

## ATP's Evaluation Program & the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)

### What is Program Evaluation and Why is it Important?

**Program Evaluation** is the systematic assessment of program implementation and results that are valid, reliable, and credible. It consists of various activities:

- needs assessment,
- design assessment,
- process/implementation,
- choice of methodologies,
- outcome and impact.

The **Advanced Technology Program (ATP)**, since its birth in 1990, has had an active evaluation program, with a dedicated staff and budget. With the implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1994, ATP was (and is) a leader in using several methods of evaluating the program and using the findings in computing performance metrics. In 2002, the *President's Management Agenda* added additional requirements aimed at improving performance management practices of federal agencies. These requirements, known as the Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART, include new investment criteria for federal R&D programs. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and individual government programs perform PART scoring separately.

### What is the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)?

The Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) identifies a program's strengths and weaknesses and informs funding and management decisions aimed at making the program more effective.

OMB evaluated ATP in 2002. ATP met with OMB staff to present evaluation results and ATP's proposed scores for each component. OMB agreed that ATP excels in program management and strategic planning

**Program Purpose and Design:** (ATP Score: 80%; OMB Score: 20%)

ATP assigned a score of 80% to this component citing that the proposed reforms submitted to Congress in 2001 would improve the program. OMB scored ATP at 20% citing "there is an adequate amount of funding from private sources."

**Strategic Planning:** (ATP Score: 100%; OMB Score: 86%)

OMB rated this component very high except for whether ATP collaborates and coordinates effectively with related programs that share similar goals and objectives.

**Program Management:** (ATP Score: 100%; OMB Score: 100%)  
OMB gave ATP a perfect score for this component, highlighting the excellent management of the program.

**Program Results:** (ATP Score: 100%; OMB Score: 67%)  
OMB rated this component in the mid-range citing that impact studies are primarily prospective and that outcomes and impacts are difficult to measure.

*Sources:*

*The Advanced Technology Program: Reform with a Purpose*, February 2002, The Advanced Technology Program: **Reform with a Purpose**, [www.atp.nist.gov/atp/secy\\_rept/contents.htm](http://www.atp.nist.gov/atp/secy_rept/contents.htm)

*A Toolkit for Evaluating Public R&D Investment: Models, Methods, and Findings from ATP's First Decade: Models, Methods, and Findings from ATP's First Decade*, Irwin Feller and Rosalie Ruegg, (NIST GCR 03-857).

Federal Evaluators, materials prepared for presentation to OMB Examiners, Spring 2005

Office of Management and Budget, Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART),  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part/print/index.html>

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