



Report In Brief

U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General

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Why We Did This Review

OIG first identified Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) implementation as a top management challenge in March 1999. From September 2000 to September 2004, we issued eight separate audit reports covering six bureaus' efforts reporting performance information. The bureaus covered by the audits were the Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Census Bureau, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Together they represented more than 80% of the Department's FY 2004 net cost of operations.

Background

We reviewed 45 performance measures in the earlier audits and repeatedly found (1) unclear performance measures and (2) inadequate disclosures (language accompanying performance data was insufficient to place performance results in an appropriate context). We also repeatedly found deficiencies in management controls (inadequate procedures to verify performance information and ensure that it could be relied upon.)

To view the full report, visit <http://www.oig.doc.gov/oig/reports/2006/OS-FSD-17444-03-06.pdf>

Office of the Secretary

Department of Commerce Has Made Significant Progress, but Additional Opportunities Exist to Improve the Reporting and Utility of Performance Results (FSD-17444)

What We Found

We sought to assess (1) whether Department and bureau efforts addressed identified deficiencies, (2) whether performance measurement and reporting was strengthened, and (3) whether additional action was needed to ensure reported performance results are reliable and meaningful. We found the Department and its bureaus had taken actions to improve both the utility and integrity of the performance information reported to the public. For example:

- Bureaus have eliminated or reworded performance measures that either (1) did not demonstrate a clear link between the activity being measured and the agency's actions or (2) clearly demonstrate what was being measured.
- Explanations of performance measures and results have been strengthened in performance and accountability reports and annual performance plans submitted by the Department to satisfy GPRA requirements, and discussions of limitations have been enhanced. In GPRA documents, improvements have been made in the description of efforts to ensure the verification of performance measures.
- Bureaus improved management controls to better ensure the reliability of performance data to the public. This included the implementation and documentation of verification procedures and establishing requirements for the maintaining of supporting documentation.

What We Recommended

We determined that Commerce and its bureaus had collectively taken sufficient steps to warrant the removal of the implementation of GPRA from OIG's list of top management challenges facing the Department.

We recommended that the Department and its bureaus ensure key terms used in measures are easily understood. The introduction of new measures should be accompanied by informative explanations in reports issued by the Department.

We also recommended that management controls over data collection and systems used in the collection and reporting of performance data be in place to ensure the integrity of underlying performance data. Finally, we recommended that quarterly performance reviews be used to discuss the effectiveness of controls in place to ensure the reliability of performance information, including the results of Office of Budget reviews of validation and verification.