

**National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations
25th Public Meeting
March 20, 2013**

On March 20, 2013, the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations held its 25th meeting at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM Director John Berry and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Controller Daniel Werfel co-chaired the meeting, with the following Council members present:

Council Member	Title
Ms. Carol Bonosaro	President, Senior Executives Association
Mr. William Dougan	President, National Federation of Federal Employees
Mr. Ernest DuBester	Chairman, Federal Labor Relations Authority
Mr. Michael Filler	Director of Public Services, International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Mr. W. Scott Gould	Deputy Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Gregory Junemann	President, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers
Ms. Colleen M. Kelley	National President, National Treasury Employees Union
Ms. Kathleen Merrigan	Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Mr. H.T. Nguyen	Executive Director, Federal Education Association

The following individuals sat in for absent Council members:

- Ms. Catherine Emerson, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Chief Human Capital Officer, for Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Deputy Secretary, DHS;
- Mr. T. Michael Kerr, Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, Department of Labor (DOL), for DOL Deputy Secretary Seth David Harris;
- Ms. Gina Lightfoot-Walker, Federal Division Director for the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), for Mr. David Holway, National President, NAGE;
- Mr. Greg Stanford, Director of Government Affairs, Federal Managers Association (FMA), sat for FMA National President Patricia Niehaus; and
- Mr. Frederick E. Vollrath, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, for Mr. Ashton B. Carter, Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The Designated Federal Officer, Mr. Tim Curry, OPM Deputy Associate Director, Partnership and Labor Relations, was present, as were 28 members of the public, including 2 media representatives.

Agenda Item I: Welcome

At 10:05 a.m., Mr. Berry began the meeting, and said, “Good morning. Welcome to the second Council meeting of 2013. Thank you all for taking the time to be here today.”

Mr. Berry announced, “This Council operates as a committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act or FACA. To facilitate opportunities for those of you who are not Council members to address the Council directly, we have set aside time on the agenda for you to make brief statements to the Council. If you wish to address the Council regarding any topics presented today or any other matter, we request that you wait until the appropriate time on the agenda, when we ask if any member of the public wishes to make any brief statements to the Council.”

Before proceeding with the agenda, Mr. Berry informed the Council that the draft minutes of the previous meeting included all of the Council’s edits to date, and asked if there were recommendations for additional changes. The Council unanimously approved the minutes without further revision, and proceeded with the meeting agenda.

Agenda Item II: Report of Agenda Subcommittee

Mr. Berry reminded everyone that, in its previous meeting, the Council discussed ways to re-energize efforts to support [Executive Order 13522](#): “The President remains committed to working with employees through their representatives in improving the productivity and effectiveness of the Federal Government. We are going to use this year to get back to the basics and operate this Council differently so we can better support the labor-management forums across the Government. In the January 2013 meeting, the Council decided to form the Agenda Subcommittee, which we tasked with mapping out a general plan for the Council’s agenda for the remainder of 2013. We’ve asked Tim Curry to brief us on what the Agenda Subcommittee is recommending for our consideration. Once Tim has briefed us on agenda ideas, we will have time to discuss the ideas and then we will ask you to adopt these ideas.”

Mr. Curry began a briefing accompanied by slides labeled “Agenda Subcommittee,” first providing a brief overview of the new group’s activities to date.¹ He said the subcommittee meets every other week, and so far has met on January 31, February 14, February 28, and March 14, 2013. He displayed a list of member agencies and unions, and pointed out that most organizations serving on the Council are represented.

Mr. Curry reported that the Agenda Subcommittee has already developed a draft general outline for Council meeting agendas for the remainder of 2013. The subcommittee recommended that each meeting agenda include at least one *key topic*, which Mr. Curry defined as “a major or substantive issue.” The subcommittee also suggested including other ongoing topics and progress reports as needed, e.g. presentations by the Problem Resolution Subcommittee and frontline wisdom success stories.

Elaborating on the idea of frontline wisdom success stories, Mr. Curry explained that such presentations would—

- Be by labor-management forums and focus on: 1) the prior labor-management relationship, 2) factors that changed that relationship; and 3) how the change contributed to accomplishment of mission and service delivery;

¹ In addition to agreeing to form the Agenda Subcommittee, the Council agreed in its previous meeting to establish the Problem Resolution Subcommittee, whose presentation will later also be summarized in these minutes.

- Be followed by a guided Council discussion to determine how to leverage lessons learned from each success story for the benefit of other labor-management forums; and
- Provide lessons learned to inform the efforts of the Problem Resolution Subcommittee, which could use the lessons in guidance to labor-management forums.

Regarding the frontline wisdom presentations, Mr. Curry identified the most important point as the opportunity to learn from the stories and transfer the knowledge to other forums, since the key goal of EO 13522 is to optimize mission accomplishment and service delivery.

Mr. Curry presented meeting agenda topics the subcommittee proposed for upcoming meetings in 2013, and emphasized that the intent was not to suggest the exclusion of other topics. The suggested topics for each meeting are below, by meeting date.

May 15, 2013 Council Meeting

Mr. Curry presented these Agenda Subcommittee suggestions for the May 15 meeting:

- Key Topic - Career Development.
- Other topics judged necessary by the Agenda Subcommittee and/or Council, e.g.—
 - Frontline Wisdom Presentation,
 - Problem Resolution Subcommittee, and
 - Other topics as deemed appropriate.

Mr. Curry advised that a Career Development Subcommittee be formed soon, said volunteers are welcome, and proposed the new subcommittee's first meeting be on March 27, 2013. He reminded everyone that the Council assembled a group in 2012 to start working on this topic, and recommended the new subcommittee leverage work already done by the prior group.²

Mr. Curry listed topics for the Career Development Subcommittee to consider in its meetings:

- College credit for agency training,
- Tools to help employees manage their careers,
- Tools for agencies to address skills gaps and succession planning, and
- Other related matters as necessary.

July 17, 2013 Council Meeting

Mr. Curry presented these Agenda Subcommittee suggestions for the July 17 meeting:

- Key Topic - Establishment of Best Labor-Management Forum Award in order to recognize and promote outstanding and innovative labor-management forums throughout the Executive Branch.

² See page 9 of the minutes of the [February 15, 2012, meeting](#), in which the decision was made to establish the previous career development group.

- Other topics judged necessary by the Agenda Subcommittee and/or Council, such as—
 - Frontline wisdom presentation,
 - Problem Resolution Subcommittee issues, and
 - Any other topics deemed appropriate.
- Best Labor-Management Forum Award Subcommittee should be formed, and it should develop—
 - Eligibility criteria,
 - Selection process (e.g. nomination deadlines; review of nominations, etc.),
 - An application/nomination form, and
 - Selection criteria (e.g. improved customer service; increased productivity; saved or avoided costs, etc.).

Mr. Curry proposed that a Best Labor-Management Forum Award Subcommittee form and start meeting as soon as possible.

September 18, 2013 Council Meeting

Mr. Curry presented these Agenda Subcommittee suggestions for the September 18 meeting:

- Key Topic - “Promoting Telework to Improve Continuity, Reduce Costs, and Increase Job Satisfaction.”
- Other topics judged necessary by Agenda Subcommittee and/or Council, such as—
 - Frontline Wisdom Presentation,
 - Problem Resolution Subcommittee issues, and
 - Any other topics deemed appropriate.

Mr. Curry suggested a Promoting Telework Subcommittee be formed, and added that it could rely on OPM’s 2013 report on telework, expected in summer of 2013, and other telework experts and data sources. He said the Council would need volunteers for the proposed subcommittee, and that the Council could determine within the next few months when to call for subcommittee members.

November 20, 2013 Council Meeting

- Key Topic - Presentation of Best Labor-Management Forum Award.
- Council meeting could be dedicated to Awards Ceremony.
- If necessary, other topics as determined necessary by the Agenda Subcommittee and/or Council, such as—
 - Frontline wisdom presentation,
 - Problem Resolution Subcommittee issues, and

- Any other topics deemed appropriate.

Council Discussion of Agenda Subcommittee Proposals

Ms. Bonosaro asked what the Council thought about the idea to establish the three additional subcommittees proposed by the Agenda Subcommittee, in terms of available people and other resources. Mr. Curry responded, “That’s a good question. We do tend to see the same faces when subcommittees are formed. We could look at engaging other agencies and unions not represented on the Council to participate in and support our subcommittees.”

Ms. Merrigan commented, “As some of you may know, last week I announced I’ll be stepping down as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.” She said she was very proud to serve both the Department of Agriculture and the Council, but added, “But I’m grappling with the idea of what the mission of the Council should be. I know everyone in this room knows the challenges of being a Federal employee in these times. Facing all these challenges—recruitment and retention issues, sequestration, furloughs, the coming retirement wave, the need to employ the best and the brightest in the current climate—it’s my hope the Council will seize the opportunity to deal with some of these challenges. I question whether, given these daunting challenges, spending time on awards is the best way to use the considerable talent around this table. I support the Agenda and Problem Resolution Subcommittees, but the Council would be better served with discussion, even open debate, on how to deal with real challenges rather than focusing so much on things that have already been accomplished.”

Mr. Berry thanked Ms. Merrigan for her comments, and then responded, “Our primary focus should be on mission delivery, and we can get the best results by unleashing the creative power of our workforce. The awards activities would serve as a channel to bring forward real work being done in forums. We’re looking for the best shining examples that will be the engine to push forward agencies in terms of engagement and productivity. This won’t be just another plaque, but will be about where change is happening and how we can learn from it. Also, I’ve seen a big drop in morale. We need to get back our focus on how to get the best people to join Government service, and that is best accomplished by tapping local forums and spreading their best ideas across Government. And this Council is not just about success stories; we don’t shrink from taking the cover off and exposing problems where needed. But what the awards are really about is returning to a mission focus and driving real change. Forums are where the real work gets done. They’re where the rubber meets the road, and we need to engage them.”

Mr. Junemann enthusiastically agreed with Ms. Merrigan’s comments about focusing on the larger issues facing Government, and said, “When I come in here, this is the highest rank of people I deal with in Government.” He emphasized the importance of his union’s locals, and of local forums, to partnership and to improving the Government’s performance. He related that he had heard a great deal from his locals along the lines of Ms. Merrigan’s comments. “Members kill me if I don’t talk about real problems. Members are saying all the time that showing savings through employee engagement was a waste of time, since cuts to the workforce are being made anyway. People are beginning to feel unappreciated. This is the kind of stuff we need to talk about here.” He emphasized that while it can be of great value to show people partnership works, in these times it is important to talk about such major issues as Ms. Merrigan mentioned. He said, “It’s particularly important to the rank and file. It’s the elephant in the room.”

Mr. Gould said that Mr. Berry, as the Government's Chief People Person, has a very difficult job given what is going on in Government now (i.e., the challenges Ms. Merrigan mentioned).

Regarding the Agenda Committee's proposed plan, Mr. Gould commented, "We have a good formula here, but I'm hearing the floor's open to add such topics as Kathleen suggests. I suggest these topics: Compensation and benefits; whether we should be restructured; finding ways to create new career paths; how we can deal with cost issues rather than by making indiscriminate cuts (achieving cost savings in smarter ways); improving partnership and rewarding positive behavior in the field; and how to deal with the 5-10 percent of labor and management people who are not coming to the table and having intelligent conversations." Mr. Gould added, "Kathleen, thank you for your courageous comments. In addition to what we have here, I agree, we need to have hard-hitting conversations."

Mr. Werfel commented, "I appreciate Kathleen elevating our conversation. We're in a battle every day to protect and support the Federal workforce. We're not just at a budget impasse, but also a reputational impasse. I don't understand why Federal employees have become a punching bag. The conversation needs to be about how to have a sustainable Federal workforce. Federal employees are essential to quality of life and safety. Virtually every aspect of American quality of life has a Fed behind it."

Mr. Werfel continued, "If we spent 2 hours discussing problems and got nowhere, or if we did something that could make a real but smaller change, I'd go for the latter. Sometimes we can influence an outcome; other times it's harder. I don't know the best answer for exactly what the Council should do right now, but I do know we can take small steps and make some progress. It's worth a discussion about other areas we can move into, in addition to what the Agenda Subcommittee proposed, but I want to be strategic."

Mr. Werfel made a suggestion for an additional topic: "One idea I have is a little building up of Scott's idea about compensation and benefits issues as a topic. We could think of ways to educate the public on the Federal workforce. I'm constantly reading that Feds are overpaid, but then I read more detailed articles that say it's not that simple. Maybe we should spend some time looking into what's being done to refute claims that Feds are overpaid. To answer Kathleen's questions, we need to get out more information on who Feds are, what they do, and what the impact will be if we don't create the environment for a sustainable Federal workforce."

Mr. Vollrath commented, "The biggest issue is sustaining the workforce. I can't now, with a straight face, tell someone they should work for the Government. We have a major problem here, and the results could be catastrophic if something isn't done." He said that thinking about how to address misconceptions about Government services is critical, and added, "We bring value to the U.S. If we don't tell that story, I don't know how we'll sustain the workforce in 2-3 years. I suggest getting rid of the 'promoting telework' topic in favor of this."

Mr. Nguyen said, "I strongly support Fred's suggestions about the impact in the near future on the Government's ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest with all that's going on, such as pay freezes and furloughs, and attacks on Federal employees. With all the attacks on Federal employees, people will start to feel undervalued. I think we should strategize and talk about how to get the best and brightest to serve their country. Thanks, Kathleen, for your suggestions. I'm

sure I speak especially for all labor representatives on the Council that dealing with issues arising from furloughs and sequestration is critical.” Referring to the Department of Defense Dependents Schools teachers he represents, Mr. Nguyen said, “How can we close schools, even for one day, for dependents of those serving in Afghanistan? How will their children be well prepared to take the SAT? Those are the kinds of things we ought to be talking about.”

Ms. Kelley commented, “When we asked the Agenda Subcommittee to take a first shot, that was a big ‘ask.’ When I saw the pre-briefs, my first thought was this is supposed to help us think ahead. But when I saw awards as a big agenda item for two meetings, that timeline initially seemed fine so we can recognize and try to replicate. But maybe we could ask the Agenda Subcommittee to modify the plan, so that awards are not bumped but are treated as a less major topic. My view of this Council is we’re at the 20,000 ft. level, and the real work needs to be done in forums. But I think that, even with meetings now being only every other month, we can work in some more issues. If the agenda were just for me, every item would be PDI, PDI, PDI.”³

In response to some of the foregoing comments, Mr. Berry clarified the situation regarding the draft agenda outline, saying the Agenda Committee had received its assignment without much guidance, but that today’s discussion had provided greater clarity, just as intended. He proposed, and the Council agreed, that topics for the May 2013 Council meeting will be PDI and the value of Federal employees. The Council also agreed, at Mr. Berry’s suggestion, that the Agenda Subcommittee would rework the awards piece of its plan, with the goal of weaving in other important topics and spending somewhat less meeting time on awards.

Mr. Gould suggested that it might be a good time now to bring up the issue of resources needed to reach the Council’s goals for 2013. He asked, “Will we have enough people? I know Tim Curry and staff have done a good job, but do we need more people?”

Responding to Mr. Gould’s comment, Mr. Berry said, “I would propose that every member of this Council work on the two topics for the May 2013 agenda, PDI and Federal employee value. We don’t want to just launch paper airplanes; our challenge for between now and the May meeting is to develop proposals for specific actions on those two topics.”

Mr. Junemann commented, “I like the PDI topic, but I think the *restoring value* piece is absolutely essential. What I’ll probably do with my organization is create a subcommittee of our own to work on that, and I’ll come back and share with everyone what we’re doing.”

Ms. Merrigan said, “Thanks, everyone, for your responsiveness to my suggestion. Colleen, thank you for bringing up PDI. Re-launching the brand of the Federal worker is critical. People need to see their leaders embracing the conflict and talking about substantive issues. Good luck to the Agenda Subcommittee.”

Mr. Berry characterized Mr. Vollrath’s predictions about the future of the Federal workforce on its current trajectory as “chilling.” He said, “And I want to underscore that. It’s chilling! Eighty-five percent of the Federal workforce is outside of DC. It’s the same size workforce as during the Johnson Administration, but serves 60 million more Americans. Recently GAO dragged me over the coals about cybersecurity. We clearly have a cybersecurity crisis, yet Congress is moving to

³ Well known among the Council members, the acronym PDI stands for predecisional involvement.

add a third year to the pay freeze. Only in Washington! I don't know what straw will break the camel's back, but we're close to the edge of a cliff now. We *cannot* get the people we need by freezing pay, changing their retirement plan on an annual basis, and denigrating public service."

Mr. Berry continued, "My father served in Guadalcanal during World War II, and he was one of the lucky ones who got out alive. When I entered Federal service, my father reminded me that I had taken the same oath he did. Shame on anyone who would not hold that oath sacred, or fail to hold those who honor it in high regard. We need to get back to Federal employees being respected, back to respect for those who put their life on the line to deliver essential services to Americans. I look forward to working with you all on that effort. Public service matters, and God help the Republic when that's no longer recognized as a true statement." The Council and audience applauded after Mr. Berry's remarks, and Mr. Werfel thanked him, and commented, "Very powerful statement!"

At Mr. Curry's suggestion, the Council agreed to switch agenda items III and IV in order to make sure the guest speaker from Kaiser Permanente had enough time to give the planned presentation.

Agenda Item III: Frontline Wisdom (The Kaiser Permanente Experience)

Mr. Berry turned the floor over to Mr. Filler, who made brief introductory remarks. He said that before introducing the speaker from Kaiser Permanente, he wanted everyone to be aware that the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) played a significant role in the Kaiser Permanente success story.

Mr. Filler explained that Executive Order 13522 provides for the Council learning from experts outside the Government, and that today's presentation from Kaiser Permanente would be such an opportunity and would be about operationalizing partnership. He said the OPM banner in the room reading "Working together to improve the delivery of Government services" aptly sums up the Council's overarching goal, as well as the purpose of hearing the Kaiser Permanente presentation today.

Mr. Filler agreed that the Council has not spent enough time talking about the critical issues Ms. Merrigan raised earlier. Demonstrating a connection between such issues and the upcoming presentation, he said, "Kaiser Permanente has faced similar budget challenges." He said the presentation would go to how labor-management relations have changed over the past 20 years. He introduced Mr. John August, Executive Director of the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, a senior official with more than 40 years of experience in the U.S. labor movement, who has established 4,000 Unit-Based Teams at Kaiser Permanente since 2006.

Mr. August thanked Mr. Filler, and praised Mr. Berry, "The applause you got after your remarks was well deserved." He added that many people in the private sector think their union workers deserve the same kind of recognition Mr. Berry said Federal employees deserve. Mr. August acknowledged Mr. Filler and Mr. Junemann, who serve as leaders in the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions. Mr. August then began his presentation, which was accompanied by slides labeled "Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions: Labor Management Partnership, Our Strategy to Lead Change."

Mr. August described Kaiser Permanente as one of the Nation's largest providers of healthcare. He said, "We have a different problem in healthcare; we have too much money." He explained he meant that U.S. healthcare expenditures are too large a percentage of the U.S. Gross National Product, and that the big question is whether healthcare will be rationed or reengineered. He added, "Just as rationing a Federal service would be disastrous, so would rationing healthcare."

Mr. August said that, while Kaiser Permanente is now a National healthcare leader that continues to win awards from the [Leapfrog Group](#), it has had its share of problems, and once had lower service quality, higher injury rates, and a number of other difficult challenges to overcome. "When we empowered and fully engaged our workforce, we got to where Kaiser Permanente became one of the top healthcare providers in the Nation." To exemplify the commitment to mission that became part of Kaiser Permanente's culture once workers were fully engaged, Mr. August told a story about a young employee who was asked in a meeting why Kaiser Permanente was working on improvements. The employee replied, "When healthcare reform comes, I want people to come to Kaiser Permanente." Mr. August said, "We know that valuing and engaging employees is the way to deal with the challenges we face."

Mr. August quoted Dr. Amy C. Edmondson, Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School: "Performance is increasingly determined by factors that can't be overseen: intelligent experimentation, ingenuity, interpersonal skills, resilience in the face of adversity." He said Dr. Edmondson's words are supported by a large body of data-driven studies she has done that show empowering frontline wisdom greatly improves organizational performance.

Mr. August summarized Kaiser Permanente's labor-management partnership strategy, a joint strategy to—

- Improve organizational performance,
- Deliver high quality care and service,
- Involve the union and workers in decisions, and
- Make Kaiser Permanente the best place to get healthcare and best place to work.

Mr. August provided some basic facts about the size and structure of Kaiser Permanente, which—

- Is one of the largest health plans in the U.S., serving more than 9 million members in California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Ohio, Oregon, and metropolitan DC;
- Has 180,000 employees and physicians;
- Has 37 hospitals and 500 medical office buildings; and
- Has 12 National unions with 29 local union affiliates across every region.

Mr. August listed awards and achievements Kaiser Permanente has received by leveraging frontline wisdom, e.g. high rankings on lists by J.D. Power and Associates, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, and the Leapfrog Group, as well as regional 4.5 and 5 star Medicare Quality Rankings. (See page 4 of slides.) He said these high rankings are particularly

impressive considering that Kaiser Permanente has been thought of for much of its history as a middling healthcare provider.

Mr. August briefly summarized the history of partnership at Kaiser Permanente, which is illustrated in a diagram on page 5 of his slides. The history began with “No partnership, traditional labor relations” and ultimately progressed to “Partnership as operating strategy, full integration at every level of unions and employer.” He said the first steps toward partnership began with management and labor finally sitting down and talking after a long period of dysfunction, which averted a strike and led to a period of peace that allowed dialogue to continue. He said that labor-management dialogue focused more at first on problem resolution than mission delivery, but that early steps such as establishing unit-based teams allowed labor-management relations to evolve far beyond the point of mere dispute resolution, with the main focus now on mission.

Presenting page 6 of his slides, which has the heading “Unit-based teams drive change,” Mr. August discussed the importance of unit-based teams in Kaiser Permanente’s progress. He said the teams were established in Kaiser Permanente’s National Agreement in 2005, and he said, “Their biggest focus is how to make partnership come alive.” Citing [a 2011 academic study](#) of high-performing unit-based teams at Kaiser Permanente, Mr. August said Kaiser Permanente has identified five characteristics shared by high-performing unit-based teams:

- Leadership (Strong leadership on both the labor side and management side is crucial);
- Clear line of sight between teams’ actions and Kaiser Permanente’s strategic goals;
- Team cohesion (Successful teams *feel* like teams);
- Process and method (structured approaches to performance improvement); and
- Infrastructure and support provided by facility and regional leadership.

Mr. August displayed a chart, on page 7 of his slides, showing the growth of high-performing teams since the academic study in 2011. (The [standards](#) Kaiser Permanente uses to rate unit-based teams’ performance are published on the Kaiser Permanente partnership website.) He said that more than 40 percent of the unit based teams are now rated high performing, and added, “We are very rigorous in terms of our form of collective bargaining. It’s not just people doing MOUs and getting together periodically; we bargain about things way beyond wages, hours, and working conditions. *We bargain over productivity and quality improvement.*”

Mr. August identified what he believes to be the four pillars of partnership:

- Business literacy;
- Interest based bargaining; interest-based problem solving; Consensus Decision Making;
- Dispute resolution: Issue resolution, corrective action; and
- Shared vision.

He said, “If any of these are not in place, partnership will collapse. Of the four pillars, he said labor and management having a shared vision is probably the most important.

Mr. August displayed Kaiser Permanente's Value Compass, a graphic on page 8 of his slides showing "Patient and Member Focus" at its center and the goals "Best Quality," "Best Service," "Most Affordable," and "Best Place to Work." His slide quoted a 2011 *Harvard Business Review* assessment of the Value Compass: "Kaiser Permanente's Value Compass succinctly defines the organization's shared purpose... a recognition of the challenges that every member of the group has the responsibility to meet every day."⁴

In closing his presentation, Mr. August mentioned some examples of savings achieved through frontline wisdom (e.g., an ambulatory surgical group in Hawaii developed ways to save \$10,000 per month, and a laboratory in Vancouver reduced the cost of needles), and he said hundreds of other examples can be found on the [Kaiser Permanente partnership website](#). He invited the Council to ask questions or make comments.

Addressing Mr. August, Mr. Berry said, "John, thanks for your passion and commitment to partnership. Last Friday, I had to have a medical procedure done at Kaiser Permanente. I have a fear of needles, but when I asked the nurse, 'When are you going to do this,' she said it was already done."

Mr. Berry said Mr. August's presentation supports the point that organizations need not be in a race to the bottom, even when facing tight budgets and other difficult challenges. "We could cut pay and benefits," he said, "but we won't get the best and brightest. Our workforce carries out important functions, which we can't do with a second-rate team." He mentioned cybersecurity as one of the Government's critical challenges requiring a strong workforce, and thanked Mr. August for the presentation.

Mr. Gould said the presentation was inspiring, and asked Mr. August a question: "You talked about a rapid improvement process. How do you go from micro-level improvement to making sure there is standard treatment throughout the organization?"

Responding to Mr. Gould, Mr. August said, "We do struggle with what I call *spread*." He said one reason spreading good ideas is difficult is that people tend to resist ideas that were not their own. He said the way to combat that obstacle and achieve "spread" is through strong leadership, and strong management support and reinforcement of good ideas.

Addressing Mr. Berry, Mr. August said, "Many of the challenges you face are similar to ours, for example, keeping pay competitive, how to get the right people with ever-changing technology, and cost challenges. We just got the word that Medicare cuts will be deeper. In this struggle, it's very important that we not waiver from partnership."

Mr. Junemann commented, "Kaiser Permanente is a monstrous entity, and so is the Federal Government." He reminded everyone that Mr. Berry said earlier that 85 percent of the Federal workforce is outside of the D.C. area, and asked, "How do you deal with satellite offices. You have people out there building castles who maybe get off mission. How do you deal with people who go astray, or get off mission, given your organization's size?"

⁴ "Building a Collaborative Enterprise" *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2011

Responding to Mr. Junemann, Mr. August said, “We get a lot of that. Frankly, because of the economic and public policy pressures, some people are resorting to such bad behaviors as informational picketing, and going off mission. When we see things going in that direction, we elevate the problem to the top. We really commit ourselves to the notion we don’t want things to go back to the way they were, after all the progress we’ve made. One of two things can kill a partnership: a change in leadership or an economic crisis. We survive because we raise issues to a high level to keep things going.”

Mr. Berry turned to the next agenda item. Due to time constraints, he asked that the Problem Resolution Subcommittee limit its presentation to 10 minutes.

Agenda Item IV: Report of Problem Resolution Subcommittee

Mr. Curry began the presentation by introducing the other presenters: Mr. Matthew Biggs, IFPTE; Ms. Teresa Briley, DOD; Ms. Heather Butler, FMCS; and Ms. Julia Clark and Mr. Michael Wolf, both of FLRA. Mr. Curry then turned the floor over to Ms. Clark, who began a presentation accompanied by slides labeled “Problem Resolution Subcommittee.”

Ms. Clark started by thanking OPM for its support. She said, “Thanks, Tim, for providing a collaborative atmosphere. We’ve received incredible collaborative support from OPM.”

Ms. Clark described the composition of the subcommittee as follows:

- Management:
 - Department of Defense,
 - Department of Veterans Affairs,
 - Office of Management and Budget, and
 - Office of Personnel Management.
- Labor:
 - American Federation of Government Employees,
 - International Brotherhood of Teamsters,
 - International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers,
 - National Association of Government Employees,
 - National Federation of Federal Employees, and
 - National Treasury Employees Union.
- Associations:
 - Federal Managers Association, and
 - Senior Executives Association.
- Neutral Agencies:
 - Federal Labor Relations Authority, and

- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Ms. Clark defined the purpose of the Problem Resolution Subcommittee: to help ensure forums are established; to assist established forums, both those that are struggling and those doing well but ready to move to the next level; to identify best practices; and to find barriers to success and develop ideas for overcoming them. She said the subcommittee also wants to establish a training and facilitation clearinghouse to provide forums tools they need for success.

Ms. Clark reported that the Problem Resolution Subcommittee had been meeting regularly, and focusing on forum reports, in order to identify problems, common barriers, and best practices. She said the subcommittee's goal is to establish a toolkit for forums to provide help and resources geared toward forums' varying levels of progress.

Mr. Berry suggested the subcommittee make sure that PDI is included in the toolkit. Ms. Clark agreed that would be a good idea. (As later revealed, the subcommittee had already considered that as a topic. See page 8 of slides.)

Ms. Briley explained part of the toolkit Ms. Clark had mentioned, a reporting tool enabling forums to answer brief questions, providing data that will help the Council identify problems within and across forums, as well as best practices to share across forums. Ms. Butler showed and briefly discussed a screenshot of the draft reporting tool, which is on page 6 of the presenters' slides. She said, "This is a great example of cross-agency collaboration."

Mr. Wolf said the Problem Resolution Subcommittee envisions an online portal, accessible from the Council website, which will provide links to training, webinars, articles, best practices, and agency and union resources. He said a menu of common forum issues could be provided, and users could then click on issues of interest and find links to helpful resources. He added that the intent would be to organize content efficiently so that forums can easily find materials helpful for their particular issues.

Ms. Butler listed some ideas the subcommittee had been discussing for "quick tips" for users of the online portal.

- Myth busters/FAQs,
- Metrics (emphasis on mission performance),
- PDI,
- Best Practices (success stories),
- Employee engagement,
- Trust, and
- Interplay between statutory rights and PDI/employee engagement.

Ms. Butler showed an excerpt from a video on metrics as an example of content that would quickly get good information to forums. She said the online portal's content would be of QUAD design, i.e. Quick, User-Friendly, Accessible, and Dynamic.

The presentation discussed other ideas for the online portal:

- Improve accessibility/utility of existing resources;
- Leverage seven FLRA and FMCS LMR courses posted on Human Resources University (HRU)—
 - Add job aid for accessing HRU, and
 - Develop downloadable instructor and student manuals;
- Include additional existing union or agency created information;
- Provide an option to submit email request for training/facilitation/intervention assistance (requests monitored by designated FLRA/FMCS team using pre-established protocol and uniform information tracking system);

The Problem Resolution Subcommittee listed next steps:

- Finish and administer forum reporting tool;
- Develop action plan based on data from the forum reporting tool;
- Develop forum resource online portal—
 - Work with OPM Chief Information Officer staff on website;
 - Create menu of possible forum problems and issues;
 - Improve accessibility of existing information resources and develop additional resources (e.g. FMCS quick tips) to fill resource gaps; and
 - Match LMF resources with menu items.

Summing up the Problem Resolution Subcommittee's plans, Ms. Clark said, "It's all about pooled interagency resources at no cost."

Agenda Item V: New Business

Because the meeting was running late, Mr. Berry used this time to emphasize the importance of PDI and provide Mr. Werfel and himself an opportunity for brief closing remarks.

Mr. Berry said, "Thank you for moving PDI up to the May meeting." He asked that Ms. Merrigan and Mr. Filler talk offline about a strategy for productive discussions on PDI in the May 2013 meeting.

Mr. Werfel remarked, "John August went through examples of frontline success in his presentation. This reminded me a little of the [President's Save Award](#) program. I've been looking at that program for the past few days, and I'm pleased to see what it has produced. The Justice Department, as an outgrowth of the Save Award program, established the [SAVE Council](#). It's not just a suggestion box; the ideas are being acted on. Some ideas are for relatively small amounts, like \$15,000 or \$30,000, but these ideas are inspiring in terms of embracing the notion that every

dollar counts. I wanted to bring this point up, that one of the things this group can do is show how Federal employees have saved money.”

Mr. Werfel continued, “One of the things I have learned in my career in Government, and I’m now in my 16th year, is that we face some very interesting challenges, such as Y2K, Katrina, and the economic collapse. Being at OMB, it’s *amazing* to watch how Government ably responds to such challenges. I’ve learned that crisis breeds collaboration, and I believe sequestration is a crisis. I would encourage this group to look for ways of how we as a community can respond to this crisis. As bad as the cards are that we have been dealt, we still need to meet mission requirements. I think this group can help. I know the Government has to solve the sequester, but while we’re in it we must continue to fulfill our oath. The Federal Government has always come through, and we must continue to do so.”

Mr. Berry thanked Mr. Werfel for his closing remarks, and then announced that OPM will be dedicating a memorial wall for Federal employees who gave their lives in service to the Nation, and that the wall would be similar to the one maintained by the Central Intelligence Agency. He said as soon as a date for the dedication is set, the Council members would be invited. He mentioned that he anticipated that the dedication would be before the next Council meeting. He then opened the floor for public comment.

Agenda Item VI: Acknowledgement/Receipt of Public Submissions

A member of the audience commented that this meeting had been the most dynamic to date. She added, “Maybe one thing you can do is do what DOD did in its recent ad campaign to make DOD look like a cool place to be. Another point: You all just had a lot of reports submitted on forums, so you can look at some of the data from that and bring in the people who worked on it.”

Agenda Item VII: Adjournment

Mr. Berry said “Thank you all,” reminded everyone the next meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2013, and adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

CERTIFIED

John Berry
Co-Chair

Daniel Werfel
Acting Co-Chair