

# Nonprofits urge Obama to focus on program performance

A coalition of good government groups this week will add its wish list to a growing pile of advice for President-elect Barack Obama and the 111th Congress, ranking performance measurement and improvement as top priorities.

"Performance must be paramount if governing for excellence is to be attained and replicated," the Government Performance Coalition stated in draft recommendations. "Good policies and sound investments will fall short of the mark if anything less than exceptional performance is the predominate mode of operation."

The advocates for a more effective government urged Obama and Congress to set standards and demand accountability through a performance-based framework at executive and legislative branch agencies. This should include linking agency budgets with annual performance plans, developing outcome measures that focus on critical priorities, and applying an objective system to evaluate program and individual successes, the groups said.

They also recommended issuing short reports that give the public a better understanding of the government and fuel a more meaningful debate about fiscal priorities, performance results and future challenges.

The coalition called for greater investment in human resources, including recruiting, orienting, developing and retaining a productive federal workforce, and engaging in workforce planning to address future skills needs. The next president also should

issue a call to service, encouraging talented Americans to address the nation's biggest challenges by working for the federal government, the coalition said.

In addition, Obama and Congress should assess the use of contractors and determine the correct balance of outsourced versus government-performed work at federal agencies, the recommendations stated.

Finally, the coalition suggested promoting the strategic use of technology to reengineer work processes to improve service delivery and accountability. This also would help meet the expectations of an increasingly tech-savvy population by tapping the Internet to give people instant access to the government.

The coalition, which was founded in 2000 and consists of 18 good government groups, does not advocate specific policy programs or positions, but rather, presents lawmakers and the administration with tools they can use to formulate an effective government management agenda.

"Our view of working with a new administration and transition team is that it's important to suggest to them what they should focus on and how," said Patricia McGinnis, president of the Council for Excellence in Government, during a recent interview. "But it's equally important and maybe even more important for that to be a real two-way street -- to understand their priorities, what they want to get done, and then tailor what we're offering to help make that happen."

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