

Executive Summary

From Spark to Flame: Idea Generation and Implementation at the Federal Level

May 10th, 2012, 8:30am – 3:30pm
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Washington DC

Led by: Fusion Cell HHS/OS/ASPR/OPEO

“From Spark to Flame: Idea Generation and Implementation at the Federal Level” was the first Fusion Forum sponsored by the HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response’s Fusion Cell in 2012. The event was open to Federal employees and contractors, creating an environment in which participants could openly discuss some of the successes and challenges of ideation and implementation at the federal level.

The day began with opening remarks from Cristin Dorgelo, Assistant Director for Grand Challenges with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Ms. Dorgelo spoke of using grand challenges to inspire new people to get involved in the problem solving process, stating that challenges should be “ambitious, audacious, and reachable.” Ms. Dorgelo’s keynote presentation was followed by three panel presentations that traced innovative ideas through their early life-cycle including idea generation, concept development and early implementation, and deployment and addressing change.

The morning panel discussions included:

Idea Generation Panel

Panelists discussed some of the strategies and approaches that their offices use to spark new ideas and encourage innovation amongst various stakeholder groups and through collaborations. Programs discussed included the CMS Innovation Center, NSF’s Ideas Lab, NASA’s LAUNCH, and FEMA’s Think Tank. Panelists included:

- Michelle Warner, Senior Advisor , CMS Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation
- Dr. Joanne Tornow, Deputy Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences, National Science Foundation
- Diane Powell, Program Manager for LAUNCH, Office of the Chief Technologist, NASA Headquarters
- Heather Strachan, Special Assistant to the Deputy Administrator of Federal Emergency Management Agency

Concept Development and Early Implementation Panel

Panelists discussed how their offices take new ideas and concepts from infancy to early development and testing. Risk and cost for concept development, creating achievable project goals and evaluation criteria, and sustainability were a few of the items covered. Panelists included:

- Wil Yu, Special Assistant of Innovations and Research, Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, Department of Health and Human Services
- Matthew Robinson, Assistant Director for Evaluation, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Jay Benforado, Deputy Chief Innovation Officer, Office of Research and Development, US Environmental Protection Agency

Deployment and Addressing Change Panel

This panel investigated two programs that are currently undergoing upgrades (BioSense 2.0 and Fusion Analytics). The panelists stressed the importance of stakeholder collaboration, setting deadlines, maintaining costs, and establishing a process for managing requested changes/modifications. Panelists included:

- Sharon Campolucci, Deputy Director for Management and Operations, Division of Notifiable Diseases and Healthcare Information, CDC
- LT Dina Passman, USPHS, Epidemiologist, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response

Following a brief lunch break, the forum split into two breakout sessions allowing greater level of discussion and interaction between attendees. The first breakout session “How to Start Up Big Bold Ideas” encouraged discussion between participants about idea generation and developing bold solutions. The session began with opening remarks from Dr. Gregory Downing, Executive Director for Innovation for the Immediate Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Dr. Downing’s remarks set the stage for participants to split into smaller groups to talk about how their offices generate new ideas and what approaches they take to bring these ideas forward. Following these roundtable discussions, Dr. Ray Arthur, Director of the Global Disease Detection Operations Center, talked about how interagency groups can creatively address known gaps (as seen with the Biosurveillance Indications and Warning Analytic Community). The session concluded with a presentation on Challenge competitions by Karen Trebon, Deputy Program Manager of Challenge.gov.

The second afternoon breakout session focused on “Engaging New Stakeholders in Creating a Common Operating Picture (COP).” This session featured presentations from three different agencies (HHS, DHS, FDA) spotlighting the tools and technologies each agency is using to help build a COP. Presentations included: Rob Shankman, GIS Program Manager and MedMap Coordinator with HHS presenting on MedMap; Paul Reisner with the First Responder Group of DHS presenting on vUSA; and Wayne Gorski, Director, Program Operations and Coordination Staff in the FDA Office of Crisis Management presenting on FDA GeoWeb Project. Participants had the chance to interact with the presenters and ask questions about the different tools presented.

After the forum, participants were sent follow-up emails that included a link to a satisfaction survey. Survey responses showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the forum experience. The survey also allowed Fusion to collect information on how to improve upon future forums. Fusion plans to host at least one more forum in November 2012.