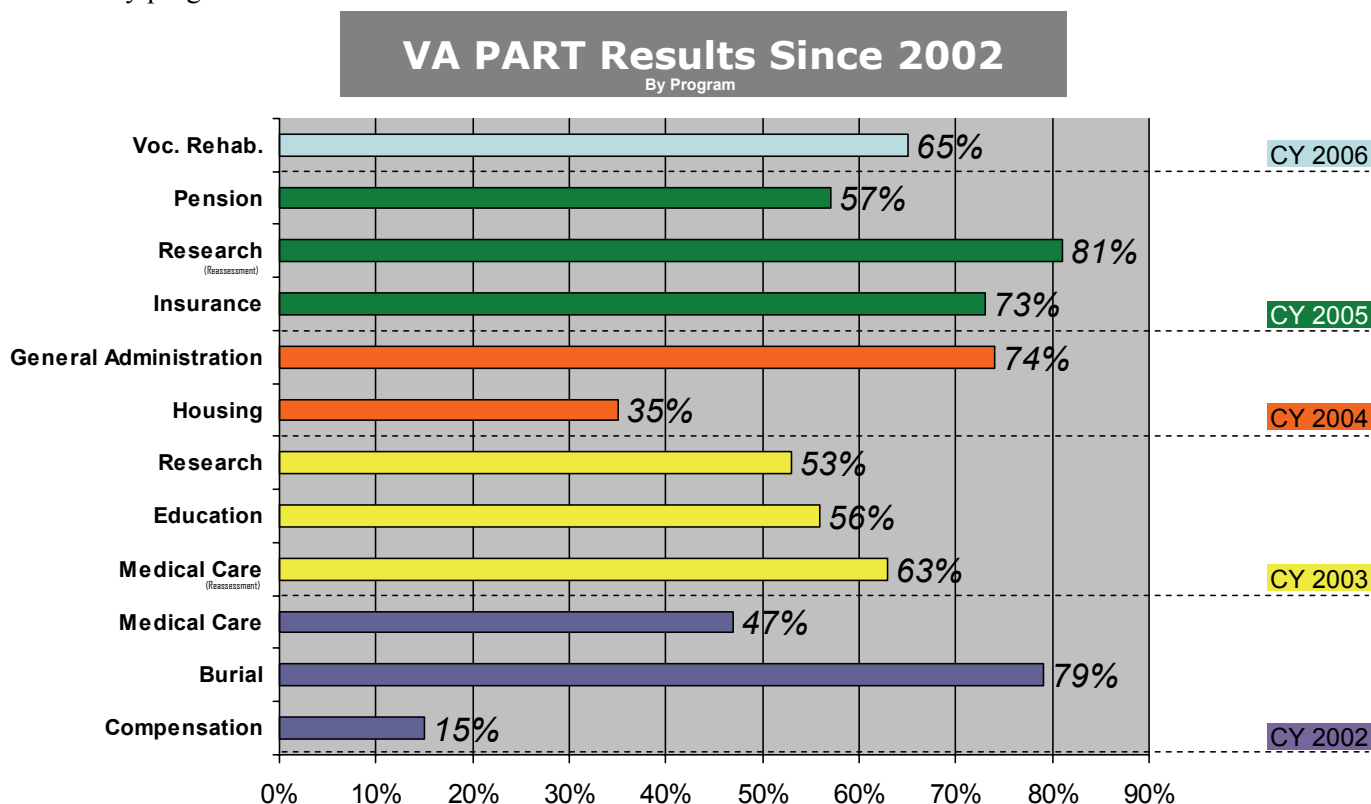# Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Reviews

Starting in 2002, OMB began to evaluate all Federal programs using a detailed questionnaire-driven methodology called the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). The PART contains 25 questions pertaining to a program's design and purpose, strategic planning capability, quality of performance measurements, financial oversight, and reporting of accurate and consistent performance data. Information on the PART can be found at the following *Web* site: www.ExpectMore.gov.

Once the review is completed, programs are given one of five ratings as follows:

Rating	Score Range
Effective ……………………………………	85-100%
Moderately Effective……………………………	70-84%
Adequate……………………………………	50-69%
Ineffective…………………………………	0-49%
Results Not Demonstrated……………………..	- - - *
* Regardless of the Overall Score, programs that do not have acceptable performance measures or have not yet collected performance data generally receive a rating of Results Not Demonstrated.	

All of VA's 10 programs have been reviewed at least once. Below is a chart summarizing VA's PART results by program:

VA PART Results Since 2002
By Program

Program	Result	Year
Voc. Rehab.	65%	CY 2006
Pension	57%	
Research (Reassessment)	81%	
Insurance	73%	CY 2005
General Administration	74%	
Housing	35%	CY 2004
Research	53%	
Education	56%	
Medical Care (Reassessment)	63%	CY 2003
Medical Care	47%	
Burial	79%	
Compensation	15%	CY 2002

On the following pages are tables, sorted by strategic goal that show for each program, OMB's **improvement initiatives** and VA's 2008 **actions** in response to the initiatives.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans	
Disability Compensation Program (Reviewed in CY 2002 and Received a Rating of **"Results Not Demonstrated"**)	
Develop capability to begin reporting on five new performance measures. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2008	• Capability to report on two outcome measures was previously developed. • Capability to report on remaining three outcome measures depends on Compensation Payment Structure Study resulting from the President's Commission on the Care for Returning Wounded Warriors and the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission. The study began in February 2008 and was completed in August 2008. It reviewed quality-of-life, long-term transitional, and earnings loss payments.
Develop analyses of how results information from new measures is used and how this information impacts program performance. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** June 2009	• Initial results from two of the outcome measures showed improved customer service. A customer satisfaction survey was not done from 2006 to 2008. • Further analysis is pending the results of the next customer satisfaction survey. It is anticipated that customer service satisfaction surveys will commence in FY 2009. • The productivity index, an efficiency measure, is undergoing revision to improve the methodology.
Evaluate recommendations from the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2008	• The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission concluded its review and issued its report in October 2007. In response, VA initiated a Disability Evaluation System Pilot with DoD that allows servicemembers separating for disability to undergo a single exam, performed by VA physicians, contract physicians, and/or DoD physicians. The results of this exam are used by VA rating specialists to issue a rating decision and establish entitlement to compensation benefits. • VA has engaged a contractor to conduct a study and provide recommendations regarding long-term transition payments, quality of life payments, and earnings-loss payments in the compensation structure.
Develop a measure related to rating consistency. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2008	• VA began regular assessments of the most frequently rated diagnostic codes in FY 2008 for routine monitoring to assess consistency of service connection determinations and degree of disability assigned for various disabilities across regional offices. Baseline results must be established before the measure can be developed.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 1: Restoration and Improved Quality of Life for Disabled Veterans *cont'd.*	
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (Reviewed in CY 2006 and Received a Rating of **"Adequate"**)	
Collect data on both established and newly developed measures to evaluate performance and use these results to improve program performance. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** June 2009	• The program continues to collect data on established measures and is working with the Department of Labor to develop a method of collecting and verifying income from a single national source rather than from each state. • VA will begin receiving data in December 2008.
Work with the Department of Labor and Department of Defense to assess results of collaboration and use these results to enhance future efforts to coordinate services for veterans with disabilities. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** November 2008	• The Joint VA and Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service Work Group drafted a long-range implementation plan, with both short- and long-term goals to coordinate services for veterans with disabilities. • A key part of the plan involved was the implementation of a pilot program at eight locations where both agencies work collaboratively in the delivery of services to veterans with disabilities. • Upon review of results, a determination will be made on whether to implement the program nationwide by December 2008.
Cooperate with GAO on an evaluation of the program to assess the effectiveness of recent program changes, including the implementation of the Five Tracks to Employment model. **Status** Completed **ECD** May 2008	• VA cooperated with GAO on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the recent changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program to include implementation of the Five Tracks to Employment Model. In October 2007, GAO released a final report on this study (GAO-07-1020). • In January 2008, VA implemented a procedure to capture data on usage of resource labs and activities of employment coordinators. • The first consolidated review of data gathered on usage of resource labs and activities of employment coordinators was completed in July 2008. VR&E will continue to perform these reviews on a monthly basis to gather data that can be analyzed and used to improve the program's performance.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 2: Smooth Transition to Civilian Life	
Education Program (Reviewed in CY 2003 and Received a Rating of **"Results Not Demonstrated"**)	
Determine the optimum level of monthly benefits required to accomplish the military recruitment and retention goals. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2011	• To date, VA has only been able to determine if DoD recruitment goals have been enhanced due to Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) using DoD data. DoD surveys indicate education benefits rank in the top four reasons to enlist. Based on the surveys and the experiences of military recruiters, educational benefits are a valuable tool in meeting recruitment goals. • VA still cannot determine the impact of the MGIB on retention.
Create an outcome measure on veterans' readjustment to civilian life due to the benefit received in this program. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2009	• VA awarded a contract in FY 2007 to provide degree attainment data to determine what percentage of those servicemembers and veterans who received education benefits obtained a degree or certificate. We anticipate having results by the end of calendar year 2009.
Reinstate a cost-effectiveness measure such as the Administrative Cost per Trainee measure. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: June 2011	• VA designed a model to assess cost-effectiveness. The model was tested with FY 2006 and FY 2007 data. VA determined the model has flaws. VA redesigned the model during FY 2008 and will test with FY 2008 results data to determine if the tool can be used to measure cost effectiveness. • VA plans to either modify this tool or replace it with another by the end of calendar year 2011.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans	
Housing Program (Reviewed in CY 2004 and Received a Rating of **"Results Not Demonstrated"**)	
Develop analyses of how results information from new measures is used and how this information impacts program performance. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2008	• VA analyzed results data related to these new measures and integrated findings into program management as follows: o Examination of Specially Adapted Housing customer data revealed a need for legislation to increase the SAH Grant amount. VA prepared a legislative proposal to increase grant amounts and index grant amounts to annually adjusting construction costs. Public Law 110-289 implemented these provisions. o Examination of veteran and lender customer data revealed a need for increased outreach and education for real estate agents and appraisers. ▪ VA made efforts to increase the number of broadcasts and training programs for all program participants and has posted them publicly on the Internet for viewing. ▪ VA developed an informational flipbook and CD-ROM targeted to real estate agents; 250,000 copies of these materials are expected to be disseminated in calendar year 2008.
Develop the capability to report on mortgage delinquencies at a point earlier than the current requirement of '105 days delinquent.' Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2008	• In order to intervene at an earlier point in the delinquency cycle and consequently have the ability to assist veterans in avoiding foreclosure, VA undertook a business process review. • This review resulted in the development of the VA Loan Electronic Reporting Interface (VALERI). o This leading-edge, Web-based, rules-driven service will electronically connect loan servicers and VA. o With this real-time access, VALERI will enable VA to receive notification of default at a much earlier stage in the process, and will thereby expedite VA's ability to intervene on veterans' behalf when necessary. • Full implementation of VALERI will be completed by the end of the 2008 calendar year.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans, *continued*	
Medical Care Program (Reviewed in CY 2003 and Received a Rating of **"Adequate"**)	
Accelerate the collaborative activities with DoD and other Federal agencies, e.g., interoperable computerized patient health data, improved data on insurance coverage, and enrollment and eligibility information. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2008	• VA and DoD now exchange key electronic health information, bidirectionally, in viewable format. Key health data include the following: outpatient pharmacy purchases, allergy information, laboratory and radiology reports, clinical notes, and problem lists. • VA now has access to theater-specific clinical data and various types of inpatient data, including discharge summaries from key military treatment facilities. • VA and DoD completed an information interoperability plan in the 4th quarter FY 2008. The plan documents strategies to achieve interoperability of essential data for health, administrative, and personnel data for processes, benefits, and treatment.

Work with Congressional staff to bring about approval for its approved budget structuring. In addition, continue to develop performance-based budgeting.
 	
 Status: Not Enacted
 ECD: February 2005
	• VA submitted its 2006 budget using the 3-appropriation account structure specified in P.L. 108-447, the consolidated appropriations act, 2005, with 2 changes:
	
	   o Major and minor construction and grants for construction of State extended-care facilities were combined under the medical facilities appropriation.
	
	   o Medical care research was moved from the 3-appropriation account structure (medical services, administration, and facilities) to the medical and prosthetic research business line.

Develop performance based budgets and clearer resource requests. Status: Not Enacted ECD: February 2008	• In the 2009 budget, VA's Medical Administration appropriation name changed to Medical Support and Compliance. Our proposal to consolidate the Medical Administration appropriation into the Medical Services appropriation was not approved. • Merging these two accounts would have improved the execution of our budget and would have allowed VA to respond more rapidly to unanticipated changes in the health care environment. The Medical Services appropriation finances the expenses of management, security, and administration of the VA health care system.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans, *continued*	
Medical Care Program, *cont'd.* (Reviewed in CY 2003 and Received a Rating of **"Adequate"**)	

Continue the enrollment policy for non-enrolled priority level 8 veterans (higher income, non-disabled), and implement additional programmatic and cost-sharing policies aimed at focusing resources on core veteran populations.
 	
Status Action Taken; Not Completed
ECD December 2013
	• The enrollment policy continues.
	• The 2009 budget proposed a tiered enrollment fee based on income and increasing prescription co-pay ($8 to $15 for priority 7 & priority 8).
	• The 2009 budget also proposed to eliminate the 3rd-party offset to 1st-party debt.
	    ○ 3rd-party offset to 1st party debt was not approved.
	    ○ Prescription co-pay proposal was not addressed.
	• The FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) extended the eligibility period for OEF/OIF veterans to 5 years post-discharge.

Insurance Program (Reviewed in CY 2005 and Received a Rating of **"Moderately Effective"**)	
Develop first steps in aligning budget requests to performance. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2008	• As a Performance Improvement Initiative PMA scorecard deliverable, VA demonstrated, using a subset of measures in the Burial, Medical Care, and Compensation/Pension Programs, its ability to estimate the cost of achieving different levels of performance. This is an important step towards linking budget requests with performance.
Conduct an independent evaluation of the conversion privilege from SGLI to VGLI. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** September 2009	• The ability to convert Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) is an important feature of the SGLI program, especially for disabled servicemembers leaving service who have difficulty obtaining life insurance from the private sector due to service-connected disabilities. • VA contracted with an outside evaluator to help identify the appropriate target audience for outreach and an appropriate strategic target, as well as to review outreach materials and special outreach efforts. • The evaluation is scheduled for completion in FY 2009.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
**Strategic Goal 3: Honoring, Serving, and Memorializing Veterans**, *continued*
**Insurance Program,** *cont'd* (Reviewed in CY 2005 and Received a Rating of **"Moderately Effective"**)
Validate the results of Program's customer satisfaction survey using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: September 2009	• Validation of customer satisfaction survey is scheduled for completion during FY 2009.
**Pension Program** (Reviewed in CY 2005 and Received a Rating of **"Adequate"**)

The program will continue to develop steps to achieve strategic targets.
 	
Status: Action Taken; Not Completed
ECD: December 2008
	• Ambitious strategic targets were published in VA's FY 2006-2011 Strategic Plan. VA's Pension Program has taken aggressive steps to achieve these targets:
	  ○ Began consolidating original pension work to three Pension Management Centers (PMCs).
	  ○ Increased staffing levels by 105 percent (443 FTE in 2006 to 911.5 FTE in 2008) at the PMCs.
	  ○ Established a timeliness standard in the directors' performance standards thereby increasing accountability.

The program will provide initial steps in linking performance to budget. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: December 2008	• As a Performance Improvement Initiative PMA scorecard deliverable, VA demonstrated, using a subset of measures in the Burial, Medical Care, and Compensation/Pension Programs, its ability to estimate the cost of achieving different levels of performance. This is an important step towards linking budget requests with performance.
The program will use information derived from new performance measures to identify and make program improvements. Status: Action Taken; Not Completed ECD: September 2009	• The Pension program is using this information from its new measures to identify and make necessary ongoing program improvements. For example, beginning in May 2008, VA began the process of consolidating original pension claims to three PMCs. • This will improve the quality and timeliness of pension claims. Staffing has been increased at the PMCs, and a timeliness standard has been added to the directors' performance standards.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal 4: Contributing to the Nation's Well-Being	
Burial Program (Reviewed in CY 2002 and Received a Rating of **"Moderately Effective"**)	
Continue to strengthen methods to link performance, budget, and accountability. **Status** Completed **ECD** March 2008	• As a Performance Improvement Initiative PMA scorecard deliverable, VA demonstrated, using a subset of measures in the Burial Program, its ability to estimate the cost of achieving different levels of performance. This is an important step towards linking budget requests with performance.
Use performance data to increase managers' performance. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** September 2012	• NCA established an Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI) Program. OAI enhances program accountability through a one-NCA scorecard, provided to management at all levels, that combines cemetery self-assessments with independent assessments. • Through FY 2008, NCA has completed 45 site visits assessing 80 cemeteries as part of this initiative. NCA schedules 12 visits per year as part of this continuous improvement program.
Use data results from three new performance measures to drive improvements in program operations (National Shrine Commitment) **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** September 2009	• NCA collected baseline data during 2004 for three new National Shrine Commitment measures. Data for these measures are regularly collected and reported and are helping to drive performance improvements. • In FY 2009, NCA will collect data to establish baseline performance on a new measure that assesses the condition of cemetery facilities.

Improvement Initiatives	FY 2008 Actions and Progress
Strategic Goal #4: Contributing to the Nation's Well-Being	
Medical Research and Development Program (Reviewed in CY 2005 and Received a Rating **"Moderately Effective"**)	
Continue to refine meaningful and useful performance measures to assist VA in management. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** September 2009	• Program-specific performance measures and assessment tools have been developed for Biomedical and Clinical Research Centers, Research Enhancement Award Programs, and the Research Career Scientist Program. Examples include the following: ○ Progress reports for Research Enhancement Award Programs are evaluated according to scientific productivity, collaboration, new funding, and training. ○ Research Career Scientists are rated according to their number of publications, number of trainees, amount of new funding, and involvement in local and national VA activities. • Performance measures and assessment tools need to be developed for the Merit Review Program. This will be facilitated by the transition to an electronic project management system. • The first phase of the transition will take place in September 2008. Full implementation is estimated to take a year.
Assess the physical condition of VA medical research infrastructure to determine its adequacy to support high-quality veteran-centric research. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2010	• An initial report to Congress based on survey results is in concurrence. A contractor has been selected, and six sites are being surveyed per quarter. • To date, surveys of 25 sites in 15 VISNs have been conducted, with a goal of surveying space for 75 of the largest research programs over 3 years.
Increase the number of research projects related to OEF/OIF veterans. **Status** Action Taken; Not Completed **ECD** December 2008	• In FY 2008, there was approximately a 24 percent increase in the number of funded projects directly related to OEF/OIF compared to FY 2006.
Enabling Goal: Applying Sound Business Principles	
General Administration Program (Reviewed in CY 2004 and Received a Rating of **"Moderately Effective"**)	
Develop performance based budgets and clearer resource requests. **Status** Completed **ECD** September 2008	• Using a subset of performance measures, VA demonstrated to OMB the Department's ability to estimate the cost of achieving different levels of performance. On this basis, VA began discussions with OMB on including this type of analysis in future budget submissions to Congress.