

Department of the Interior Performance

The FY 2007 Performance and Data Analysis section documents the performance of the Department of the Interior against the FY 2007-2012 Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan. The Performance and Data Analysis section is organized according to Interior's four areas of mission responsibility and their accompanying end outcome and intermediate outcome goals. These goals provide a framework for the strategic plans of Interior's bureaus. The mission areas are as follows:

- ◆ **Resource Protection** – Protect the Nation's natural, cultural and heritage resources
- ◆ **Resource Use** – Improve resource management to assure responsible use and sustain a dynamic economy
- ◆ **Recreation** – Improve recreational opportunities for America
- ◆ **Serving Communities** – Improve protection of lives, property and assets, advance the use of scientific knowledge, and improve the quality of life for communities we serve

A fifth area, **Management Excellence**, provides the enabling framework within which we carry out these mission responsibilities to manage the Department to be highly skilled, accountable, modern, functionally integrated, citizen-centered, and results-oriented.

These goals and their measures provide the basis for assessments of the Department's effectiveness in this section.

What Counts, and How We Count It

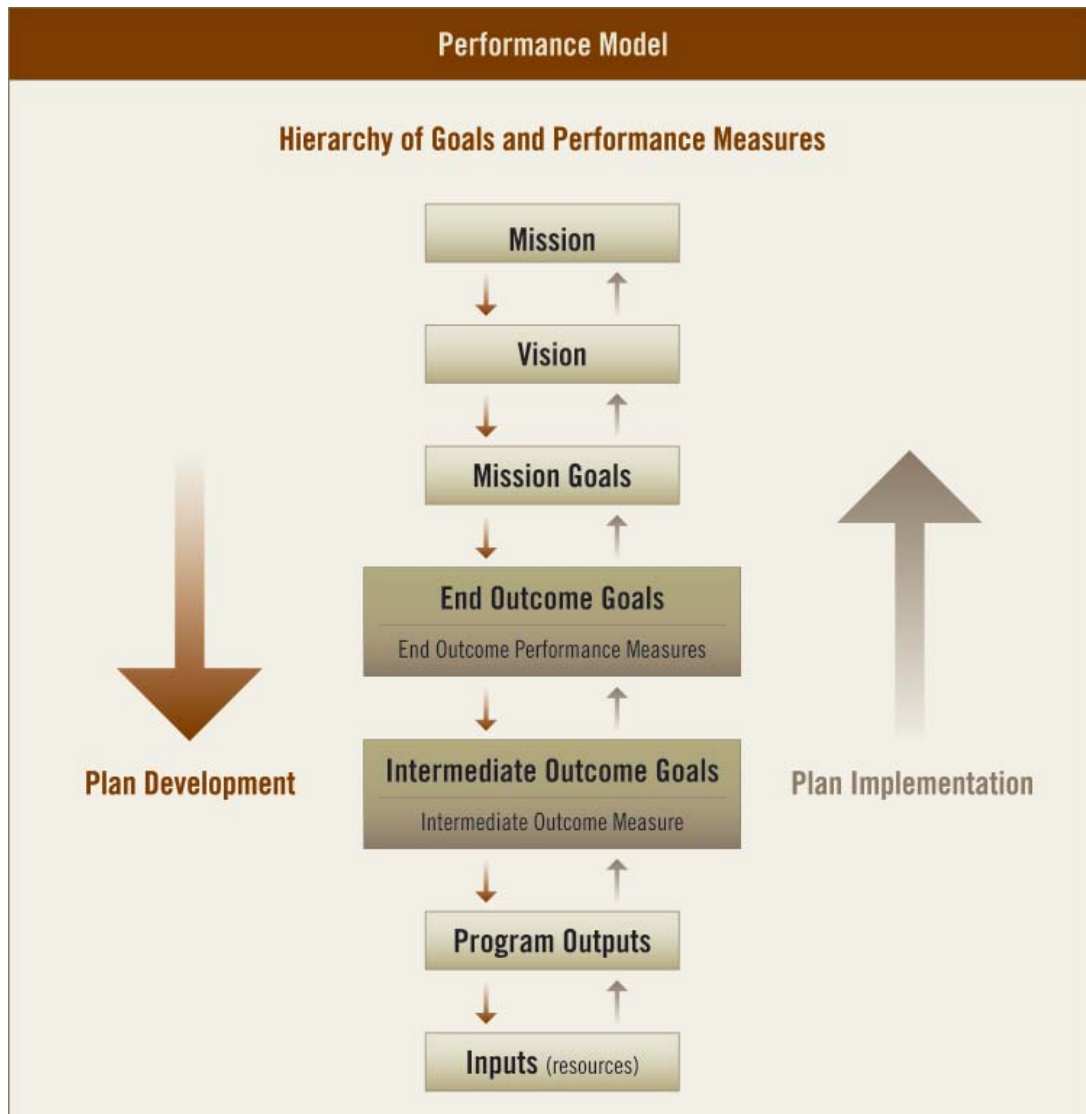
Our GPRA Plan provides a high-level overview of performance, setting large mission goals and broad program objectives. Its greatest value, day-by-day, comes from our ability to connect that larger view with each day's ground-level activities, whether that work is focused on rehabilitating a wetland clogged with the invasive purple loosestrife, improving a visitor center at a national park, monitoring the rehabilitation of a played out mine, helping an American Indian child become a better reader, or adding real-time capability to a flood warning system.

Because the plan identifies a clear hierarchy of goals and measures, we can see exactly how our work contributes to Interior's end results. And because it sets targets at every level, it gives us numerical measures by which we can judge what we have accomplished.

The plan structure focuses on end outcomes, selected high-priority intermediate outcomes, and on measures that will verify progress toward outcome achievement. Each mission area has its own end outcome goals and performance measures. Supporting those, in turn, are intermediate outcomes and measures and, ancillary to the plan, program outputs and inputs (see the Figure 2-1 on the next page – Hierarchy of Goals and Performance Measures).

The outcome goals and their performance measures maintain our focus on the bottom line – specific results we must achieve to successfully accomplish our mission. To progress toward these goals, we identify a series of intermediate outcome goals that support, promote, and serve as a vehicle for achieving results. Performance measures are also applied to intermediate outcome goals to help assess their effectiveness. Engaging these actions, in turn, requires an array of program level activities and their associated outputs. Outputs are typically quantifiable units of accomplishment that are a consequence of work conducted to execute our GPRA plan (such outputs might be acres treated for hazardous fuels or park safety programs implemented). Activity-based costing lets us connect outputs to costs, creating a powerful management tool that helps us recognize superior performance, focus attention on achievement and innovation, and move more quickly to spread best practices throughout the organization.

FIGURE 2-1



In our GPRA Plan, the outcome goals are cast in a long-term context – typically covering the duration of the GPRA Plan. These goals and measures are annualized to demonstrate incremental progress toward achieving long-term targets. There are instances in which we may adopt outcome measures that appear output-like because they use units of measurement, such as acres restored or permits issued, that have output connotations. However, the context in which the measure is applied remains outcome focused. In some cases, a true outcome measure may be too far beyond the control of our programs to provide a useful gauge of the agency’s effectiveness in meeting its program responsibilities. In such cases, Interior uses the best indicator it can develop to assess its contribution and progress toward that goal.

Selected high-priority intermediate outcome goals and measures appear in both the GPRA Plan and bureau or departmental office operating plans. The balance of the intermediate goals and specific work outputs will appear only in bureau or office operating plans. This category of goals is used to link budgets to performance.

Although departmental planning now centers on high-level outcome-oriented goals and performance measures, performance information will be tracked and evaluated at various levels within the organization.

Linking key programs and outcomes of individual efforts, programs and bureaus reinforce the Department’s combined stewardship of our critical

resources. This is especially important in light of increasing developmental pressures, growing public demand, and accelerating changes in science and technology. Doing this gives us a set of consistent goals and a common agenda. It gives us the means to increase our focus on performance results, helps make our managers more accountable, and creates a springboard for communication, collaboration, and coordination in the service of conservation with interested citizens, organizations, and communities.

We believe the adoption of our original integrated plan marked a significant step forward in the

Department's ongoing efforts to improve its reporting performance under the Government Performance and Results Act. Our new system and measures in the new plan will make our reporting more transparent, more exact, and easier to evaluate. When employed and examined as a whole, our plan tells the story of the Department's work and provides support to various budgetary and programmatic initiatives which are key to achieving the goals of the program. It establishes performance measures that act like stepping stones, keeping the programs on track, on time, and on budget.

Reading the Numbers for Yourself

The Department's GPRA measures should give readers a clear picture of our expectations and ambitions for the future. It is meant to be transparent and easy to understand. By following the hierarchy from mission goals through end outcome goals to intermediate outcome goals, the reader can see our intended results and the steps we will undertake to get there. Notice that the performance measures are not usually written to include words such as "increase" or "reduce". There may be periods in which desired progress plateaus due to various operational constraints. Consequently, more neutral wording has been chosen.

Data Validation and Verification

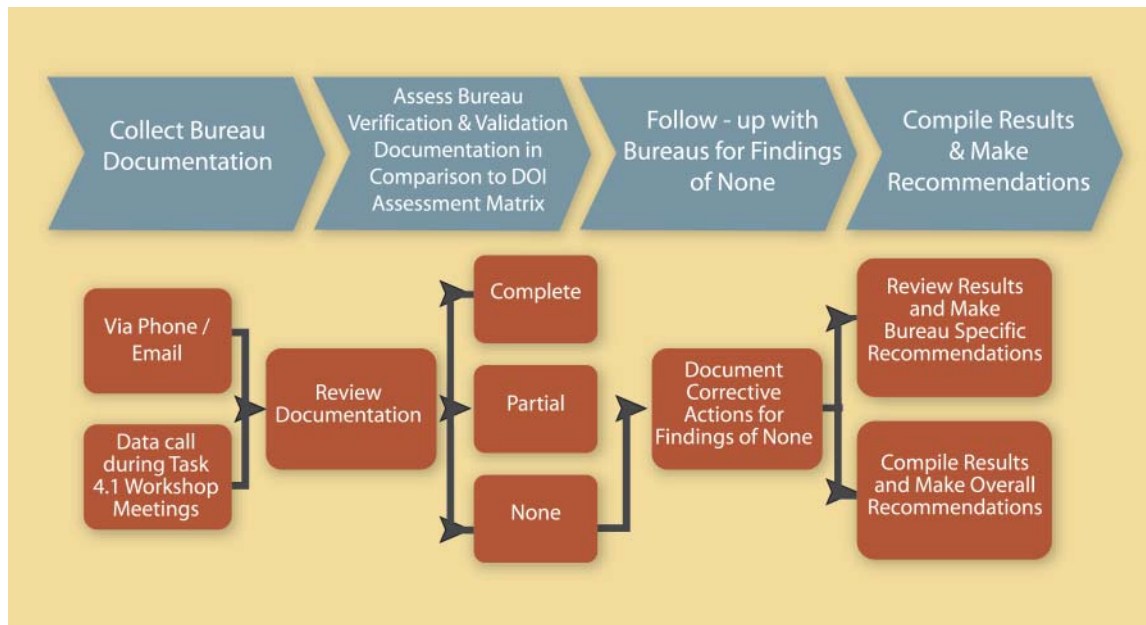
To credibly report progress toward intended results and to enable performance informed decision-making, Interior needs to ensure that its performance information is sufficiently accurate, reliable, and sound. GPRA requires agencies to describe the means used to verify and validate measured performance as part of annual performance reports. Verification includes assessing data completeness, accuracy, and consistency and related quality control practices. Validation is the assessment of whether the data are appropriate to measure performance.

The Department of the Interior requires the full implementation of data verification and validation criteria to ensure that information is properly collected, recorded, processed, and aggregated for reporting and use by decisionmakers. Since 2003, the Department has required bureaus and offices collecting and reporting performance data to develop and use an effective data verification and validation process. A data V&V assessment matrix, developed in cooperation with departmental bureaus and offices, including the Office of Inspector General, was issued in January 2003 to serve as a minimum standard for data V&V. The matrix has been used successfully as a tool to elevate data V&V procedures to an acceptable functional level and to detect potential problem areas in well-established bureau or office data V&V systems.

In 2006, Interior contracted Grant Thornton to evaluate each of the bureau's data verification and validation processes, report findings on compliance,

and identify areas for improvement. Grant Thornton used the following framework to structure the analysis:

FIGURE 2-2



As a result of this assessment, DOI gained a greater insight into how individual bureaus comply with the data V&V protocols and identified areas for improvement in the verification and validation processes to ensure the data reported meets, and exceeds, quality standards.

In 2007, the Department requested that bureaus review their compliance with Department data V&V standards and assess their implementation of recommended improvement actions contained in the Grant Thornton report. Bureaus and Offices that found standards or recommendations that had not been fully implemented were required to submit plans to bring their procedures into compliance prior to submission of 2007 performance data.

Interior uses four categories of performance data throughout its performance verification and validation process:

1. **Final.** All data are available, verified, and validated for the measure. Actual numbers are reported. Performance analysis can be completed. This includes the characterization of data as “goal met,” “exceeded,” or “not met,” along with comparing the result with the target and describing why the result meets, exceeds, or falls short of the target. It is Interior’s policy to report a measure as “goal met” if the actual or estimated performance result is from 95% to 105% of the performance target.

2. **Estimated.** Some data are unavailable, unverified, or not validated for the measure. A reasonable methodology should be developed and applied to estimate the annual performance. Once the estimation methodology is documented and is proven repeatable and valid, estimated data can be factored into the “goal met,” “exceeded,” or “not met” aggregation.
3. **Preliminary.** All data are available but are not verified and validated for the measure. No analysis should be conducted (i.e. these data reports are considered similar to a “no report” in that the data are not verifiable either directly or through a valid, documented, repeatable estimation methodology, and therefore cannot be factored as either “goal met,” “exceeded,” or “not met”); these data are reported as preliminary.
4. **No Data.** Data are unavailable and there are insufficient sources to develop a reasonable estimate. No report on the measure can be made.

Data Sources

A key element in reporting valid, accurate, and reliable performance data is ensuring that sources of data are documented and available. Interior bureaus and offices are continuing to improve their data management processes by developing better sources of data and by linking with current data sources that already have reporting, verification, and validation procedures in place. Data sources for each of Interior’s measures are shown in the following tables as an additional row.