FirstGov is the U.S. General Services Administration-administered web portal to the world of U.S. government, allowing direct access to federal services and products like tax forms and passport applications, while also providing direct links to state and local government sites.

Needless to say, a string of winners falls into the category of applying technology to long-standing public jobs. In 1986—the first year of the awards program—Rochester, New York, won an Innovations award for using videodiscs to administer its property tax rolls. In 1988, Kentucky won for using video and sound recording in place of court stenographers. In 1990, Ramsey County, Minnesota, won for its use of "smart cards" to dispense welfare cash benefits. In 1991 Kentucky won again, this time for initiating a broadcasting-based distance learning program to remote rural school districts.

In 1993, Oregon won for its Vendor Information Program, whereby the state began posting "requests for proposals" and accepting bids over the Internet. New York City won in 1996 for its widely praised and widely replicated "Compstat" program, a tactical policing tool whereby the police use computer-collected data to analyze crime patterns, allowing more effective deployment of resources based on the measurable impact of intervention. And in 1999, Pittsburgh won for its Electronic Bond Bidding Initiative, which allowed the city to cut out the middleman—bond brokers—and sell bonds via the Internet directly to investors, saving the city and investors money.

One Innovations awards winner even applied technology to technology. The Center for Technology in Government, a 1995 winner from the state of New York, was created in part to allow state and local government agencies to experiment with computer-based ways to do the work of government on a small scale before investing big money to roll out such systems for real.

Electronic Bond Bidding Initiative, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Driver Six: Doing the Right Thing

By direct contrast to those awards driven by technology, there are some that are arguably based on something else altogether: their essential humanity. There is a whole class of Innovations award winners that are hard to explain in any other way than that they are flat out about doing the right thing.

Obviously—as one would hope—all the winners are imbued with a clear sense of positive purpose. But even with such laudably noble efforts as the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP) or A Secret Safe Place for Newborns, there were extenuating imperatives that helped drive the initiatives. In the case of First Offenders, it was clear evidence that the old way of conducting the business of criminal justice wasn't working very well. (Although a strong case can certainly be made for putting FOPP into the "doing the right thing" category, Hotaling was such a force to be reckoned with that it fits perfectly under frustration with the status quo). In the case of the Safe Place initiative, it was a string of shocking headlines that finally moved people to action.

But take a program like Racial Integration Incentives, a 1988 Innovations winner, which sought to actively maintain racial balance in the neighborhoods of three Cleveland suburbs. Absent the program, those neighborhoods would simply follow the same course that had been followed in dozens of neighborhoods for dozens of years: They would naturally segregate.

Or why embark on an initiative to offer aid and comfort to lone citizens in the throes of personal tragedy, as the city of San Diego did back in the early 1990s through its Trauma Intervention Program (TIP)? Without such a program, few would be any the wiser and only a tiny handful any the sadder. There would certainly be no front-page news decrying the lack of compassion coming out of city hall if TIP hadn't been invented.

In scouring the literature on innovation, one finds far ranging and detailed discussion of risk taking and rewards, empowerment and flexibility. Hardly anybody talks about innovation in terms of simply doing what's right. Even Daniel Yankelovich's first-rate book *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World* (Syracuse University Press, 1991) winds up being more of a technical primer on dispute resolution and collaborative decision making than a disquisition on the Golden Rule.

Yet in 1985, three suburbs outside of Cleveland embarked on a program to fight the "tipping" that social scientists have identified occurs when a particular neighborhood begins to go one way or another in racial makeup. Under the program, local community services offices actively tried to steer whites toward black neighborhoods and blacks toward white neighborhoods, offering various financial incentives to those who agreed to make "pro-integrative" moves. It's no surprise to learn that the Racial Integration Incentives program, which was focused on Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, and University Heights, Ohio, is no longer around. And a quote from an interview with one of the program principals back in 1988 was certainly prophetic. "People would rather stick their heads in the sand than take the political heat," said Winston Richie, an African American and executive director of one of the community services groups pushing the program. (We will take up Racial Integration Incentives again in the next section of this paper on survival and replication.)

San Diego's Trauma Intervention Services, meanwhile, was designed to team volunteers with survivors of acute tragedy—most frequently people who'd lost family members to work or traffic accidents. Those volunteers arrived on the scene within minutes to offer emotional comfort to sur-

vivors and to help them connect with social services programs when appropriate. But mostly the volunteers simply served as someone to offer comfort and sympathy in the absence of a trauma survivor's own family or friends.

The integration and trauma programs were early examples of Innovations winners that emerged, more often than not, by dint of pure goodwill and willpower by some individual or small handful of individuals intent on doing good. Those types of programs continue to pepper the Innovations awards list.

Not all of them are as emotionally charged as TIP or the pro-integration program. For example, the Department of Defense (DoD) won an Innovations award in 1998 for its Best Manufacturing Practices Program (BMPP). Under BMPP, experts visit willing businesses to analyze best practices—from manufacturing techniques to personnel management. What those teams learn is then posted on a website available to any company interested in improving their own processes. It's tough to explain the program in any other terms than that the Defense Department was simply trying to help companies run better. Arguably there was some enlightened self-interest involved—more efficient companies had the potential to become more reliable, cost-effective suppliers to the DoD. But really the program boils down to simply being a good idea that has the potential to help a lot of people.

More frequently, though, winners in the "right thing to do" category involve much tougher and more emotionally charged issues.

In the year 2000—with Innovations applications based on hard technology pouring into the program—two of the winners that emerged were singled out mostly for their essential human decency. In Hampden County, Massachusetts, Sheriff Michael Ashe bent over backward in arguing the practical public health benefits of Better Inmate Care Improves Public Health, a program that offers inmates comprehensive health care coverage and counseling. Ashe notes that healthier and more health-conscious inmates are much less of a threat to public health when released, and that is no doubt true. But Ashe pushes that argument as hard as he does because he is well aware that any pro-

gram identified as being humane (read "soft") toward criminals has a high probability of becoming a political target. At the end of the day, though, Ashe is simply doing the right, if less than politically popular, thing.

Pennsylvania, meanwhile, won for its Mental Hospital Seclusion and Restraint Reduction policy, whereby the use of chemical and physical restraints in its nine state mental hospitals has been dramatically scaled back. As in Hampden County, the new policy has paid multiple dividends, not the least of which is evidence of the therapeutic benefits of a more humane approach to restraint. But the program has proved to be expensive to administer and time-consuming to carry out, and no gubernatorial candidate in Pennsylvania is ever going to climb up to a public podium and bellow the praises of the state's efforts to treat a group of virtually invisible, mentally ill constituents in a nicer way.

The Pennsylvania program, like the First Offender program, might also easily be shifted to the category of "frustration with the status quo." The driving force behind the change in policy was a woman named Mary Ellen Rehrman, who says she became a mental health advocate the day she first saw her hospitalized schizophrenic son in a four-point restraint. "It wasn't therapeutic, it was humiliating," said Rehrman. "I thought that enough disability comes with the illness without a patient being left so devalued and vulnerable." So the Pennsylvania

Mental Hospital Seclusion and Restraint Reduction, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

program clearly has feet in both the "frustration" and "doing the right thing" categories.

In 1994, the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, won an award for its Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Program, which represented a whole new and more humane way to treat victims of rape and other sexual crimes. This program also wound up paying multiple dividends. It turns out, for example, that victims who are led into the warm confines of a counselor's office rather than the harsh spotlight of a police precinct tend to be much more willing to testify against assailants. But at its heart, the program flat out represented a more compassionate way to deal with people who had just been through hell.

What Makes Innovation Successful?

There are three explicitly stated goals of the Innovations in American Government Awards program:

- To celebrate innovation and innovators.

- To blunt cynicism about and improve the image of government by highlighting examples of effective government.

- To help sustain innovation and replicate it in other jurisdictions.

Clearly the program does a good job of celebrating innovation and innovators. Finalists are invited to Washington, D.C., where they enjoy the heady surroundings of the National Press Club's storied briefing and conference rooms. There they make their final oral presentations to a national selection committee. The awards are presented the next day at a festive luncheon, attended by a who's who of public sector change management experts. Winners are sometimes even accorded visits to the White House. A special supplement covering the finalists and winners is published in subsequent issues of both *Governing* and *Government Executive* magazines (a supplement that, by way of full disclosure, has for the past four years been written by this author). So, from the standpoint of celebrating innovators, the program seems to hit the mark.

As for the program's goal of reducing cynicism about and boosting confidence in government, even the program's most ardent supporters will admit that that's a hard one to measure. It is taken on faith that

the program will have some positive impact. There is a measurable flurry of media coverage of the finalists and winners immediately after their designation, usually by local market newspapers, television, and radio. Judging by the responses to the questionnaire recently sent out to all winning programs by the Institute for Government Innovation as part of the Innovations' 15th anniversary activities, quite a few of the programs have received extensive media coverage. Being named by the Kennedy School and the Ford Foundation as an innovator no doubt has helped many of them in that regard.

But the real hope of the Innovations program is that it supports both the survival and the dissemination of good ideas. Both the Innovations program application and the grilling that finalists take from the national selection committee during oral presentations hit hard on each. The aforementioned survey recently sent out to every winning program focused extensively on program survival and replication, as well as the extent to which being recognized by the Kennedy School and the Ford Foundation had some positive influence in each regard.

It's understandable that the Innovations program would be curious about its own impact on innovators and the seeding of good ideas around the country and world. But trying to decipher cause and effect in that regard is an uncertain proposition, and it's probably better left to the Institute to make its own calls about its impact as it sees fit. The more profitable line of inquiry for the purposes of this report is to look at those programs that have

been "successful"—that is, they have survived and perhaps been replicated elsewhere—and try to figure out the characteristics of those programs as a guide to others who might want to follow on the innovation path.

To do that, this report examined the list of 30 programs that the Innovation Program identified as having particular staying and multiplying power. But this section doesn't restrict itself to those 30 by any means. It will consider a much wider range of programs based, again, on the author's personal knowledge and extensive coverage of the award winners and also on other writings about successful (and unsuccessful) programs. This section also relies on follow-up phone calls to program principals and stakeholders, close observers of the Innovations program, and those who follow innovation in the public sector more generally.

One of the most remarkable statistics associated with the Innovations in American Government awards program is the number of winning programs that are still around. Of 150 winners identified by the Innovations program between 1986 and 2001, only 14 are defunct, and seven of those date back to pre-1990. Meanwhile, scores of those winning ideas have been picked up and replicated nationally and even internationally. And so clearly the programs identified by the Ford Foundation and Kennedy School offer solid lessons to would-be innovators when it comes to designing successful— that is resilient and replicable—innovations.

For those contemplating joining the ranks of innovators, the lessons that sift out in looking at both "winners" and "finalists" come through quite clearly. When designing a program it's best to:

- Keep it simple in concept

- Make it easy to execute

- Shoot for quick results

- Be frugal

- Make it appealing to the widest constituency possible

- Keep it apolitical

Keep It Simple in Concept

Innovations award winners can be divided into two categories: the ones that are easy to explain and the ones that are hard to explain. There are far more in the former than the latter category, to be sure. But it's clear from looking at those programs that have caught on and those that haven't, that the more straightforward the concept, the better a program's chances of sticking around and being adopted by other jurisdictions.

Take, for example, Compstat, the New York Police Department's high-profile and widely replicated effort to turn information technology to the task of mapping crime trends. Compstat has received so much attention, people are probably sick of hearing about it. Well, from the standpoint of replication, that's a good thing. Jurisdictions from Los Angeles to New Orleans have adopted the Compstat approach. Indeed, it represents such a basic idea—tie resources to results—that the "stat" suffix is now being affixed to a wide range of other policy and program areas, from finding welfare recipients jobs—"jobstat" (also in New York City)— to a host of city functions. Mayor Martin O'Malley has launched "Citistat" in Baltimore, which applies the "stat" concept across city functions, from law enforcement to building code enforcement, from street sweeping to restaurant inspections. Of course, the idea of using results to drive resource deployment is hardly a new one, but it's possible to argue that the specific use of "stat" to identify the practice has been a catchy, simple, and powerful way to drive the idea into government.

Take, on the other hand, a program like "Here, Thayer and Everywhere," a 1994 winner out of the Winchester, New Hampshire, School District. It was an effort, according to a description in the October 1994 issue of *Governing,* to "help other schools grapple with issues raised by such practices as team teaching, mixing students regardless of ability, scheduling subjects in blocks, orienting learning around projects, and finding ways to ensure that teachers get to know their students as fully as possible." It was also meant to take on such topics as how to assess students and "personalize the learning process," and to do all that through workshops to be broadcast via satellite at 500 registered sites around the country and over some

cable and public television stations. Without denigrating one iota the school's sincerity about the program, it's easy to see where such a diffuse plan of action to be delivered in a way that would require such extensive planning, marketing, and organization was not destined to either survive or thrive, and indeed the program is now defunct.

North Carolina's Smart Start, a 1998 winner, has a catchy title, but when one digs into the guts of implementation, it's a pretty complicated program, requiring counties to come up with elaborate action plans to coordinate a host of educational and social services to compete for the millions of state government dollars the program offers. To date, Smart Start survives, but it hasn't proved to be a popular selection at the innovations replication vending machine.

One of the more perplexing characteristics of the 2001 award-winning Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement initiative is that while it seems to have been wildly successful in California—helping push thousands of minority kids into higher education—very few other states have seen fit to adopt similar programs. One explanation for that might be the tough-to-explain system of parental, mentor, tutor, corporate, and teacher relationships on which the program's success depends; it's a hard initiative to sum up in a sentence.

On the other hand, 1987 winner Parents as Teachers from the state of Missouri was as fundamental an educational concept as has ever been identified by the program: Train parents in some basic techniques for boosting their kids' learning skills. The program didn't merely survive, it spread like wildfire, even going overseas.

Bill Parent, former executive director of the Innovations awards program, points out that many of the innovations that show strong replicative powers are in program or policy areas where there "are established, strong national networks of practitioners." And so good ideas that spring from the education and social services world tend to spread quickly through what are traditionally fairly cohesive networks, whereas initiatives in an area like environmental protection—a notoriously fragmented policy area, both from the standpoint of programs and jurisdictions—don't spread so quickly.

As a purely mechanical matter, it's a point worth emphasizing: Communication networks are clearly important to program replication, and the larger and more established those networks the better. But regardless of how well developed the communication network, complicated ideas just don't seed well. Parents as Teachers and Here, Thayer and Everywhere were both educational initiatives, yet one became an international phenomenon while the other disappeared. The only explanation for why that happened is that one was a very simple idea; the other wasn't.

Make It Easy to Execute

Programs that seem to have natural powers of survival and replication don't require major legislation or huge administrative rule changes to create or implement, nor do they force participation. That is, stakeholders can choose to be part of a new way of doing business of their own free will.

Operation Ceasefire, the preemptive approach to gang violence out of Boston and a 1997 Innovations award winner, wasn't predicated on the permission of—or any official action by—the Boston City Council. Furthermore, the program doesn't force anybody to do anything. It's based on a voluntary and collaborative approach to diffusing tension among gangs, essentially by trying to get people in a room to talk. In fact, in Operation Ceasefire's case, a large part of its effectiveness is clearly because at-risk youth are asked to participate rather than ordered to fall into line. (To be accurate, the program does have a "stick" component: If gangs don't decide to ease up on their own initiative, the police promise a swift crackdown.) The program is a strong survivor and has been replicated in cities from Birmingham, Alabama, to Wilmington, Delaware.

Project Match, the ground-breaking welfare-to-work program out of Chicago, was a new strategy in helping break the welfare dependence cycle that, likewise, required no one's permission to try and didn't mandate participation. The program did benefit from money set aside by the Illinois Department of Public Aid for pilot projects. But because Project Match wasn't created by legislation or administrative rules, and because clients were coming to the program voluntarily, it evinced a staying and replication power that has allowed it

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not only to survive right through federal welfare reform, but also to serve as a model for all of the mandatory programs aimed at moving people off welfare and into jobs that operate today.

Likewise, the long-running and 2001 Innovations award-winning Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement program out of California was not the result of any lengthy hearings or detailed change in laws or rules, and it does not mandate participation. The program simply offers students the opportunity to get some extra help in studying science and math in order to move forward academically. In 30 years the program has expanded from one school to more than 450 schools. And arguably, it is because of the program's voluntary nature that it continues to thrive even after California's sweeping anti-affirmative-action ballot initiative, Proposition 209, which specifically prohibits the state from establishing programs or policies that make choices based on race.

On the other hand, Georgia's successful effort to sunset its civil service system was directly dependent on legislation, legislation that, not incidentally, required a once-in-a-generation alignment of some very state-specific political stars, along with the solid backing of the system's (former) internal "customers" —those state agencies the civil service system was supposed to be helping. The initiative survives in Georgia because it is now the law, but don't look for many (if any) states to follow Georgia's lead. In fact, as close as any state has come to doing what Georgia has done is Florida, which recently put a large number of its management positions outside of its merit system. Putting all employees outside of the merit system proved to be too tough an initiative to push through the legislature.

Similarly, Child Care Management Services, Texas's effort to offer one-stop shopping for a variety of child welfare programs, was heavily dependent on the permission of government officials—federal government officials, in particular. In fact, the program finally was created only after a five-year fight with the federal government over regulations and waivers. For that reason, the whole effort became as much a cautionary tale about tangling with the federal welfare bureaucracy as it did a model for how to do child welfare services more intelligently. According to the survey returned by the Texas pro-

gram to the Institute for Government Innovation, only four other states have followed Texas's lead. Despite that, there were and continued to be sporadic attempts (pre-1996 welfare reform) to integrate and streamline a variety of social services programs in states and counties around the country, and some of those efforts were subsequently recognized by the Innovations program. But each seemed to have its own tale of woe about bucking entrenched interests in finally developing more integrated programs and systems.

Shoot for Quick Results

Many of the Innovations award winners that have gone on to be widely copied have another thing in common: They yield measurable results in a very short period of time. David Osborne puts it another way: "They have a good story to tell." And in the innovations business, a good story revolving around quick, easily communicated results is priceless.

The Oregon Vendor Information program, the 1993 winner mentioned earlier that allowed the state to put up requests for proposals and to accept bids for materials and services over the Internet, is a perfect example of not just a good story but a great one. The Oregon program yielded its results almost instantaneously. Virtually the moment Oregon started posting RFPs on the Internet, it started hearing from far-flung vendors ready to compete. It was a twin win for the state. First, the new program was a huge money saver just from an administrative standpoint. According to Oregon officials, the program paid for itself within one year just in the reduced costs of doing RFPs the old-fashioned, paper-driven way. (The state was actually spending nearly $150,000 a year in postage under the old paper-driven system.) Second, state officials estimate they saved $17 million the first year and a quarter from enhanced competition injected into the purchasing process by electronic bidding. In fact, the electronic bidding process was such a good idea that had Oregon not gotten there first, someone else clearly would have. The electronic bidding process is how hundreds of jurisdictions nationally and internationally now do business.

That same sort of instant success helped Community Voice Mail for Phoneless/Homeless Persons root and flourish, having been adopted by

Perritech, Perry Local Schools, Ohio

dozens of other jurisdictions since the program won its Innovations award in 1993. Besides being relatively easy to implement—it was a simple matter of setting up phone mail accounts for clients—it yielded results almost immediately. As reported in *Governing's* coverage of the program in November 1993, one unemployed power plant worker had six job offers within four days of the program's initiation—job offers that would have never found him absent the voice mail. Within a week the unemployed worker had a job. One month later, fully employed and getting back on his feet financially, he moved into his own apartment. Now that's a fast-acting program—and a great story.

A winner from 2000 that's generating a lot of interest is Perritech, the high school-based computer consulting firm run and staffed by students that was also mentioned earlier in this report. The company was mostly set up to trouble-shoot and service the school's new computer system, but students—who get advanced training and certification in a host of computer software, hardware, and networking systems—are now actually consulting to local businesses, including, of all places, the local nuclear power plant. There students helped set up hundreds of new desktop and laptop computers. "You have this image of typical fly-by-night teenagers who can't even make change without using a calculator," said Bob Kundrat, supervisor of client services for the plant. "These kids were really professional. They knew they were there to do a job and they did it well."

One of the Perritech's first alumni, a 19-year-old named Chris Hanus, is now working for one the state's largest law firms as its network analyst. Talking to Hanus on the phone is a joy; he's smart, personable, and full of entertaining tidbits, including the fact that he recently bought a house. Meanwhile, the program itself is developing partnerships with several other schools interested in starting similar programs, including an alternative school in Georgia for young offenders. Those are all great stories.

Be Frugal

As many have noted, one of the organizational imperatives damping down innovation in the public sector is a general disinclination to spend new money on untested ideas, even ones ginned up by seasoned veterans who might know what they're up to. This rule holds even for programs that extensive research indicate are probably going to be a worthwhile investment—eventually.

That would explain why a perfectly fine idea like Georgia's Voluntary (note the "voluntary") Pre-kindergarten Program hasn't been widely replicated. The price tag in Georgia of $200 million a year is clearly what's keeping other states from embarking on similar initiatives, even though it's axiomatic that dollars invested in a child's education early on pay dividends in educational achievement and social adjustment down the road. An innovation like the Trauma Intervention Program, on the other hand, is never going to get derailed due to lack of funds; it relies heavily on volunteers and costs relatively little to operate.

Kentucky's massive educational overhaul, Recreating Public Education for Results, a 1997 winner, has proved to be a virtual one-of-a-kind effort. Although pieces of it have been adopted in other states, no state has undertaken a similarly comprehensive reengineering of an entire educational system. And it's actually dubious whether the state itself would have undertaken the multibillion-dollar restructuring and reinvestment program had it not been for the fact that the Kentucky State Supreme Court had ordered it to do so.

Any program that is flat out dependent on a regular check from a legislative body is always going to be

at risk. The Work Force Unemployment Prevention Program—a 1990 winner out of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which placed inner-city youngsters into after-school white-collar job settings—was heavily dependent on a regular state stipend. Before the program could even begin developing a Perritech-like track record, it was summarily de-funded by the state legislature.

This truth—that innovation's replicability is fre-quently tied tightly to cost—seems so deeply imbedded in the innovation ethic, it's actually hard to find many Innovations award winners that involve huge investments of money. This holds true even for the high-ticket world of health care. Indeed, many of the health-related programs identi-fied by the Innovations award program have been picked specifically for the fact that they extended health care to some previously uncovered popula-tion and did it without significantly increasing a jurisdiction's costs. For example, Medical Care for Children, a 1990 winner out of Fairfax County, Virginia, was chosen in large part because it was a very successful effort to get medical and dental care to indigent kids without a huge influx of new county money. Likewise, Buncombe County Medical Society Project Access, a 1998 winner out of Buncombe County, North Carolina, won its award in part because it succeeded in expanding the delivery of quality primary care to uninsured adults countywide without a huge investment of new dollars. On the other hand, few jurisdictions have followed the lead of Hillsborough County, Florida, which tacked a half a cent on to its sales tax to fund managed health care for the poor, an idea that netted the county an Innovations award in 1995 for the Hillsborough County Health Care Plan.

One of the most likable of the 2001 Innovations award finalists was Chicago Fitness Plus, an initia-tive aimed at getting older folks into the habit of regular exercise as a way to promote independence and general well-being. When asked what was holding the obviously incredibly popular program back from expanding into more health and elder care centers, program officials cited that old refrain: money. If it costs a lot of money, survival will always be a struggle and the idea will always be a hard sell.

Make It Appealing

One of the really interesting features of the Innovations award program is that it clearly doesn't tend toward political pandering. Of course, it shouldn't. But still, what easier way to recognize replicable programs than to stick one's finger in the air, see which way the political winds are blowing, and then choose an early "three strikes and you're out" initiative knowing that 49 of them are bound to follow in rapid succession. In fact, the awards program tends to attract—and reward—those who buck conventional political "wisdom" and eschews the quick fix of the day.

This characteristic of the Innovations awards is par-ticularly notable in the whole area of criminal jus-tice. For example, a string of programs have been recognized for a focus on alternative ways to deal with criminals. The first was Alternatives to Incarceration, a 1987 program out of Georgia that emphasized probation over incarceration for non-violent offenders. And most recently, Reparative Probation, a 1998 winner from Vermont, was cho-sen for its emphasis on community service over probation—again, for non-violent offenders. But while both might be considered trend-buckers at first glance, it turns out that one has actually tapped into deep community sentiment, while the other really hasn't. In other words, to put it most simply, one has proved readily likable, the other less so, and the proof is in the replication.

If anything, the Georgia program preceded a wave not of alternatives to incarceration but of unprece-dented "get-tough-on-criminals" laws, including boot camp and mandatory sentencing initiatives. Needless to say, states haven't fallen over them-selves in following Georgia's lead, although there is—and recently has been—a good deal of discus-sion and debate nationally about alternatives to jail time for non-violent offenders. California's recent ballot initiative requiring that non-violent drug offenders do counseling rather than hard time is evidence that, at least in some places, people are climbing on this bandwagon. Still, few politicians seem very interested in getting out in front on the alternatives to jail platform. Nor does there seem to be enough of a groundswell of support for such ideas that Georgia's or California's efforts will be broadly replicated. New York has been mired in a

debate about easing up its tough drug sentencing laws for years now; there's no evidence that the legislature or governor is getting anywhere near enough grassroots pressure to move them.

On the other hand, Vermont's Reparative Probation program seems to have struck a real populist, community chord. Through the program, communities set up citizen boards to consider community service sentences for non-violent offenders who've committed crimes against that community. Offenders have the option of pleading guilty and opting for alternative service (graffiti artists might be required to paint the trim on city hall, for example) over a trial that would then risk fines, jail time and/or probation. Not only has the program grown within the state, but more than a dozen other states and localities have started similar ones, according to Vermont officials.

The difference between the Georgia and Vermont initiatives, and the lesson for would-be innovators: To survive and thrive the innovation doesn't have to pander, but it does have to, at some level, be one that people can connect with. At the very least they have to be ideas that don't draw sustained, focused opposition in the absence of widespread community or stakeholder support.

For example, politically dicey programs like Sheriff Ashe's jailhouse health campaign can probably survive as long as they skim along below the radar. But the Hampden program doesn't fall into the "likable" category, especially when compared to a host of other Innovations award winners. Take, for example, the Police Homeowner Loan Program, a 1993 initiative out of the capital city of Columbia, South Carolina, aimed at encouraging city police officers to move back downtown and into distressed neighborhoods. While it took some persuading and real sweetening of the financial home purchase and employment packages to get police officers' attention, as a program there's nothing not to like about it. And that's clearly one of the reasons that it has been picked up in dozens of other communities. Such programs, it should be noted, have been dogged by charges of fraud in some places. An innovation lesson for another day is that even the best ideas can be abused by creative thieves, but that shouldn't stop people from pursuing good ideas.

In looking at the broad swath of Innovations programs, a bunch of them are flat out likable. Gallery 37, a youth-focused program out of Chicago and a 1997 winner, pairs kids in paid apprenticeships with accomplished, professional artists. The kids' work is then displayed in various public places all over the city. It's such a likable idea that it's been picked up in more than a dozen jurisdictions, from Tuscon, Arizona, to Toledo, Ohio, and even Adelaide, Australia, according to Gallery 37 officials. Likewise, who is going to squawk about a program like the aforementioned Perritech, a natural for replication? And chances are that even Chicago's Fitness Plus program will start to seed itself in other cities, even if it does cost a little money. It will likely do that because there's another kind of math that enters into the replication equation here: an aging voter population looking to government for likable ideas. Fitness Plus is one that older folks seem to like a lot.

Likable, though, can be tough to predict at times. One program that seemed like it couldn't possibly lose a civic popularity contest wound up sinking out of sight anyway. California's much hyped and publicized Info/California, a 1993 winner, with its fleet of publicly placed touch-screen, interactive kiosks, fell flat on its face. The state had plans to buy and locate 100 of the terminals at $30,000 a pop, but those plans were scrapped. It wasn't that people necessarily hated the things, they just didn't use them.

Meanwhile, those programs that touch off basic and sustained (or very effective acute) opposition are obviously not destined for bright futures. Take, for example, Maine Top 200. Given the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's remarkable and measurable success in reducing worker injury and death in key industries in Maine, OSHA decided to take the program national. Its reward for its ambitious push was to be sued by the National Association of Manufacturers, which claimed that record-keeping requirements under the new initiative amounted to new "rules." The manufacturers argued that all such rules must go through the usual process of public hearings and comment, which they hadn't. The manufacturers won their lawsuit, effectively killing the program. (To be accurate, the program lives on in a way: After its success in Maine, OSHA continues to use data on deaths and injuries to target enforcement nationally. What was

lost in the wake of the manufacturers' lawsuit, ironically, was the working-cooperatively-with-industry component of the program.)

But of all the programs handed an Innovations award, there was probably none so doomed as Racial Integration Incentives, that star-crossed 1988 award winner mentioned earlier. Dedicated to creating and maintaining racial balance in the neighborhoods of three Cleveland suburbs, it did have the fierce support of a handful of both whites and African Americans. But it was also fiercely attacked from both sides. Even the U.S. Justice Department under Ronald Reagan investigated it for charges of "racial steering" in real estate sales (nothing came of the investigation). In the end, the program was as unpopular as it was honorable. Unpopular prevailed.

Keep It Apolitical

A small handful of the initiatives identified by the Innovations program have "star power" because they're closely identified with a high-level elected or appointed public official.

Wisconsin Works (W2), which presaged federal welfare reform by almost 10 years (it was launched in 1987), was the hallmark of Governor Tommy Thompson's long reign as governor, and probably didn't hurt him when it came to winning his new job as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Replication of W2 was swift and pervasive; at least a dozen states pursued waivers similar to those granted Wisconsin under W2. And when Wisconsin finally won its Innovations award in 1999, the whole country was already three years into federal welfare reform. But even if W2 could be credited with having a huge influence over other states—and even the 1996 federal welfare reforms—its survival and replication would be the exception to the rule as far as innovation's longevity is concerned.

Typically programs recognized by the Innovations program that have close connections to a politician or political regime end up being swept out with a change of administration. Two in particular are representative. Minnesota's Strive Toward Excellence in Performance (STEP) program, a 1986 winner aimed at improving state administrative services, was tightly connected to political appointee Sandra Hale. When Governor Rudy Perpich's administra-

tion went, Hale and STEP went with it. It's worth noting, though, that Minnesota continues to be a leader in performance-based governance, and it's reasonable to argue that many of the ideas behind the STEP program live on in other incarnations. At the same time, programs similar to STEP have proliferated, although results-based governance is clearly one of those broad trends whose origins are really tough to pinpoint.

Maryland's Smart Growth initiative, recognized in 1999 as a finalist and in 2000 as a winner, will be interesting to watch in this regard. Tightly tied to the administration of Governor Parris Glendening, the sweeping sprawl-slowing initiative hasn't been picked up by any other state, and there is plenty of speculation about the program's survival once Glendening moves along. If he is succeeded by a fellow Democrat, then the program will probably continue to have the high-level support it needs to maintain its integrity and impact. Moreover, the fact that it is embedded in legislation gives it a better chance of survival. But sweeping land use regulations and policies in other states—like Vermont and Oregon—have become targets for steady chipping away by opponents. If there is a change in party in Maryland, look for Smart Growth's profile as a target to rise considerably.

While Oregon Benchmarks was closely tied to Governor Barbara Roberts, it was, in fact, a legislative initiative, which is one of the main reasons why it manages to stay alive through continuing

Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation, State of Maryland

legislative appropriations. Its survival is a matter of constant vigilance, to be sure, because it does rely directly on the munificence of the state legislature. But because Roberts won the buy-in of key legislators in pushing the program, it wound up with a more solid foundation of support than if it had been simply identified as a product of the Roberts administration.

All in all, though, one of the interesting and fairly consistent characteristics of the programs highlighted by the Kennedy School and the Ford Foundation is that they very rarely rely on star power or get tangled up in politics. For the most part, they are born quietly, and are pushed by people who weren't famous when they stepped into the innovations limelight and who haven't become famous after they stepped out of it. And that, as it turns out, is a pretty good foundation for successful innovation.

Personal Observations:
13 Years of Chronicling Innovators

For all the millions of words written about innovation in government (and the private sector), and for all the long-winded attempts to analyze the alchemy of change management in government—this tome included—innovation, at the end of the day, is a pretty straightforward proposition: It's a people-driven business. And the people behind innovation are a fascinating group.

It's easy to attach to them all the typical adjectives: creative, persistent, even courageous. But those words are used so often they've lost a lot of their punch, as accurate as they might be. Besides, what I've noticed about those who've been identified through the Innovations awards is something a little subtler: They are restless.

When it comes to how public jobs get done, there's a group of people (many, to be sure, who've never been recognized by any awards program and who never will be) who just seem, like the mythical Prince Valiant, to be perennially dissatisfied. Which is why no change-management recipe book in the world is ever going to capture the magic of innovation in the form of some immutable quasi-political or social-scientific math equation. In the end it's actually more of a nurture-nature question best left to psychologists—who, by the way, don't really have any answers, either.

Still, "experts" have been analyzing innovation in the public (and private) sector for eons. Whether it's Borins, Osborne, Light, Peters, or Walters, dozens have gone through the exercise of putting innovative organizations and programs under the micro-scope in hopes of finding that magic bit of genetic material that will allow innovation to be cloned.

It's not an easy thing to do. Yes, organizations can be structured in a way that will encourage innovation. And certainly it helps to understand the inspiration behind certain types of innovation so that when opportunity visits it can be turned to action. Characteristics of sustainable and replicable programs are worth identifying so that once-and-future innovators at least have the benefit of knowing some tricks of the trade as they embark on the frequently frustrating adventure of pushing change.

But if innovation were a matter of organizational dynamic or just the right opportunity, it would hardly ever happen in the public sector, or probably anywhere else, for that matter. It is people who push it, people often working in dysfunctional organizations under miserable circumstances, and in spite of that, they try to change things.

Which is why in the 13 years of closely following the Innovations in American Government program, what I have seen collected is as much a gallery of good people as it is a database of good ideas. As mentioned in the previous section, very few of the programs recognized have been pushed by high-level, well-known public sector all-stars. For the most part, the programs are the product of inside and outside stakeholders who are simply tired of doing something one way when they suspect—or know—there's a better way; who are tired of chronic mediocrity (or outright failure) when they know government should and could do better.

Trying to list all the people I've met and/or interviewed in the course of those 13 years who've impressed me with their dedication and creativity (not just from the standpoint of the idea, but also from the standpoint of getting the idea implemented) is a hazardous enterprise only because there have been so many who stand out. I will mention a few; but I could easily list many more.

Let's start with Donald L. DeMarco, one of the first award winners I ever met. He's one of the principals behind the ill-fated program aimed at maintaining racial balance in Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, and University Heights, Ohio. Even to a green reporter (at least when it came to covering innovations), it was obvious that DeMarco's quest was pure Don Quixote. Here was a guy who, in essence, was trying to buck the most fundamental forces of social and economic behavior in our nation—if not the world. What was the payoff? Besides an Innovations award (much appreciated, certainly, but no antidote for the inevitable), DeMarco got nothing but resistance and attack from all quarters. He was even harassed by his own government in the form of the U.S. Department of Justice. What DeMarco had going for him was this startling, fearless, bulldog tenacity when it came to doing what he thought was right. It wasn't until I met DeMarco that I fully understood the single-minded dedication of purpose, the capacity for action, and the courage of those who had pushed for civil rights in the 1950s and '60s. It was an eye-opener.

Or consider a guy like John Baldwin, principal of the Hamilton Terrace Learning Center, the 1995 award-winning program aimed at helping shepherd troubled teens and welfare mothers into higher education and toward independence. He commandeered an empty school building (he talked a custodian out of his keys). He then won over his superintendent by promising to deliver an education program that would become the "crowning star" of the district. Then—and on his own—he lined up the financial support needed to create the program. And, finally, he developed a whole new curriculum aimed at this jumbled-up and challenging student mix. Keep in mind that Baldwin had no other ambition here. He wasn't running for anything. The work he did wasn't going to make him wealthy (to say the least). He was never going to be on the cover of any

Photo: Andy Kuno

Norma Hotaling

national magazine recognizing him for his fine work and dedication. There was no large cash "genius" prize in his future that would allow him to live easily for a while. All he got was the satisfaction of knowing that in the face of chronic failure, he was trying something different to help a specific group of people who needed that help.

Two women, likewise, immediately come to mind when I think about the activists I've met or talked to who had some connection to the Innovations awards. Norma Hotaling, who pushed the First Offender Prostitution Program in San Francisco, is, to put it mildly, intimidating. She is an ex-prostitute with an attitude. Not only did she pull herself out of a life on the streets, she's now trying to make a real difference in other people's lives by championing a much more compassionate and common sense approach to the all-too-human problem of sexual exploitation of women and children. Largely because of her work and the work of like-minded activists, the ideas she supports do slowly seem to be working their way into the law enforcement policies of other localities both here and overseas, in spite of frequently running up against political brick walls.

Where Hotaling is a steamroller, Mary Ellen Rehrman is a tough, wisecracking lobbyist with a huge heart and the ability to work with government insiders to make big change. Rehrman, like Hotaling, is also fueled by hard firsthand knowledge of public sector policy failure. After just a few minutes on the phone with Rehrman—who now

runs a Philadelphia-based clearinghouse advocating more enlightened treatment for people in mental hospitals nationwide—it became quite clear why it is that her home state of Pennsylvania has come to lead the country in its highly evolved restraint and seclusion policies for its public mental hospitals. Rehrman flat out wouldn't have it any other way. Most simply put, people like Hotaling and Rehrman are the status quo's worst enemies.

By contrast, but just as effective, is a chronic innovator like Joe Dear, who has bagged two Innovations awards. He is one of those quiet, behind-the-scenes types who evinces a constant restless energy that is focused on analyzing government activity in relation to desired results. Where the two don't seem to be matching up, Dear starts asking hard questions. He was behind OSHA's Maine Top 200 initiative, which looked at death and injury rates in that state in relation to types of work and then focused preemptive safety efforts on the appropriate industries to remarkable effect. He also pushed an award-winning initiative to overhaul Washington State's dysfunctional worker compensation system. Bespectacled and diminutive, Dear will chew over a question you've asked him about public sector management in Austin, Texas, in April and will continue his answer when you bump into him a month later in Olympia, Washington. He's very smart. Unfortunately for the public sector, Dear is now working for a private business. But I predict he'll be back at some point; he seems to have too much fun doing public policy.

Just as restless and smart is someone like Mary Ellen Skinner, one of the driving bureaucrats behind the Texas Child Care Management Services initiative, the effort to knit together diverse programs aimed at helping kids in Texas. It goes without saying that persistence had more than a little to do with pursuing her *five-year* fight to bring some rationality and cohesiveness to social services delivery there. But what she actually taught me was the value of a (very wry) sense of humor when it comes to surviving that kind of grinding campaign against institutionalized irrationality. In a soft, Southern, almost whimsical lilt, she can deliver some wicked one-liners aimed at federal child care policy—and they are frequently right on the mark.

Photo: Carl Cook

Joe Dear

Then there's a guy like Redlands, California, Chief of Police James R. Bueermann, who is simply way ahead of the game. His program—Risk-Focused Policing—is a community health approach to crime prevention and was a 2000 Innovations award finalist. The chief was clearly disappointed that his program didn't win. That's understandable, but I was happy just to meet the brains behind the effort. Even in this day and age of community policing, top cops tend to come from the old-fashioned "bust heads" school of law enforcement. But Bueermann is a thinker, someone who really understands and can articulate the value of prevention when it comes to keeping communities safe. If more in law enforcement thought the way he did, governments would be spending much more money on housing and community development and a lot less on high-powered handguns and bulletproof vests for police officers.

Again, it's not just Innovations award winners who deserve to be mentioned here; I could continue on with dozens of people I've interviewed in the last 20 years who embody all the same qualities and who've never been formally recognized by anyone for their achievements, large and small, and who probably never will be. Government is no different in that regard from the private sector; it harbors the hapless and the wonderful alike. But I believe being wonderful is considerably harder in the public sector, and it really means something.

A perennial and probably futile hope is that the mainstream press will start recognizing this; that it will shake its obsession with disaster and celebrity and tune in more carefully to those in the public sector who are out on a limb, trying to get something good done, often against fierce odds and occasionally failing spectacularly. Probably the most haunting thing ever told to me by an Innovations award winner was when I asked Don DeMarco what it was like to be pushing change on such a deserted, controversial, and unpopular frontier: "For so long we've been the test," said DeMarco, "and it's lonely out here." Short of the popular media figuring out who the real heroes in this world are, such award programs as that funded by Ford and run by the Kennedy School are at least, I hope, making it a little less lonely.

Finally, if pressed to come up with my own formula for how all this should work, and to borrow from the contemporary political lexicon, maybe we need to institute some sort of "two strikes" rule for innovation based on Mary Ellen Rehrman's observation: If some policy or program is not humane and it's not therapeutic (or, more broadly, if its not morally defensible and it's not working), then it's a signal to everyone that it's time for change. Or maybe it ought to be a "one strike" rule. But either way, it's going to be people who decide that.

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Jonathan Walters is a staff correspondent for *Governing* magazine. Walters has been covering state and local public administration and policy for more than 20 years, writing for publications including the *Washington Post,* the *New York Times,* and *USA Today.* For the past 10 years he has been focusing on public sector management and administration with an emphasis on change management and results-based governance. Past articles for *Governing* have included stories on total quality management, performance measurement, activity-based costing, performance-based budgeting, the balanced scorecard, and management trends and innovation in government.

For the past 13 years, he has been directly involved in covering the Ford Foundation/Kennedy School Innovations in American Government awards. He is also the author of *Measuring Up! Governing's Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses and Other Public Managers.* Walters frequently speaks on a wide range of subjects related to public sector policy and administration, from performance-based governance to civil service reform.

Besides covering government, Walters is actively involved in government in his hometown of Ghent, New York, where he serves as co-chair of the planning board and as the town's freedom of information law officer. He is also active in his local volunteer fire company. Walters graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1977 with a B.A. in English/Journalism.

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