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Agencies' Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions to Facilitate Congressional Review

Preface

Under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, every major federal agency must now ask itself some basic questions: What is our mission? What are our goals and how will we achieve them? How can we measure our performance? How will we use that information to make improvements? GPRA forces a shift in the focus of federal agencies—away from such traditional concerns as staffing and activity levels and toward a single overriding issue: results. The act requires agencies to set goals, measure performance, and report on their accomplishments.

There is no more important element in results-oriented management than an agency's strategic planning effort. This effort is the starting point and foundation for defining what the agency seeks to accomplish, identifying the strategies it will use to achieve desired results and then determining how well it succeeds in reaching results-oriented goals and achieving objectives. Developing a strategic plan can help clarify organizational priorities and unify the agency's staff in the pursuit of shared goals.

Leading results-oriented organizations focus on the process of strategic planning, rather than on a strategic planning document. They believe strategic planning is not a static or occasional event, but rather a dynamic and inclusive process. If done well, strategic planning is continuous, provides the foundation for the most important things the organization does each day, and fosters informed communication between the organization and its stakeholders—that is, those parties potentially affected by or interested in the organization's activities.

For strategic planning to be done well, we found that three practices appear to be critical.¹ Organizations must (1) involve their stakeholders; (2) assess their internal and external environments; and (3) align their activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes. Stakeholder involvement is particularly important for federal agencies because they operate in a complex political environment in which legislative mandates are often broadly stated and some stakeholders may disagree strongly about the agency's mission and goals.

The act seeks to address such situations by requiring agencies, as they develop their strategic plans, to consult with Congress and solicit the views of other key stakeholders. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular

¹Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act (GAO/GGD-96-118, June 1996).

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No. A-11, Part 2,² a transmittal letter to Congress accompanying the strategic plan, is to include information on the consultations that occurred and goals or strategies suggested by stakeholders that are contrary to the agency's strategic plan. The letter also is to describe the contribution (if significant) made by nonfederal parties--e.g., consultants, customers, contractors, state governments--in the preparation of the strategic plan.

Purpose and Use of This Guide

In March 1997, after interviewing both congressional staff and agency officials who had participated in early consultations, we testified on some general approaches that may contribute to the usefulness of GPRA consultations.³ Congressional staff and agency officials expressed a widespread appreciation for the essential role that consultations can play in the development of a strategic plan that is useful to the agency and appropriately takes into account the views of Congress. However, both congressional staff and agency officials we interviewed believed that their consultation experiences had been too limited to use in identifying specific best practices for future consultations.

Recognizing that best practices had not yet evolved, the Chairmen of the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, Committee on Appropriations, and Committee on the Budget in the House of Representatives requested that we develop an initial set of key questions to facilitate congressional consultations on the plans and to help Congress determine how those plans can be improved to better support congressional and agency decisionmaking. They saw a need for a readily usable tool to provide a starting point for fruitful dialogue. This guide was developed in response to that request. The guide should also be helpful to agencies as they develop their strategic plans. We expect that as agencies and Congress gain experience with the act, develop strategic plans and engage in the required consultations, additional issues and key questions will emerge. We will incorporate those issues and key questions into subsequent versions of this document as appropriate.

This document consists of three sections. The first lists key questions on the overall strategic plan that congressional staff may find useful in determining how those plans can be improved to better support congressional and agency decisionmaking. For each of the six critical components GPRA requires for strategic plans, the second section describes the component's purpose, includes a definition, and suggests key questions for the consultation. The third section

²Circular A-11, Part 2, Preparation and Submission of Strategic Plans (Sept. 1995).

³Managing For Results: Enhancing the Usefulness of GPRA Consultations Between the Executive Branch and Congress (GAO/T-GGD-97-56, March 10, 1997).

consists of a set of tables that repeat the key questions on the overall plan and for each component of the plan. The tables are intended to facilitate a "hands on" review of draft plans by providing space to write comments on or answers to each question.

One key lesson that emerged from our examinations of early consultation efforts was that to be most useful, consultations must be tailored to the individual needs and experiences of congressional committees and agencies. Thus, every question contained in this guide may not be appropriate for every specific consultation. Congressional staff may want to focus on those questions that are most relevant to their needs as they engage in a particular consultation.

We developed this guide based on GPRA requirements for agency strategic plans; key steps and best practices described in our Executive Guide for effectively implementing the act; and guidance contained in the OMB Circular No. A-11, Part 2. To help ensure its usefulness to congressional staff, the guide was reviewed by selected House staff actively involved in consultations; their suggested improvements were incorporated. We also obtained and incorporated comments from OMB staff directly involved in overseeing agencies' efforts to implement the act.

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Agencies' Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions

**Agencies' Strategic Plans Under GPRA:
Key Questions to Facilitate Congressional Review**

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Agencies' Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions

Section 1

Key Questions on the Overall Strategic Plan for the Agency

The following section provides key questions on the agency's overall plan that may facilitate congressional consultations on the plan, including determining how the plan relates to other management initiatives on information technology and financial information.

The Overall Strategic Plan: Key Questions

- ▶ Is the plan consistent with legislative priorities and agendas? Are there areas important to your Committee that have not been addressed in the strategic plan?
- ▶ Did the agency already consult with other congressional committees? What were their views on the draft plan's mission, strategic goals, and strategies?
- ▶ Does the plan reflect coordination with other executive agencies as appropriate? Are other agencies' plans attempting to achieve similar strategic goals, or do they have activities or functions similar to those discussed in the plan under review? If so, how does the plan ensure that such related efforts are complementary, appropriate in scope, and not unnecessarily duplicative?
- ▶ What organizations and individuals were key stakeholders and why? Were their views on the plan solicited and incorporated? Why or why not?
- ▶ What agency staff were involved in developing the plan? Did they include line managers? How, if at all, does the agency plan to communicate the goals, priorities, and decisions reflected in the strategic plan to managers and staff throughout the agency?
- ▶ What contribution was made by nonfederal parties—e.g., consultants, customers, contractors, state governments—in preparing the plan?
- ▶ If the agency was involved in a GPRA performance measurement pilot project, did any "lessons learned" from the pilot influence the draft strategic plan? How?

Section 1: Agency Overall Strategic Plans

- ▶ How will information technology reforms required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 better support the agency's mission and improve its program performance?
- ▶ Is there an investment control process, consistent with the Clinger-Cohen Act, to prioritize information technology projects in line with the agency's overall goals and priorities?
- ▶ Does the plan include a general description of the information resources needed to meet the agency's strategic goals? Does this information include steps to build the staff skills to develop and manage the information systems needed to support the achievement of GPRA goals?
- ▶ How does the agency plan to provide timely, reliable, useful, and consistent financial information as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act, as expanded and amended by the Government Management Reform Act?
- ▶ Overall, is the plan logical, and do the various components fit together well? In other words, can the plan, if implemented well, get the agency "from here to there?"

The following section discusses key questions on each component of an agency strategic plan that may be useful to congressional staff who are preparing for consultations with agency officials.

Section 2

Key Questions on Required Components of Agency Strategic Plans

GPRA requires that each strategic plan include six components. This section describes each component's purpose and includes a definition. It also provides key questions that may be useful for the consultation.

Six Required Components

Agency strategic plans are to have six critical components:

- (1) a comprehensive agency **mission statement**;
- (2) agencywide long-term **goals and objectives** for all major functions and operations;
- (3) **approaches (or strategies) to achieve the goals and objectives** and the various resources needed;
- (4) a **relationship between the long-term goals/objectives and the annual performance goals**;
- (5) an identification of **key factors, external to the agency** and beyond its control, that could significantly affect achievement of the strategic goals; and
- (6) a description of **how program evaluations were used to establish or revise strategic goals**, and a schedule for future program evaluations.

(1) Mission Statement

The mission statement brings the agency into focus. It explains why the agency exists and tells what it does. Because programs ultimately must have a statutory basis and because Congress is the source of legislation creating, modifying, and funding programs, Congress' involvement is indispensable in defining each agency's mission and establishing its goals. This involvement may entail identifying legislative changes that are needed to clarify or modify Congress' intent and expectations or addressing differing conditions and citizens' needs that have occurred since the original statutory requirements were established.

The federal government's adaptive responses over time to new needs and problems have also contributed to fragmentation and overlap in a host of program areas, such as food safety, employment training, early childhood development, and rural development.⁴ Overlapping and fragmented programs waste scarce funds, confuse and frustrate program customers, and limit the overall effectiveness of the federal effort.

The requirement for agencies to consult with Congress in developing their strategic plans presents an important opportunity for congressional committees and the executive branch to work together to address the problem of agencies whose (1) missions are not well-defined or are not aligned with related efforts in other agencies, (2) goals are unclear or nonexistent, and (3) programs are not properly targeted. Such consultations should be helpful to Congress in modifying agencies' missions; setting better priorities; and restructuring, creating, or terminating programs.

⁴See, for example, Food Safety: A Unified, Risk-Based Food Safety System Needed (GAO/T-RCED-94-223, May 1994) and Early Childhood Programs: Multiple Programs and Overlapping Target Groups (GAO/HEHS-95-4FS, Oct. 31, 1994).

Mission Statement: Key Questions

- ▶ Is the mission results-oriented, and does it fulfill a public need? If not, how could the mission better focus on results?
- ▶ Is the mission based on statute, and if so, does it cover all relevant statutes?
- ▶ Are parts of the agency's functions or activities not covered in the mission statement? Why?
- ▶ Are there developments (e.g., in technology or competition) that suggest the mission and corresponding legislation need to be revised or updated?
- ▶ Is the agency's mission similar to those of other agencies, and if so, has coordination occurred? Does unwarranted duplication of missions exist?
- ▶ How is the agency's mission differentiated from those of other agencies with similar missions? Are there unique agency characteristics that give it an advantage in fulfilling its mission, such as location of field offices or staff expertise?

(2) General Goals and Objectives

General goals and objectives—or strategic goals—explain what results are expected from the agency's major functions and when to expect those results. Thus, such goals are an outgrowth of the mission and are very often results-oriented. The general goals need not be in a quantitative or measurable form, but the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs' committee report (S. Rep. 103-58) on GPRA says goals must be expressed in a manner that allows for future assessment of whether they are being achieved.

Congress intended for GPRA to fundamentally shift the focus of federal management and oversight from a focus on staffing and activity levels to a focus on the results of federal programs. This will not be an easy transition, nor will it be quick because agencies must move beyond what they control—their activities—to focus on what they merely influence—their results. But the act has the potential for adding greatly to government performance—a particularly vital goal at a time when resources are limited and public demands are high.

Goals and Objectives: Key Questions

- ▶ Do the goals cover the major functions and operations of the agency? If not, what functions and operations are missing? Are the goals logically related to the mission?
- ▶ Are the goals results-oriented, such as to reduce crime or have fewer workplace accidents? Or, are they focused more on outputs, such as inspecting more workplaces? If so, why?
- ▶ If the goals are not expressed in a quantitative or measurable form, are they expressed in a manner that will allow the agency and Congress to assess whether the goals are achieved?
- ▶ Are all of the agency's goals and priorities consistent with Congress' goals and priorities? When differences exist, why do they exist, and can they be resolved?
- ▶ Do the agency's goals appear similar to the goals in plans of other agencies that are performing related activities? If so, are these sets of goals complementary or duplicative?
- ▶ Are the goals targeted at results over which the agency has a reasonable degree of influence (may not apply to all agencies)?

(3) Approaches or Strategies to Achieve the General Goals and Objectives

Strategies help in aligning an agency's activities, core processes, and resources to support achievement of the agency's strategic goals and mission. Under GPRA, strategies are to briefly describe the operational processes, staff skills, and technologies, as well as the human, capital, information, and other resources, needed. According to OMB Circular No. A-11, Part 2, such strategies should also outline how the agency will communicate strategic goals throughout the organization, and hold managers and staff accountable for achieving these goals.

We have found that some agencies need to do a better job of designing strategies to improve efficiency and reduce costs.⁵ In an era of fiscal constraint, agencies' planning processes should support making intelligent resource allocation decisions that minimize, to the extent possible, the effect of funding reductions on mission accomplishment. Congress can use the consultation process to assure itself that the agency has designed well-thought-out strategies to achieve results-oriented goals and that the strategies are consistent with Congress' fiscal realities.

⁵For example, see State Department: Options for Addressing Possible Budget Reductions (GAO/NSIAD-96-124, Aug. 29, 1996).

Approaches or Strategies: Key Questions

- ▶ How are the goals to be achieved? Are the strategies logically linked to the goals and the day-to-day activities of the managers and staff? Are they consistent with historical resource trends?
- ▶ What steps will the agency take to align its activities, core processes, workforce, and other resources to support its mission-related outcomes?
- ▶ What are the required resources, such as human, capital, and information? Are new regulations, flexibilities, user fees, or legislation required?
- ▶ What steps is the agency taking to ensure that managers have the authority they need to achieve results? Are there strategies to hold managers accountable for the results? Are there any strategies that focus on providing incentives for managers and other staff to achieve the goals?
- ▶ Do managers have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement GPRA? If not, what strategies are needed to develop the necessary capacity?
- ▶ Are technological advances necessary to successfully execute the strategies? If so, how likely are those advances?
- ▶ What, if any, alternative strategies were considered?
- ▶ Are there programs or activities that need to be eliminated, created, or restructured to achieve the goals?

(4) Relationship Between the Long-Term Goals/Objectives and the Annual Performance Goals

Under GPRA, agencies' long-term strategic goals are to be linked to their annual performance plans and the day-to-day activities of their managers and staff. Without this linkage, Congress may not be able to judge whether an agency is making progress toward achieving its long-term goals. The first governmentwide annual performance plan is to cover fiscal year 1999 and be submitted to Congress about February 1998 with the President's budget. The individual agency plans are to be submitted to Congress shortly thereafter. In anticipation of Congress receiving these annual plans, many congressional staff are particularly interested in how general goals will be translated into the future annual performance goals. We include several related questions that congressional staff may want to ask agency officials.

GPRA defines an annual performance goal as the target level of performance expressed as a tangible, measurable objective against which actual achievement is to be compared. An annual performance goal is to consist of two parts: (1) the **performance measure** that represents the specific characteristic of the program used to gauge performance and (2) the **target level** of performance to be achieved during a given fiscal year for the measure. For example, a tangible goal may be to increase the lead time for predicting tornadoes (characteristic) from 7 to 9 minutes (target level).

In areas where meaningful objective measurement is not feasible, GPRA allows agencies to use an alternative form of performance assessment, provided they receive authorization from OMB. All forms of performance assessment must be in terms that would permit an independent determination of whether the program's eventual performance corresponded to the performance statement.

Relationship Between Long-Term Goals and Annual Performance Goals: Key Questions

- ▶ Does the plan describe how annual performance goals will be related to long-term goals, e.g., how annual goals will be used to gauge progress? If not, why not?
- ▶ What additional descriptive information, if any, could be included in the strategic plan to help clarify the link between the strategic goals and the annual goals that will subsequently be proposed? For example, are key terms and performance measures defined?
- ▶ Does the strategic plan recognize the need for a clear linkage between the annual goals and the program activity structure listed in the budget?
- ▶ Is the agency considering whether any revisions will be needed to budget account and program activity structures? If revisions will be needed, is the agency consulting with the Committees on Appropriations and cognizant authorizing committees?
- ▶ Does the strategic plan indicate whether each long-term strategic goal will have a corresponding outcome-oriented annual performance goal?
- ▶ Will the agency's annual performance goals be tangible or measurable? If not, does the agency plan to ask OMB for an alternative form of performance assessment for its annual performance plan? If so, will the alternative provide some basis for assessing whether the goals were met?
- ▶ Has the agency established annual performance measures to determine how well information technology is supporting strategic and program goals, as required by the Clinger-Cohen Act?
- ▶ Will the agency's performance goals include goals related to reducing any unintended negative effects of agency programs, e.g., increases in loan default rates or in the burden that agency programs may place on the private sector?

(5) Key External Factors Beyond the Agency's Control

This component of the plan involves an identification and discussion of key factors external to the agency and beyond its control that could occur during the period covered by the strategic plan and could significantly affect achievement of strategic goals. Such factors could include economic, demographic, social, technological, or environmental factors. Without this assessment, Congress or the agencies may not be able to judge the likelihood of achieving the strategic goals and actions needed to better meet those goals.

External factors can at times invalidate assumptions that the agency initially used to develop a goal. Consequently, information on these factors can be useful for goal setting and also for explaining results in the agency's annual performance reports, including, when applicable, the reasons annual performance goals were not met.

Key external factors could also include conditions or events that would affect the agency's ability to achieve its strategic goals if they do not occur. For example, achievement of goals can depend on the actions of other federal entities, state governments, local governments, and nonfederal entities. According to OMB Circular No. A-11, Part 2, in its plan, the agency should briefly (1) describe each key factor, (2) indicate its link with a particular strategic goal or goals, and (3) describe how achievement of the goal(s) could be affected by the factor.

Beyond monitoring external factors, leading organizations monitor their internal environments continuously and systematically. Internal factors could include the culture of the agency, its management practices, and its business processes. By doing this internal monitoring, these organizations are better able to anticipate future challenges and make adjustments so that potential problems do not become crises. For this reason, we include a question about internal factors that congressional staff may want to ask, even though assessing internal factors is not required either by the act or OMB.

External Factors: Key Questions

- ▶ Does the agency monitor external factors? If not, why not? If it does, is the monitoring process likely to identify all the major factors? What have been the findings of this monitoring?
- ▶ Have any actions been identified that could reduce or ameliorate the potential impact of external factors?
- ▶ Are the agency's strategies for achieving its long-term goals properly reflective of external factors? For example, if changes in information technology make it possible to increase productivity, does the plan discuss how this change will be translated either into more progress in achieving results or into savings through downsizing the workforce?
- ▶ Does the agency monitor internal factors? What internal factors within the control of the agency could affect achievement of the strategic goals? Are agency culture changes needed?

(6) How Program Evaluations Were Used to Establish or Revise Strategic Goals

GPRA was intended, in part, to improve congressional and agency decisionmaking by providing comprehensive and reliable information on the extent to which federal programs are fulfilling their statutory intent. Program evaluations can be a potentially critical source of information for Congress and others in ensuring the validity and reasonableness of goals and strategies, as well as for identifying factors likely to affect performance. Such information can also be useful in explaining results in the agency's annual performance reports, including, when applicable, the reasons annual performance goals were not met, and identifying appropriate strategies to meet unmet goals.

Program evaluations are defined in the act as objective and formal assessments of the results, impact, or effects of a program or policy. Program evaluations include assessments of the implementation and results of programs, operating policies, and practices. According to OMB Circular No. A-11, Part 2, the program evaluation schedule included in the strategic plan should outline the general scope and methodology for the evaluations, key issues to be addressed, and when such evaluations are to occur. Further, such schedules should cover the fiscal years leading to the next revision of the strategic plan.

How Program Evaluations Were Used: Key Questions

- ▶ Were program evaluation findings used in developing the strategic goals or other components of the plan? Were GAO or Inspector General report findings used?
- ▶ Are systems in place or planned to produce reliable performance and cost data needed to set goals, evaluate results, and improve performance? For example, does the agency have trend or baseline data that it can use to confidently set goals?
- ▶ Is there a schedule for future program evaluations? If not, why not? If yes, does it outline the general scope and methodology for the evaluations, key issues to be addressed, and when such evaluations are to occur?
- ▶ How will future program evaluation findings be used to improve performance? How will the agency's program evaluations inform congressional decisionmaking?

Section 3

Tables for Reviewing Agency Strategic Plans

This section lists the six critical components of strategic plans and then repeats the section 1 and 2 key questions in a table format. This format is intended to facilitate a "hands on" review of draft strategic plans by providing space for congressional staff to write their answer (or the agency's answer) to each question and any comments they might want to make.

One key lesson that emerged from our examinations of early consultation efforts was that to be most useful, consultations must be tailored to the individual needs and experiences of congressional committees and agencies. Thus, every question contained in this guide may not be appropriate for every specific consultation. Congressional staff may want to focus on those questions that are most relevant to their needs as they engage in a particular consultation. Depending on the context, some questions cannot be answered "yes" or "no." However, we have included such response boxes for use when appropriate.

Required Components

As discussed in section 2, GPRA requires that agency strategic plans have six critical components:

- (1) a comprehensive agency **mission statement**;
- (2) agencywide long-term **goals and objectives** for all major functions and operations;
- (3) **approaches (or strategies) to achieve the goals and objectives** and the various resources needed;
- (4) a **relationship between the long-term goals/objectives and the annual performance goals**;
- (5) an identification of **key factors, external to the agency** and beyond its control, that could significantly affect achievement of the strategic goals; and
- (6) a description of **how program evaluations were used to establish or revise strategic goals**, and a schedule for future program evaluations.

OVERALL STRATEGIC PLAN			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Is the plan consistent with legislative priorities and agendas?</p> <p>Are there areas important to your Committee that have not been addressed in the strategic plan?</p>			
<p>Did the agency already consult with other congressional committees?</p> <p>What were their views on the draft plan's mission, strategic goals, and strategies?</p>			
<p>Does the plan reflect coordination with other executive agencies as appropriate?</p> <p>Are other agencies' plans attempting to achieve similar strategic goals, or do they contain activities or functions similar to those discussed in the plan under review?</p> <p>If so, how does the plan ensure that such related efforts are complementary, appropriate in scope, and not unnecessarily duplicative?</p>			
<p>What organizations and individuals were key stakeholders, and why?</p> <p>Were their views on the plan solicited and incorporated? Why or why not?</p>			

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

OVERALL STRATEGIC PLAN			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>What agency staff were involved in developing the plan? Did they include line managers?</p> <p>How, if at all, does the agency plan to communicate the goals, priorities, and decisions reflected in the strategic plan to managers and staff throughout the agency?</p>			
<p>What contribution was made by nonfederal parties--e.g., consultants, customers, contractors, state governments--in preparing the plan?</p>			
<p>If the agency was involved in a GPRA performance measurement pilot project, did any "lessons learned" from the pilot influence the draft strategic plan? If so, how?</p>			
<p>How will information technology reforms required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 better support agencies' missions and improve its program performance?</p>			
<p>Is there an investment control process, consistent with the Clinger-Cohen Act, to prioritize information technology projects in line with the agency's overall goals and priorities?</p>			

OVERALL STRATEGIC PLAN			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Does the plan include a general description of the information resources needed to meet the agency's strategic goals?</p> <p>Does this information include steps to build the staff skills to develop and manage the information systems needed to support the achievement of GPRA goals?</p>			
<p>How does the agency plan to provide timely, reliable, useful, and consistent financial information as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act, as expanded and amended by the Government Management Reform Act?</p>			
<p>Overall, is the plan logical, and do the various components fit together well? In other words, can the plan, if implemented well, get the agency "from here to there?"</p>			

Additional comments:

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

(1) MISSION STATEMENT			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Is the mission results-oriented, and does it fulfill a public need?</p> <p>If not, how could the mission better focus on results?</p>			
<p>Is the mission based on statute, and if so, does it cover all relevant statutes?</p>			
<p>Are parts of the agency's functions or activities not covered in the mission statement? Why?</p>			
<p>Are there developments (e.g., in technology or competition) that suggest the mission and corresponding legislation need to be revised or updated?</p>			
<p>Is the agency's mission similar to those of other agencies, and if so, has coordination occurred? Does unwarranted duplication of missions exist?</p>			

Tables for Reviewing Plans: Section 3

(1) MISSION STATEMENT			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>How is the agency's mission differentiated from those of other agencies with similar missions?</p> <p>Are there unique agency characteristics that give it an advantage in fulfilling its mission, such as location of field offices or staff expertise?</p>			

Additional comments:

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

(2) LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Do the goals cover the major functions and operations of the agency? If not, what functions and operations are missing?</p> <p>Are the goals logically related to the mission?</p>			
<p>Are the goals results-oriented, such as to reduce crime or have fewer workplace accidents?</p> <p>Or, are they focused more on outputs, such as inspecting more workplaces? If so, why?</p>			
<p>If the goals are not expressed in a quantitative or measurable form, are they expressed in a manner that will allow the agency and Congress to assess whether the goals are achieved?</p>			
<p>Are all of the agency's goals and priorities consistent with Congress' goals and priorities?</p> <p>When differences exist, why do they exist, and can they be resolved?</p>			

(2) LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Do the agency's goals appear similar to the goals in plans of other agencies that are performing related activities?</p> <p>If so, are these sets of goals complementary or duplicative?</p>			
<p>Are the goals targeted at results over which the agency has a reasonable degree of influence (may not apply to all agencies)?</p>			

Additional comments:

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

(3) APPROACHES OR STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>How are the goals to be achieved?</p> <p>Are the strategies logically linked to the goals and the day-to-day activities of the managers and staff?</p> <p>Are they consistent with historical resource trends?</p>			
<p>What steps will the agency take to align its activities, core processes, workforce, and other resources to support its mission-related outcomes?</p>			
<p>What are the required resources, such as human, capital, and information?</p> <p>Are new regulations, flexibilities, user fees, or legislation required?</p>			
<p>What steps is the agency taking to ensure that managers have the authority they need to achieve results?</p> <p>Are there strategies to hold managers accountable for the results?</p> <p>Are there any strategies that focus on providing incentives for managers and other staff to achieve the goals?</p>			

(3) APPROACHES OR STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
Do managers have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement GPRA? If not, what strategies are needed to develop the necessary capacity?			
Are technological advances necessary to successfully execute the strategies? If so, how likely are those advances?			
What, if any, alternative strategies were considered?			
Are there programs or activities that need to be eliminated, created, or restructured to achieve the goals?			

Additional comments:

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

(4) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LONG-TERM GOALS AND THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE GOALS			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Does the plan describe how annual performance goals will be related to long-term goals, e.g., how annual goals will be used to gauge progress?</p> <p>If not, why not?</p>			
<p>What additional descriptive information, if any, could be included in the strategic plan to help clarify the link between the strategic goals and the annual goals that will subsequently be proposed?</p> <p>For example, are key terms and performance measures defined?</p>			
<p>Does the strategic plan recognize the need for a clear linkage between annual goals and the program activity structure listed in the budget?</p>			
<p>Is the agency considering whether any revisions will be needed to budget account and program activity structures?</p> <p>If revisions will be needed, is the agency consulting with the Committees on Appropriations and cognizant authorizing committees?</p>			

(4) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LONG-TERM GOALS AND THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE GOALS			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
Does the strategic plan indicate whether each long-term strategic goal will have a corresponding outcome-oriented annual performance goal?			
Will the agency's annual performance goals be tangible or measurable? If not, does the agency plan to ask OMB for an alternative form of performance assessment for its annual performance plan? If so, will the alternative provide some basis for assessing whether the goals were met?			
Has the agency established annual performance measures to determine how well information technology is supporting strategic and program goals, as required by the Clinger-Cohen Act?			
Will the agency's performance goals include goals related to reducing any unintended negative effects of agency programs; e.g., increases in loan default rates or in the burden that agency programs may place on the private sector?			

Section 3: Tables for Reviewing Plans

(5) KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT COULD AFFECT GOALS			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Does the agency monitor external factors? If not, why not?</p> <p>If it does, is the monitoring process likely to identify all the major factors?</p> <p>What have been the findings of this monitoring?</p>			
<p>Have any actions been identified that could reduce or ameliorate the potential impact of external factors?</p>			
<p>Are the agency's strategies for achieving its long-term goals properly reflective of external factors?</p> <p>For example, if changes in information technology make it possible to increase productivity, does the plan discuss how this change will be translated either into more progress in achieving results or into savings through downsizing the workforce?</p>			
<p>Does the agency monitor internal factors? What internal factors within the control of the agency could affect achievement of strategic goals?</p> <p>Are agency culture changes needed?</p>			

(6) HOW PROGRAM EVALUATIONS WERE USED TO ESTABLISH /REVISE STRATEGIC GOALS			
Question	Yes	No	Comment
<p>Were program evaluation findings used in developing the strategic goals or other components of the plan?</p> <p>Were GAO or Inspector General report findings used?</p>			
<p>Are systems in place or planned to produce reliable performance and cost data needed to set goals, evaluate results, and improve performance?</p> <p>For example, does the agency have trend or baseline data that it can use to confidently set goals?</p>			
<p>Is there a schedule for future program evaluations? If not, why not?</p> <p>If yes, does it outline the general scope of the evaluations, key issues to be addressed, and when such evaluations are to occur?</p>			
<p>How will future program evaluation findings be used to improve performance?</p> <p>How will the agency's program evaluations inform congressional decisionmaking?</p>			

Notes

Notes

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