



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 31, 2006

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RATING TOOL GUIDANCE NO. 2006-03

TO: OMB PROGRAM ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS
OMB PROGRAM DEPUTY ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS
AGENCY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION LEADS
AGENCY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RATING TOOL CONTACTS

FROM: Diana Espinosa 
Deputy Assistant Director for Management

SUBJECT: Updating PART Improvement Plans and Performance Data in PARTWeb

1. Purpose. This spring agencies will have the opportunity to update portions of the information presented on www.ExpectMore.gov. This memorandum provides OMB Resource Management Offices (RMOs) and their agency counterparts with guidance for updating the improvement plans and performance data included in PARTWeb. This updated information will be posted on ExpectMore.gov in the summer. The memorandum also requests good examples of completed follow-up actions.

2. Actions.

By July 5, agencies should do the following for programs PARTed in 2002 – 2005 as appropriate:

- Enter updated information on their improvement plans in PARTWeb.
- Enter any available additional performance data (targets and actuals) into PARTWeb.
- Provide brief written descriptions of a few follow-up actions they have completed and believe are exemplary. These write-ups will not be submitted through PARTWeb.

By August 2, OMB RMOs should do the following:

- Review the information entered into PARTWeb, ensure it is accurate and complete, and work with agencies to make any necessary changes.
- Provide agencies with feedback on the comprehensiveness and quality of their reporting.

3. Entering information into PARTWeb. This memorandum describes the PART information that agencies and OMB should enter into PARTWeb for this update. A new data entry screen called “Spring Update” has been created in PARTWeb to facilitate data entry.

The “Spring Update” screen is similar to the “2005 Fall Update” screen, as it only allows editing of certain portions of PART data. You access it by hitting the “2006 SPR” file link in your program assessment list.

The spring update version (“2006 SPR”) will automatically be pre-populated with the most recent assessment information (i.e., the “2005 UPD” version that is currently posted on www.ExpectMore.gov) and will only allow the user to update information in the improvement plan and to add new performance data. The updated information will be posted in the PART details on ExpectMore.gov when final, replacing the existing information.

Detailed instructions on how to enter and edit spring update data in PARTWeb have been added to the PARTWeb user’s manual (pages 55-58), which can be accessed from the omb.gov/PART website: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part/partweb/partweb_user_manual_may2006.pdf.

4. Updating PART improvement plans. Each program that has been PARTed has a set of follow-up actions (also known as an improvement plan) that are being implemented in response to the PART findings to improve program performance. The follow-up actions listed in the PART details on www.ExpectMore.gov (see Figure 1) will be updated twice a year – in the spring for release in summer and in the fall for release with the President’s Budget. As many as three follow-up actions are also included in the PART summary on ExpectMore.gov (see Figure 2). They will not be updated at this time.

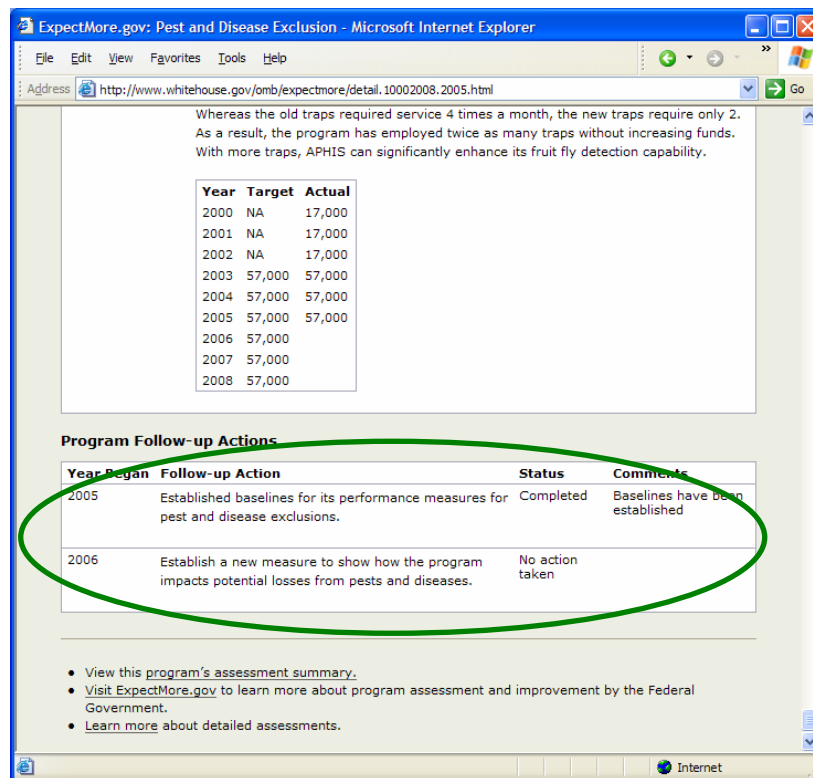


Figure 1. The follow-up actions on the PART details screen will be updated at this time. After the updates to the follow-up actions and performance measures are finalized, they will be posted on ExpectMore.gov.

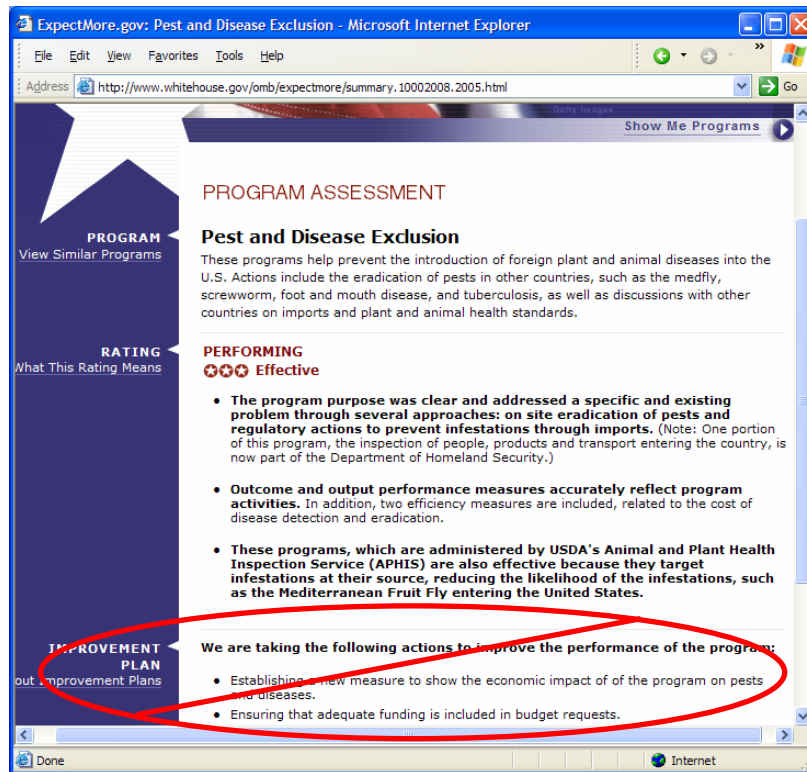


Figure 2. The follow-up actions on the PART summary screen will not be updated at this time. They are not included in the spring update.

To facilitate the updating of improvement plans, each agency that has completed five or more PARTs will receive a spreadsheet listing the improvement plan information currently included in PARTWeb, as well as a summary that lists the actions by year and category, and shows their current status. The spreadsheet will be emailed to the agency's Budget and Performance Integration Initiative lead and saved at J:\PART_PET\2006 SPR Improvement Plan Spreadsheets.

Agency and OMB staff should review the information currently included in PARTWeb on improvement plans to

- Verify that the information reported is timely and accurate;
- Make certain that the information is consistent with the improvement plan included in the PART summary;
- Ensure that the improvement plans are aggressive and work to improve program performance; and
- Ensure that individual follow-up actions are discrete and that completion can be objectively determined.

During the update process, improvement plans should not be developed for programs assessed for the first time this year. Improvement plans for 2006 PARTs will be developed in the fall/winter for release on ExpectMore.gov in February 2007.

For programs currently being reassessed, however, the existing improvement plans should be updated now. (Note: Programs being reassessed in 2006 will have two active files in PARTWeb: "2006" and "2006 SPR." See the PARTWeb user's manual for details about the differences.)

Verify that the information reported is timely and accurate. Agencies should ensure that the information they report on their improvement plans (e.g., the year the action was begun, the status of the action, etc.) is correct and current. This reporting should reflect activities completed to date.

Make certain that the information is consistent with the improvement plan included in the PART summary. The detailed follow-up actions (see Figure 1) should be consistent with those included in the PART summary (see Figure 2). There should be at least one follow-up action reported in the details for each follow-up action listed in the summary. In some cases, there may be a few detailed follow-up actions corresponding to one in the PART summary, such as when the detailed ones correspond to different steps in a process. For example, a follow-up action in the PART summary may read “Working with the Congress to reform the program” and the corresponding actions in the details could be “Draft legislation,” “Complete interagency clearance of legislation,” “Introduce legislation and brief Congressional committee staff,” etc. (Reminder: The follow-up actions listed on the PART summary will not be updated at this time.)

Ensure that the improvement plans are aggressive and work to improve program performance. Agencies and OMB staff should give particular focus to ensuring that PART follow-up actions are directed toward improving performance and that they strive toward continuous improvement. As follow-up actions are completed, programs should propose additional ones so that the improvement plans remain living documents. Additional actions may be logical next steps to completed actions or new actions relating to PART findings that have not been addressed yet.

Ensure that individual follow-up actions are discrete and that completion can be objectively determined. Individual follow-up actions should be discrete, actionable items. One should be able to objectively assess whether the action has been completed.

It may be helpful to break up follow-up actions into major steps so that agencies are better able to show progress toward achieving their improvement plans. Keep in mind, however, that tracking completion of follow-up actions in PARTWeb is primarily intended for public accountability, not for internal agency management of implementation plans. Agencies may wish to maintain more detailed tracking of their follow-up actions.

As a general rule, follow-up actions should have a defined timeframe for completion, preferably one year. When the timeframe is not one year, the description of the follow-up action should include the timeframe for planned completion.

Appendix A provides additional information on how to complete the related “Spring Updates” data entry fields in PARTWeb.

5. Updating PART performance information. During the spring update, agencies will enter into PARTWeb any additional performance information that became available since the fall 2005 updates. If additional performance data was used to modify performance targets or to develop additional targets, that information may be added as well.

Only existing measures may be updated at this time; new performance measures may not be added or existing ones modified at this time.

6. Good examples of PART improvement plan implementation. Agencies should provide a few examples of completed PART follow-up actions that they believe are exemplary. These 5 – 10 examples may include important changes in how the program is carried out, legislative changes agencies sought and achieved in response to a PART finding, steps taken to improve efficiency or productivity, etc.

The narrative description should be in bullet form (2 – 3 sentences) and emailed to the agency's RMO contact by July 5.

7. Scorecard treatment. The comprehensiveness and quality of this agency's deliverable will be reported on the fourth quarter Budget and Performance Integration scorecard. This is a change from earlier scorecard guidance that listed the spring updates as a third quarter deliverable.

8. Inquiries. OMB RMOs with questions about this guidance should contact their Performance Evaluation Team (PET) representative. Agency staff should contact their OMB RMO counterparts.

Attachment

PART Improvement Plans

Reporting on existing improvement plans. All improvement plans for programs have been assessed using the PART (assessments completed 2002 – 2005) should be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure the reported information is accurate, complete, and current. For each follow-up action, including ones you may add (see discussion below) do the following:

- Enter the year the action was begun. This should be the calendar year when the action was identified and/or first reported. For most actions, the year will correspond with the year that the PART summary listing the action was first published. For example, a PART follow-up action from the first year the PART was used would list 2003 since the summaries were published in February 2003.

For the 2005 PARTs, several programs began working on their follow-up actions in advance of the publication of the PART summaries. Those programs accurately reflect 2005 as the year begun. Other 2005 PARTs that began working on their follow-up actions shortly after the publication of the PART list 2006 as the year begun.

It is important that these dates be actual calendar years so that the reader will have an accurate sense of how much time it has taken the agency to complete the action.

- Verify/select the category for the action. Category definitions are provided below. The category is used for internal tracking and is not published.
 - *Budgetary* – The President’s Budget includes a proposal relating to the total funding for the program or funding for a portion of the program (i.e., to increase, decrease, or maintain the current level) or to change the distribution (targeting) of funding within the program. The budget recommendation is based largely on performance.
 - *Legislative* – The follow-up action relates to submitting a legislative proposal or working with the Congress in an informal fashion to enact a legislative change. The legislative proposal may be included in the President’s Budget or submitted separately and it may in appropriations language, considered as part of an authorization bill, or submitted as a separate bill.
 - *Performance Measurement* – The agency is developing or will develop new performance measures (long term, annual, or efficiency) or the agency is or will develop targets for its existing performance measures.
 - *Management (other)* – The agency is taking or will take administrative steps (besides developing performance measures) in response to PART findings. Examples include putting performance contracts in place to hold managers accountable for performance, revising regulations, modifying grant announcements, establishing a methodology for measuring improper payments, etc.

- Update the status. For each follow-up action, update the status of the action pursuant to the definitions provided below. (Note a new status level of “Enacted” has been added since the fall.)
 - *No action taken* – The agency/program has not taken steps to implement the follow-up action.
 - *Action taken, but not completed* – The agency/program has taken some steps to implement the follow-up action, but has not completed the action.
 - *Completed* – The agency/program has completed the follow-up action.
 - *Enacted* – This category should only be used for actions categorized as budgetary or legislative, such as when the President’s Budget included a funding proposal that was enacted by the Congress or when the Administration submitted legislation that the Congress enacted.
 - *Not enacted* – Just as “Enacted,” this category should only be used for actions categorized as budgetary or legislative.
- Provide comment to explain status. As appropriate, explain the status of the follow-up action. There is limited space so explanations should be succinct.
 - *No action taken* – A comment is required. There is an exception for new actions that were just added.
 - *Action taken, but not completed* – The comment could explain what has been done and what remains to be done and the associated timeline.
 - *Completed* – The comment may explain the associated impact on performance.
 - *Enacted* – The comment may explain when the budget or legislative proposal was enacted, including mentioning the legislation that enacted it.
 - *Not enacted* – If a budgetary proposal from a prior year was not enacted, the comment should identify if the action is proposed again in the FY 2007 President’s Budget or whether there should be an additional budgetary action listed for 2006.
 - The comments relating to legislative actions should make clear what exactly was done. For instance, “legislation was introduced” versus “legislation has been approved in the Senate.”

Modifying existing improvement plans. For agencies to remain accountable for their improvement plans, pre-existing follow-up actions should only be modified to improve clarity, and make it more specific and actionable. The intent of the original follow-up action should remain the same.

In some cases, it may be helpful to break up follow-up actions into major steps so that agencies are better able to show progress toward achieving their improvement plans. Keep in mind, however, that tracking completion of follow-up actions in PARTWeb is primarily intended for public accountability, not for internal agency management of implementation plans. Agencies may wish to maintain more detailed tracking of their follow-up actions.

In addition, as programs complete their follow-up actions, they should be identifying additional steps they will take to continue improving their performance. They may be logical next steps to completed actions or new items aimed at continued improvement.