



A Framework for Sustained Executive–Legislative Collaboration on Federal Management¹

Participants in the February 5 roundtable expressed broad agreement that since its inception, the PMA has served as a useful tool for Administrations to advance their management priorities. At the same time, there was equally strong consensus that agreement on high-level objectives has not translated into consistent, durable implementation. Prior PMAs have often suffered from being too expansive, insufficiently prioritized, and disconnected from the legislative, operational, and cultural realities that ultimately determine whether reforms succeed.

The discussion underscored that meaningful management reform requires more than policy statements or executive directives. The federal government still lacks a future focused, integrated, outcome-based, and resource constrained strategic plan. And Congress and the President must appoint a qualified, independent, and respected Comptroller General, as well as Inspectors General, on whom the government depends for independent oversight and recommendations for reform.

Most of the work needed to achieve progress, though occurs within executive branch agencies, yet Congress retains significant influence through its control of statutory authorities, data access, funding structures, and oversight incentives. (Congress' point of view, though, is often limited by its stovepiped committee jurisdictions.) Historically, progress has been most durable when these two branches have engaged in sustained, pragmatic collaboration focused on removing specific barriers to execution rather than debating abstract principles.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of focus. Attempting to advance a large number of priorities simultaneously has tended to dilute accountability and slow progress. By contrast, prior efforts that concentrated on a limited number of initiatives, assigned clear ownership, and tracked progress through transparent metrics were more likely to produce results. This experience suggests the need to organize management priorities into a small number of coherent areas that share common implementation challenges and can be pursued in a disciplined way with clearer authority, responsibility, and accountability.

¹ This paper is a product of a Driving Government Efficiency Roundtable at which representatives of the Legislative and Executive Branches, as well as representatives of the private sector, participated on February 5, 2026.



One area where there appears to be particularly strong bipartisan interest is payment integrity and performance accountability. Issues related to improper payments, fraud prevention, and internal controls were cited as both substantively important and publicly understandable. Progress in this area depends heavily on improved data access, system interoperability, and clear accountability for outcomes, areas where executive action and legislative support must be closely aligned.

A second cluster of priorities concerns how the federal government buys goods and services, hires and manages its workforce, and evaluates performance. Fragmented procurement practices, duplicative administrative systems, and inconsistent enforcement of performance expectations continue to undermine efficiency and mission delivery. Addressing these issues requires not only policy direction but also sustained attention to incentives, acquisition timelines, and the practical constraints faced by agencies and their workforce.

A third set of priorities relates to the government's digital and data infrastructure. Consolidation and standardization of systems, reduction of duplicative websites, elimination of data silos, improvement in data quality, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence were all discussed as long-term enablers of better service delivery and stronger cybersecurity. Participants noted that progress in these areas typically unfolds over many years and across administrations, reinforcing the importance of realistic timelines and continuity.

To support progress across these areas, the discussion – at the Roundtable and after – pointed toward establishing a standing Executive–Legislative Management Forum, a regular, structured venue for addressing implementation barriers and sustaining momentum on shared management priorities.

Elements of a Standing Executive–Legislative Management Forum

Mission: The forum would serve as a problem-solving venue to identify and resolve specific statutory, operational, and resource barriers to implementing shared management priorities. Its purpose is not to duplicate existing oversight mechanisms or committee jurisdictions, but rather to provide a routine setting where implementation challenges can be surfaced, diagnosed, and addressed through coordinated executive and legislative action.

Core Functions: The forum could initially focus on: identifying implementation barriers requiring legislative or executive action; facilitating information sharing on progress, challenges, and best practices across the priority areas; coordinating activities to avoid conflicting or duplicative

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initiatives; and escalating issues that require senior leadership attention when working-level collaboration reaches an impasse.

Potential Membership: To be effective, the forum would require buy-in from principals in both the Executive and Legislative Branches. Participation could include current executives from the Office of Management and Budget, management council representatives, and committee staff from relevant legislative jurisdictions including those focused on government operations. The exact composition would remain flexible to accommodate the specific issues under discussion and to respect existing committee structures and relationships, though it would be limited to current federal executives.

Operating Principles: The forum would operate on a regular cadence—potentially quarterly—with working-level meetings complemented by periodic engagement of senior officials when decisions require their authority. Rather than creating new bureaucracy, the forum would regularize and formalize conversations that often occur informally, providing structure and continuity that increases the likelihood of follow-through. The forum would maintain a practical, problem-solving orientation, emphasizing concrete next steps. Progress would be tracked transparently using a limited number of outcome-focused metrics.

Initial Focus: A phased approach might begin with the three priority clusters identified in this framework: payment integrity, acquisition and workforce management, and digital and data infrastructure. This focus would allow the forum to demonstrate value in areas where there is already bipartisan interest and where progress depends on close executive–legislative coordination. As the forum proves its effectiveness, its scope could adapt to address emerging priorities.

This approach builds on successful precedents from prior administrations where sustained, working-level collaboration between the branches produced tangible results. The standing forum described here would provide the institutional foundation for this partnership while maintaining sufficient flexibility to adapt as priorities and political circumstances evolve.

Regular engagement would be most effective if paired with simple, transparent measures of progress. Participants highlighted that prior efforts benefited from the use of scorecards that tracked outcomes rather than compliance activity. Limiting metrics to a manageable number and clearly identifying accountable leaders can help maintain focus and enable course correction when progress stalls.

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Finally, the conversation emphasized the importance of adopting timelines that reflect the realities of transformational change. Many management reforms cannot be completed within the tenure of individual political appointees. Setting expectations over multiple years, and explicitly acknowledging the need for continuity across administrations, may increase the likelihood that reforms are sustained rather than repeatedly restarted.

Taken together, the discussion suggests that advancing shared management priorities will require disciplined prioritization, durable executive–legislative engagement, clear accountability, and a sustained partnership with career civil servants. The standing forum described above would provide the institutional foundation for this partnership while maintaining flexibility to adapt as priorities evolve. A framework built around these principles may offer a more practical path from agreement on goals to measurable improvements in how the federal government operates.

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