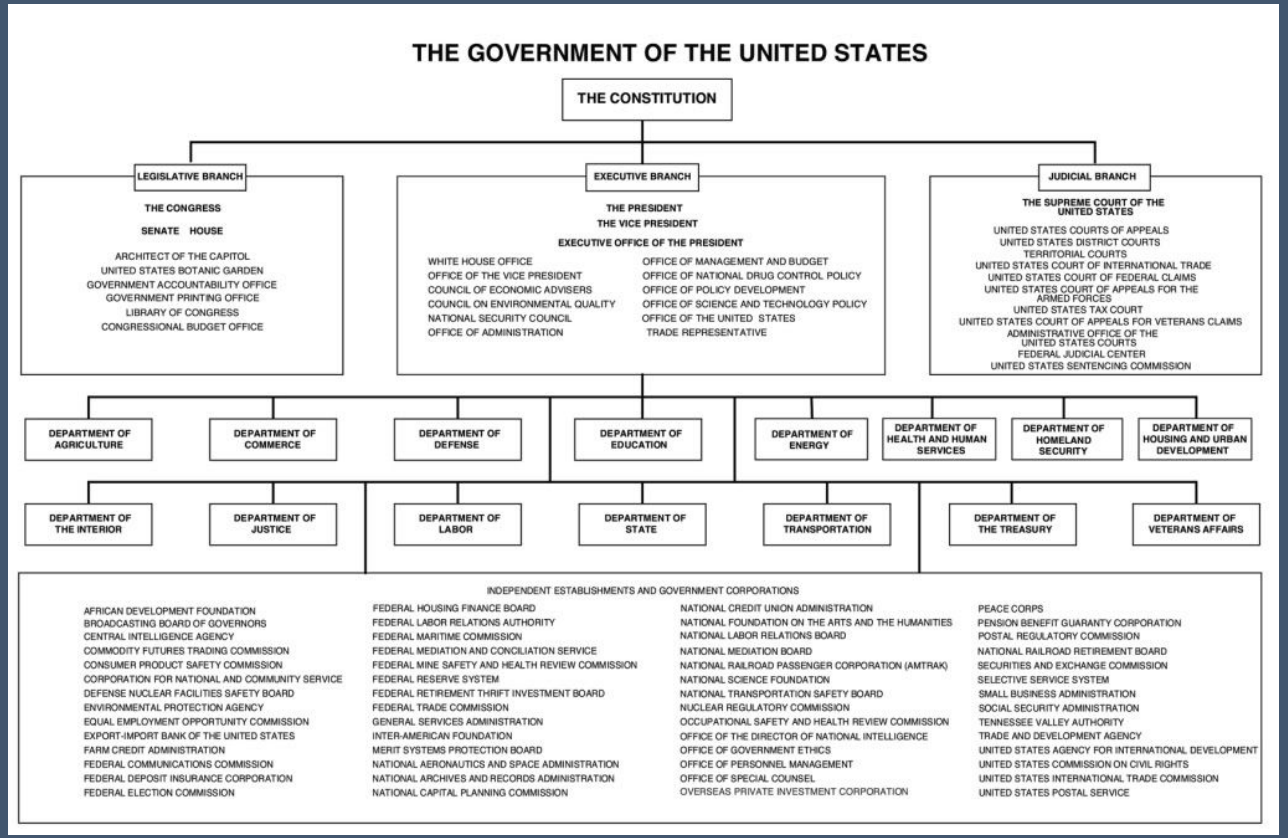
Erik Nikolaus Martin
Senior Policy Advisor, Day One Project
Dec 28, 2020

How the Federal Government is just like a Startup

This is your mission statement:

- Form a more perfect union
- Establish justice
- Insure domestic tranquility
- Provide for the common defense
- Promote the general welfare
- Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves
- And our posterity

This is your org chart:



Note:

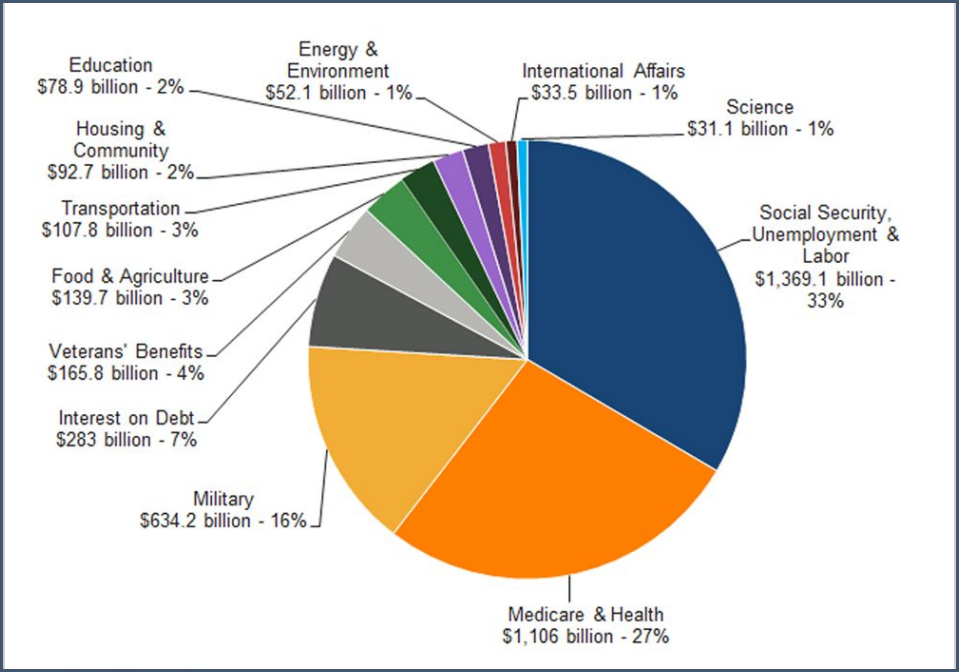
- You have ~4.2 million employees (~2/3 civilian, ~1/3 military).
- You get to appoint 0.1% of them.
- The rest can't be fired.

This is your board:

Note:

- 435 House members
- 100 Senators
- They represent 323 million shareholders.
- Roughly half of them want to fire you at all times.

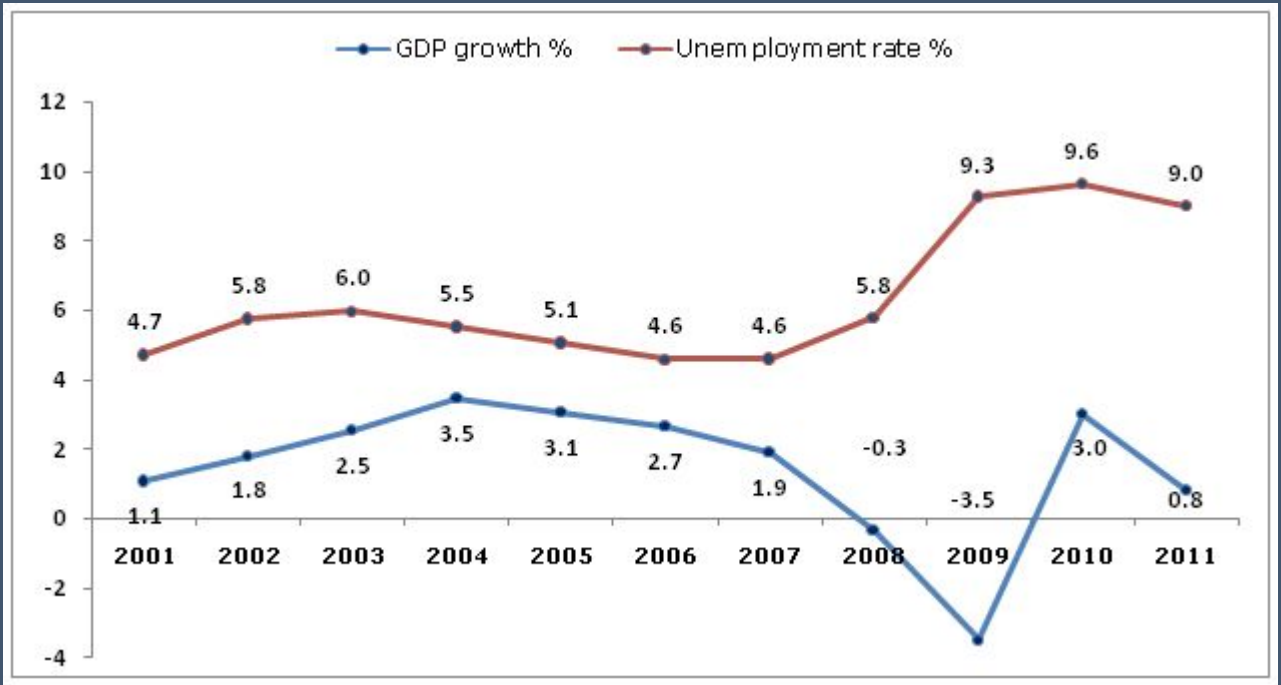
This is your spending budget:



Note:

- >60% of your $4 trillion budget is “mandatory” (you don’t control it)
- The rest is “discretionary” (you don’t control it, either; Congress does)

These are your KPIs:



Note:

- Your control over these numbers is mostly an illusion.

This is your GC:

~~You can do whatever you want as long as it's not explicitly illegal.~~

You can't do anything unless it's explicitly legal.

This is your HQ:

The Executive Office of the President (EOP)

POTUS

Chief of Staff

- Council of Economic Advisers
- Council on Environmental Quality
- National Security Council
- Office of Administration
- Office of Management and Budget
- Office of National Drug Control Policy
- Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Office of the United States Trade Representative
- Office of the Vice President

White House Office

- Domestic Policy Council
- National Economic Council
- Office of the First Lady
- White House Counsel

- Cabinet Affairs
- Communications
- Press Secretary
- Research
- Speechwriting
- Digital Strategy
- Legislative Affairs
- Presidential Personnel
- Public Engagement
- Intergovernmental Affairs
- Scheduling and Advance
- Staff Secretary
- Presidential Correspondence

Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

U.S. Federal Government:
- Budget: ~$4.45 trillion
- Staff: ~4.2 million people (~2.7 million civilians)

Executive Office of the President:
- Budget: ~$375 million
- Staff: ~2,000 people

Office of Science and Technology Policy:
- Budget: ~$6 million
- Staff: ~40-150 people

What tools did we have?

- *Preparation of President's Budget*
- *Work with Congress on Legislation*
- *Executive Action*
- *President's Ability to Convene*
- *Recruiting Great People*

Policy

"movement in a direction for a reason"

How to Write a Health Policy Brief. Wong et al. Families, Systems & Health, 2017.

How to create change in policy

"People develop an implicit or explicit sense for what in their environment is fixed, and what they view as potentially changeable. Many elements of the status quo are the result of human action or inaction, and therefore, are potentially changeable, as opposed to the laws of physics."

— Tom Kalil

Policy Toolkit: Make Movement Happen

Content credit: Cristin Dorgelo

- Legislation—agency authorities
- Executive action—Executive Orders, Presidential Memorandums, Presidential Policy Directives, OMB guidance
- Regulation, rulemaking, standards, codes
- Treaties
- Creation, elimination, or restructuring of organizations
- Adding a specific idea or action to another policy vehicle (“hitching a car to a moving train”)
- Reversals

Policy Toolkit: Incentivize Movement

- Appropriations and budget proposals
- Research, development, demonstration, and deployment investments
- Requests for proposals, solicitations, discretionary funds, contracting tools
- Competitive, block, or formula grants
- Entitlement programs
- Tax rates, simplification, incentives
- Market shaping, incentive prizes, milestone payments, Advance Market Commitments, and other pay-for-performance mechanisms
- Procurement and acquisition; government as customer
- Deregulation, regulatory reform, “sandboxes,” experimental sites/authority
- Penalties or increased enforcement
- Talent pipeline, “tours of duty,” Federal personnel processes and authorities (including job descriptions, roles, hiring processes)
- Cross-agency goals and performance-management processes
- Benchmarks

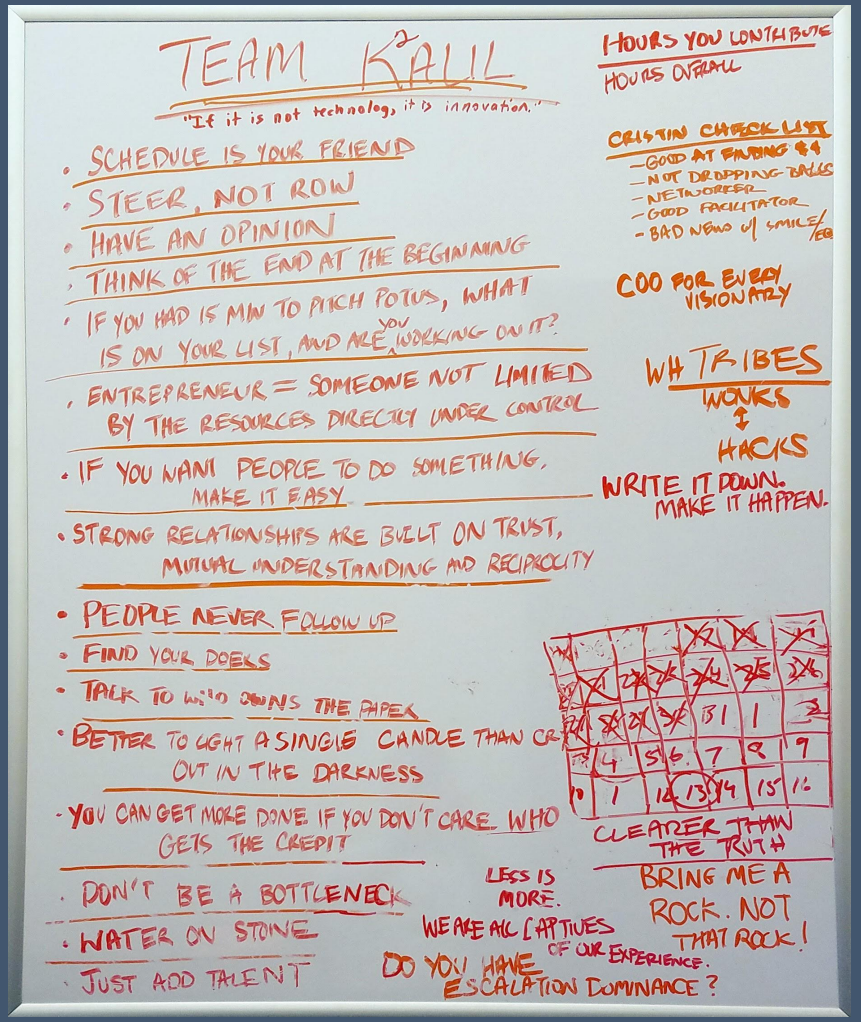
Policy Toolkit: Call for Movement

- Requests for information and other public-input mechanisms
- Dear Colleague Letters
- Reports, strategies, agendas, action plans, “90-day reviews”
- Coalition building
- Convening
- Calls to action and spotlight on cross-sector commitments
- National goal setting, including Grand Challenges and “moonshots”
- Speeches, bully pulpit

Policy Toolkit: Support and Coordinate Movement

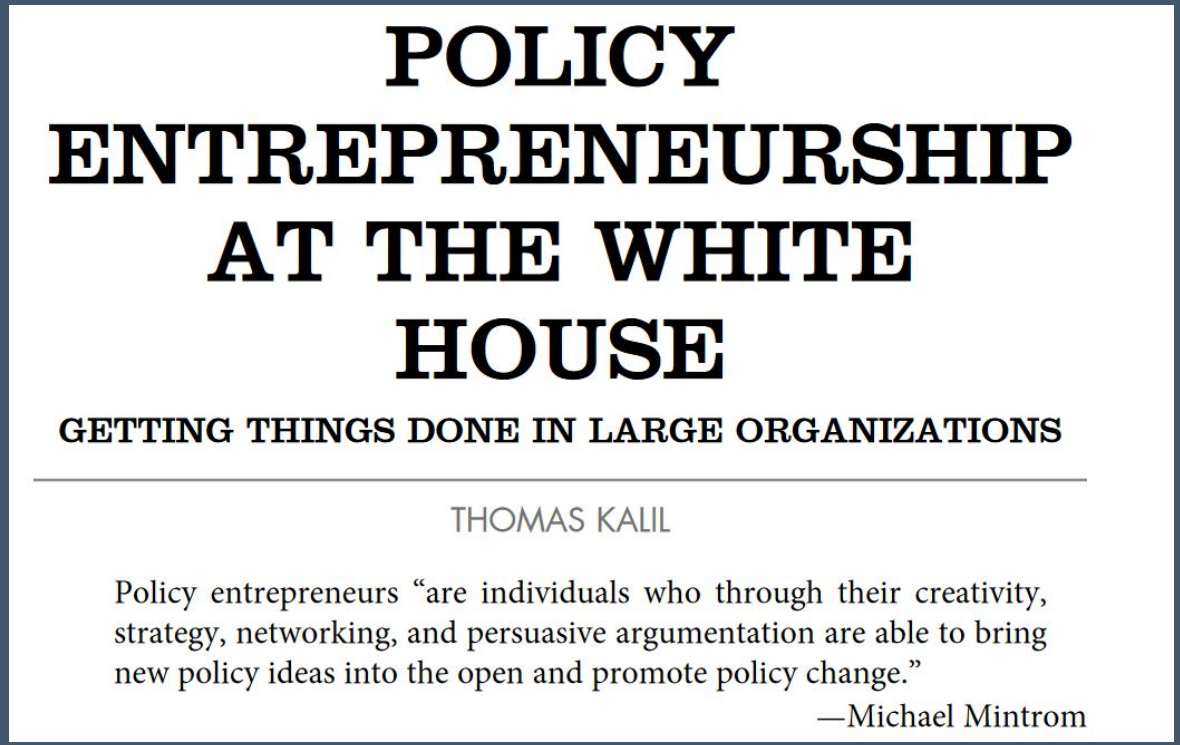
- Leveraging the Cabinet
- Principals/deputies processes and other interagency collaboration and coordination
- Interagency and external committees (advisory committees, councils, task forces, commissions), and their charters and work products
- Bilateral and multilateral international collaboration and dialogues
- Evidence base, learning agendas, behavioral insights
- "Government as Platform for Innovation"—opening up Federal resources for citizen-driven innovation and entrepreneurship (data, facilities, tools, algorithms, IP, personnel, etc.)
- Communities of practice, communities of interest

Lessons Learned



For more information - MIT Press

https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/inov_a_00253



POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE WHITE HOUSE

GETTING THINGS DONE IN LARGE ORGANIZATIONS

THOMAS KALIL

Policy entrepreneurs "are individuals who through their creativity, strategy, networking, and persuasive argumentation are able to bring new policy ideas into the open and promote policy change."

—Michael Mintrom