



Can Government Be Agile?



**AGILE
GOVERNMENT
CENTER**

WHAT IS AGILE?

In software development, agile features small, cross-functional, self-organizing teams that include customers working quickly to deliver solutions in increments that immediately provide value. The development is customer centric and networks are used for development and deployment.

WHAT ARE AGILE PRINCIPLES?

The Agile Manifesto was developed in 2001 by a group of software developers who were frustrated by the paradigm governing their industry at the time. These principles continue to guide projects and programs of software development today. Agile developers use “scrum” and “sprints” as techniques to produce products quickly that have a high degree of customer acceptance and satisfaction.

AGILE GOVERNMENT CENTER

The Agile Government Center will serve as the hub of a network that will bring together governments, nonprofits, foundations, academic institutions and private sector partners to assist in developing and disseminating agile government principles and case studies of agile policies and programs. This network will be a source of assistance to those who want to adopt and implement agile to provide public goods and services that fully meet customer needs and build public trust. It will:

- Be global in scope
- Determine Agile Government Principles
- Identify cases of Agile Government
- Assist in implementing Agile Government

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www.napawash.org/grandchallenges/challenge/agile-government-center





AGILE GOVERNMENT PRINCIPLES

Mission. *Should be extremely clear, and the organizational unit laser focused on achieving it.*

Metrics for Success. *Should be widely agreed upon, evidence-based, and easily tracked.*

Customer-Driven Behavior. *Should include frequent interaction with program beneficiaries, and be ingrained in the culture.*

Speed. *Should be encouraged and facilitated through co-location where possible.*

Empowered, Highly Skilled, Cross Functional Teams. *Should engage in continual face-to-face communication should replace siloed bureaucratic systems.*

Innovation. *Should be rewarded—within the overall framework of existing rules and regulations — and changes in rules and regulations should be proposed where necessary.*

Persistence. *Should feature continuous experimentation, evaluation, and improvement in order to learn from both success and failure.*

Evidence-Based Solutions. *Should be the gold standard for creating program options.*

Organizational Leaders *Should eliminate roadblocks, aggregate and assume risk, and empower teams to make decisions.*

Diversity of Thought. *Should be encouraged.*





GOVERNMENT APPLICATION OF AGILE

In the Age of Agile, author Stephen Denning outlines three “laws” for the application of agile management principles. These are:

- The Law of Small Teams: “In a VUCA (Violent, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, big and difficult problems need to be disaggregated into small batches and performed by small cross functional autonomous teams, working in relatively short cycles in a state of flow, with fast feedback from customers.”
- The Law of the Customer: Denning suggests that “the epic shift in power in the marketplace from seller to buyer (creates) a need for firms to radically accelerate their ability to make decisions and change directions in light of unexpected events.”
- The Law of the Network: This is the “lynch pin.” He suggests that a vertical hierarchy is no match for an interactive network.



A CASE STUDY

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

The mission was clear—save the economy from further collapse. President Obama and Vice President Biden created an eight-person Recovery Improvement Office. In a very short period of time, interconnected networks were working rapidly, meeting the objectives of the Act in distributing more than \$800 billion with virtually no allegations of waste, fraud, or abuse.

Central to this effort was the continuous communication by the White House Chief of Staff to other White House staff members, by the vice president to the cabinet, governors and mayors, and through bi-weekly calls between the office and the 22 departments responsible for spending the money. Additional networks using public interest groups created an action orientation that allowed the Recovery Act to meet its objectives of creating and saving jobs, helping those most hurt by the Great Recession, developing infrastructure, and making sure that states were not forced to raise taxes or cut services.

 *We are excited to launch this initiative, which is especially significant given the Academy's current focus on identifying and addressing the Grand Challenges of Public Administration.*

The Agile Government Center will serve as a practical solution to the challenges of 21st century governance, problems we must address in an innovative and collaborative manner. 

*—Terry Gerton, President and CEO
of the Academy.*



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ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The National Academy of Public Administration helps government leaders solve their most critical management challenges. Since 1967, our congressionally chartered non-partisan, nonprofit Academy has provided expert advice to government leaders in building and managing more effective, efficient, equitable, accountable, and transparent organizations. Our national network of over 900 Fellows includes former cabinet officers, members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as prominent scholars, business executives, and public administrators.



12 GRAND CHALLENGES

In 2018, the National Academy of Public Administration launched the Grand Challenges in Public Administration campaign to identify the biggest challenges that government will face during the 2020s. To learn more about our 12 Grand Challenges in Public Administration, visit www.napawash.org/grandchallenges.



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