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Innovation center to tackle government tech problems

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The government is getting a hand with solving the most pressing issues facing federal IT. A new innovation center will tackle some of the challenges around technology and provide recommendations on how to move forward amid shrinking budgets.

The American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council has opened the Institute for Innovation, which will take on up to five projects every year to address IT issues that directly impact government and industry. The ultimate goal is to have a more formalized process to identify challenges and implement structure around problem-solving within federal IT, said Jim Beaupre, chairman at ACT-IAC.

ACT-IAC has often provided the government with insight and recommendations on federal IT struggles. When it was time for the Veterans Affairs Department in 2009 to modernize its healthcare information system, ACT-IAC assembled a working group to assess the issues, challenges and opportunities, Beaupre said.

The council's more recent involvement was when the Office of Management and Budget solicited ideas from industry on new approaches to acquire financial management IT systems, a project in which 52 ACT-IAC member companies participated, Beaupre said.

The institute will first tackle the Quadrennial Government Technology Review and provide recommendations on how technology can make government more efficient in times of budget cuts, Beaupre said. The findings and recommendations by ACT-IAC members and subject matter experts will then be provided to the next administration's leadership and other senior government officials.

As a bipartisan project, the institute will work to be as open as possible and vendor and product agnostic, Beaupre said. "This process is very transparent," he stressed. "There's no hiding behind closed doors."

The institute will also follow principles that ban business development promotion and lobbying. Additionally, all of the institute's funding will come from private-sector businesses that become members of the institute's Innovator Circle and other not-for-profit organizations.

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