



RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

How to Fail Forward: A Worksheet

The Centre for Public Impact's report on failure was getting at something: It's difficult to deal with failure in any organization, and it's especially difficult in government.

Government organizations are often stuck between a rock and a hard place when dealing with setbacks, where things that go wrong are amplified and the things that go right are neutralized. Successful ventures are often uncongratulatory events, but failures? They're public spectacles.

The truth is failure is inevitable in any complex system. And it's a necessary step to innovate or improve. Failure in government organizations doesn't happen because government itself is bad or wrong. It is a fact of working in any complex system, said Andi Mirviss, co-author of the "How to Fail (Forward)" report.

Because it's inevitable, ignoring failure can cause harm. Using it to your advantage, however, can transform it to become fertile soil for growth, a gift that keeps giving. **Use this checklist to start failing forward.**

Check out Mirviss' interview and more on resilience in the guide, *Resilience Lessons From State & Local Government*, [here](#).

Do you view failure as a necessary step to growth?

First, you need a mindset shift. It's normal to fear failure, but failure is inevitable. Do you see it as the fertile soil for improvement that it is?

As a leader, are you setting an example by communicating your own failures?

Leaders can help break the taboo around failure by setting the example. It takes the most crushing anxiety out of the picture if leaders demonstrate the practices they want others to have.

Are staff at all levels able to communicate the failures they notice?

A psychologically safe environment means you're able to talk about your mistakes or broader failures without fear of personal retribution. This isn't an environment where every mistake is OK, but it's important to have a dynamic in which people can speak candidly without fear of losing their job or standing in the agency.

Have you built learning from failure as a part of a program, process or operation?

This destigmatizes talking about breakdowns. Incorporating it as a regular part of a process or system ameliorates the anxiety around having isolated conversations about failure.

Underwritten by:

