All,

On July 29th, Executive Branch employees discussed the **MAX Federal Community wiki's capabilities and future** with the Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business (BFELoB) managing partner lead and colleagues from OMB's budget systems group. The vision of BFELoB is:

"Modern, interoperable, flexible, cost effective, and optimized solutions supporting all phases of the formulation and execution of the Federal Budget and linking budget formulation, execution, planning, performance, and financial information."
https://max.omb.gov/maxportal/webPage/lob/obj/noIndex

The managing partner lead, Sandi McCabe, staffs the project management office from the Department of Education Budget Service. Phil Wenger (policy) and Shelly McAllister (human capital) were on hand from OMB, as was Emily Fort (wiki manager). Phil kicked things off, after which Sandi and Emily led the discussion. Senior Fellows and Friends supported this discussion because it supports our focus on better government in the public interest.

Emily introduced the paradigm shift that accompanies the use of this tool, which ignores hierarchical organizational relationships for the most part. For example, anyone can read any document (and prior versions) whose link they can see onscreen, and can e-mail the author. Many documents can be edited by anyone. Does this mean that there is no control, and chaos reigns? Not at all. It's merely that different methods of control are operating in this environment, ranging from restricted page views to peer pressure. For an example of the latter, every change I make is there for all to see – and my name is attached to it. Do I really want to be known across agencies for messing up someone else's report, spreadsheet, or flowchart? Uh, no. However, am I welcome to edit a draft whose owner is soliciting input? Absolutely. Would I edit a draft whose subject I knew nothing about? Unlikely!

Their description of work that's proceeding on the wiki was augmented by comments from another Community member in attendance. Online posting, editing and discussion, combined with webinars and face-to-face meetings, helps numerous Cabinet department representatives and independent agency staff as they collaborate on everything "Budget," including the development of a competency model for budget analysts to facilitate recruitment and retention. We also discussed the considerations that would be involved in expanding the Community to include federal, state and local governments. Expansion beyond the current scope and 7,000+ users is probable, but unintended consequences (such as an unapproved budget's being posted before it has been approved) have to be thought through beforehand in order to mitigate risk and keep from discouraging participation.

This very robust, well supported wiki, the means by which BFELoB partnering agencies collaborate securely between face to face meetings, also is used by an increasing number of non-budget related groups. For example, the Department of Interior's geographically dispersed 2007 SES Candidate Development Program has been using the Community to:

- Develop, review and edit shared documents;
- Share information on detail assignments, including timeframes and locations; and
- Develop project plans, progress reports, and final plans.

The cohort signed on because they could begin operating quickly in a trusted environment and learn more about social network technology as they went through their program, becoming more nimble and ready to lead in the process. This week, a 2007-2008 team of Executive Potential Program graduates, also geographically dispersed, was set up to conduct similar activity as they set new developmental goals for themselves.

The focus group exposed all participants to new possibilities. A list of participant affiliations follows:

Department of Education
  Federal Student Aid
  Office of Management
  Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
  Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Department of Treasury
  Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Environmental Protection Agency
  Office of Financial Management
Office of Management and Budget
Young Government Leaders (YGL)

Executive Branch employees are invited to sign up at https://max.omb.gov/maxportal/.

Sincerely,

Kitty Wooley
U.S. Department of Education

P.S. A candid shot of three focus group participants is attached:

Mark Dronfield, Department of Education, Budget Service
Mike O'Leary, Department of Treasury, Bureau of Engraving & Printing
Lora Allen, Department of Education, HR Services
  --PMF coordinator and Young Government Leaders membership chair

P.P.S. Speaking of YGL, a new community recently was established by its co-founder, Steve Ressler, a committed advocate of good government. He invites you to *check it out!* at www.govloop.org.