THOUGHT LEADERSHIP | ABSTRACT | SEPTEMBER 2026

Beyond Silos

The Executive Capacity Gap

How consequential decisions are outgrowing the traditional leadership model

Each expert can be right. The organization can still be wrong.

Public organizations divide complexity into professional functions. Consequential decisions now arrive already integrated—crossing infrastructure, finance, law, markets, politics and decades of implementation. The expertise may exist everywhere. The capacity to turn it into one accountable judgment may exist nowhere.

THE STRUCTURAL MISMATCH

The Executive Capacity Gap is the structural mismatch that emerges when the integration, continuity and time horizon required by a consequential decision exceed the capacity of the leadership system responsible for making it.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS

INTEGRATION	CONTINUITY	TIME HORIZON
Connect knowledge across functions and institutions.	Preserve purpose and reasoning as participants change.	See consequences extending beyond today's decision.

WHAT EXECUTIVES TOLD US

69%	76%	82%
VISION OR EARLY COORDINATION	**SUPPORT OR CONTINUITY**	**INTEGRATIVE CAPACITY**
Selected clear long-term vision or early coordination as the leading contributor to success.	Selected political or public support, or continuity through implementation, as the leading point of difficulty.	Placed significant or considerable value on support connecting priorities, expertise, stakeholders and implementation.

THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

VERTICAL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Keep formal authority, ownership and responsibility clear.

HORIZONTAL FOR INTEGRATION

Build a proportionate decision process that frames the question, assembles evidence, tests assumptions, records reasoning and reviews material change.

RESEARCH BOUNDARY

The survey was exploratory, based on 16 completed responses from a purposive professional sample. Its percentages describe the communities surveyed; they identify a pattern worth testing, not population estimates or proof that one organizational model is universally superior.

THE GOVERNING IDEA

The pyramid organizes the institution. The matrix organizes the decision. The executive must connect them before fragmentation becomes failure.

OFFICIAL MANUSCRIPT

David M. Smitherman, Beyond Silos: The Executive Capacity Gap. The Beyond Series, Bear Strategies, 2026.

CONTINUE THE WORK

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