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MEDIA ADVISORY: Top Public Administration Book Prize awarded to Christopher Hood and Ruth Dixon's *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less? Evaluating Three Decades of Reform and Change in UK Central Government*

The National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) has awarded its 2015 Louis Brownlow Book Award to Christopher Hood and Ruth Dixon for their book *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less? Evaluating Three Decades of Reform and Change in UK Central Government* (Oxford University Press). The Brownlow Award is the top book prize in the field of public administration. The award committee honored Hood and Dixon's book "for its comprehensive study of reform, cost and performance."

Brownlow Book Award Committee chair and Academy Fellow Dr. Norman J. Johnson said "The New Public Management Movement with its data driven approaches was seen as the elixir to really reform governmental management. Hood and Dixon decided to take an empirical "look see" at the workings of the elixir. After struggling to clean a thirty year data set, the first of their challenges, they proceeded with the work. What they found was this: The UK central government cost a bit more and worked a bit worse--the opposite of their book's title. Truth to power is a harrowing exercise. Empirical derived facts are fortunately stubborn truths. Hood and Dixon shrewdly, in an understated way, set a platform for the challenge".

Christopher Hood (an Academy Fellow) is a Fellow of All Souls College, Visiting Professor at Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government and a member of its Department of Politics and IR. Ruth Dixon is an Associate Member of the Department of Politics and IR, University of Oxford, UK. They were funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the Economic and Social Research Council for this study. They will receive the accolade and give a plenary address at the Academy's Fall Meeting in Washington, DC on Thursday, December 3, 2015.

The UK is a critical case for anyone who is interested in the effects of decades of reform and change on how much government costs to run and on the fairness and consistency with which it treats its citizens. That is because the UK is commonly claimed internationally to have been the most prolific reformer of its government and public services over the past three decades. So what was the outcome of those decades of reform (and associated changes notably in information technology) on the running costs of government and on levels of complaint, litigation and other indicators of citizen dissatisfaction?

Despite much discussion and debate between enthusiasts and skeptics of the successive government makeovers and reforms, there has been remarkably little systematic evaluation of such outcomes, in

the UK or anywhere else. This book is the first to test the claims of both proponents and detractors of government modernization programs against carefully sifted data relating to running cost and administrative performance of central government in the UK over more than thirty years. Hood and Dixon show that, confounding expectations of both sets of commentators, not only did the reform efforts largely fail to cut running costs, but the increased spending did not produce greater fairness and consistency in government decisions. These findings (summarized in a [Commentary](#) by Hood and Dixon in *Governance*) are important both for scholars of government and for practitioners operating in a period in which pressures to make government 'work better and cost less' remain of central importance.

The 2015 Brownlow Book Award Committee chaired by Academy Fellow Dr. Norman J. Johnson, also included Academy Fellows Joel D. Aberbach, Edward T. Jennings, Jr., James Svava and Katherine G. Willoughby.

The National Academy of Public Administration is a non-profit, independent organization of top public management and organizational leaders established in 1967 and chartered by Congress in 1984. With a network of nearly 800 distinguished Fellows and an experienced professional staff, the Academy is uniquely qualified and trusted across government to provide objective advice and practical solutions based on systematic research and expert analysis. Learn more about the Academy and its work at www.napawash.org The National Academy of Public Administration's 2015 Fall Meeting will be held on December 3, 2015. Please [click here](#) to register. Copies of *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less? Evaluating Three Decades of Reform and Change in UK Central Government* may be ordered from [Oxford University Press](#) or from [Amazon](#) as well as other online and brick-and-mortar booksellers.