

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT LINKAGES

Information Technology Planning

During the past year, ACF actively utilized the ACF Information Technology Review Board (ITRB) in accordance with the intent of the Clinger-Cohen Act (also known as the Information Technology Management Reform Act [ITMRA]). The overall purpose of the ACF ITRB is to monitor (1) the performance of selected ongoing major ACF information technology investments or to consider proposed new major investments and (2) matters that concern ACF IT policies and issues. The ACF ITRB completed, or is implementing, 10 priority Investment Technology policies:

- IT procurements: ACF will implement annual, centralized replacement planning and purchasing for PC's and related equipment. Replacement budget plans will be presented annually to the ACF ITRB for approval.
- Standard desktop PC hardware: ACF implements a standard desktop PC hardware configuration.
- Standard PC software: ACF implements and maintains a standard desktop PC software configuration.
- IT training: ACF has centralized its plans and budgets for all technical training. Training for all ACF standard PC software is available in a classroom setting and through our Distance Learning initiative. Training in each software is provided through centralized budgets.
- Internet/Intranet technologies: ACF will provide enhanced support for Internet and Intranet publishing by operating state-of-the-art web servers and related technologies. Central Office/Regional Office Internet web page content is subject to Office of Public Affairs review to ensure compliance with applicable policies and procedures.
- ACF network remote access: ACF will expand and enhance its remote access services agency-wide to meet the 21st Century work environment. The results of feasibility studies and analyses of alternatives will be presented for review by the ITRB, when available.
- Desktop video conferencing: ACF will continue to improve capabilities for point-to-point video conferencing within ACF, and/or Internet-based video conferencing within ACF and/or with outside parties (within available budgets including, possibly, program funds). Future recommendations will be presented to the ITRB under the leadership of the videoconferencing team and Region VI.
- HHS-wide administrative systems: ACF working with the Department to create uniform administrative systems, which will begin with a new Web-based HR/Payroll system that will provide the Department with higher quality HR service and integrated functionality.
- On-line Data Collection (OLDC): ACF will implement a next generation of electronic grant-making through the OLDC capability to enable grantees and potential grantees to enter all grants information on-line over the Internet. Plans and designs presented to the ITRB are consistent with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act.
- Electronic file storage: ACF is planning for efficient archiving of documents from paper and/or electronic originals through electronic document management technology. ACF will collaborate with the Department to accomplish this initiative.

In addition, ACF continues to monitor the following IT investments:

- IT support activities associated with the Expanded Federal Parent Locator Service mandated by Welfare Reform Legislation: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA);
- Completion of Business Process Reengineering of the Grants Administration Process through the use of the Grants Administration Tracking and Evaluation Systems (GATES);
- Continued implementation of IT support activities associated with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- Several major IT initiatives implementing the Secretary's Five Year Strategic Plan for IT Consolidation and "One Department". (ACF is participating in the departmental initiative to consolidate the infrastructure of the small OPDIVs creating a uniform standardized configuration. Completion is planned for October 2003.); and.
- Consolidation of all IT activities and development of an Enterprise Architecture to guide and improve Capital Planning and Investment Control of IT and business processes across the OPDIV.

Cost Accounting

To implement a credible and auditable method which fulfills the full cost accounting requirements for the FY 1998 (and future audits), ACF allocated its Federal Administration budget indirect costs proportionately among the major Performance Management program areas on the basis of direct FTE's (indirect costs include salaries and benefits for ACF personnel not working directly on one of the 14 program activities; costs of training, personnel, budget, travel, systems, facilities, supplies and rent.) To accomplish this, ACF senior staff in headquarters and the regions completed a Staff Resource Survey providing the total number of ACF employees working directly on program activities in one or more of the major program areas as well as the total number of staff not working directly on program activities.

The data in these surveys were collated and analyzed in an automated spreadsheet. The results identified indirect costs in proportion to direct staff ratio. This information was provided to PSC to develop ACF's Statement of Net Costs. ACF's cost accounting strategy was accepted by the auditing firm, PSC, ASBTF, and the OIG. ACF continues to use this strategy for each audit cycle, adding new program areas as appropriate.

Workforce Analysis Plan

ACF is committed to being a customer-focused, citizen-centered organization which focuses on results, provides high quality, cost-effective and efficient services, meets customers' needs and expectations, and uses state-of-the-art information technology to improve management and data systems. ACF continues to utilize its workforce analysis plan to support the agency's workforce restructuring efforts.

ACF's ongoing workforce analysis provides a demographic summary of the agency's permanent workforce, an evaluation of the skills of the workforce, and an assessment of the organization's structure. In addition, ACF has engaged in progressive succession planning efforts to address mission-critical activities and gaps in the ACF workforce.

ACF regularly analyzes information gathered for work force planning purposes in order to accurately gauge and project current agency workload, current employees' competencies, estimated future workloads and future competency needs for the next three to five years. In response to changes in the agency's workforce resulting from retirements, separations and dwindling fiscal resources affecting the ability to hire new staff, ACF has successfully aligned its workforce analysis with restructuring and strategic planning efforts. The agency has undertaken the following steps in order to accomplish its mission in the face of workforce changes:

- Consolidation of administrative management functions in the areas of grants management, information technology and human resources resulting in the elimination of duplicative services and achievement of economies of scale;
- Restructuring and/or realignment of multiple program and staff offices to reduce the numbers and levels of reporting layers, increase the number of staff in direct service positions and achieve greater organizational efficiency;
- Institution of a performance-based management strategy to create accountability among all employees for realizing agency mission, goals and objectives; and
- Enhancing workforce planning efforts in the areas of hiring recruitment, retention and succession planning by linking planning initiatives to the accomplishment of the agency's mission.

Program Evaluation

While states have been given increasing latitude in administering programs, they depend on the Federal government to provide reliable information, technical assistance, and the development and dissemination of proven or promising methods for achieving and measuring success. Extant research and early results of major studies under way have helped shape significant changes in Federal and state policy and legislation affecting low-income families and children.

Effective state decision-making requires timely and reliable information on the consequences of alternative policy and program choices and the experiences of other states. As policy and program design has devolved to states and localities, these levels of government need reliable information for decision-making and to understand the effects of different policy and program choices on quality and accessibility. Documenting, understanding, interpreting and facilitating the exchange of information and experiences among states are essential to providing high quality services to promote the well-being of families and children.

As ACF continues to focus on results-oriented management, evaluations play an increasingly important role in program improvement. Program evaluations are directed at evaluating effectiveness, assessing the achievement of performance results, assessing the impacts of human services, and improving program management. Program evaluations are largely directed at

assessing the effectiveness of individual projects within a program. The ACF performance measurement system is the primary mechanism used to monitor annual progress in achieving ACF's strategic and performance goals.

Specific Examples of Ongoing Evaluations that Support Goals and Objectives in ACF Performance Plan

Employment-related studies and demonstrations address a variety of topics including alternative welfare-to-work strategies, employment retention and advancement, and strategies to promote work in rural areas. Welfare reform outcome post-TANF studies examine outcomes of welfare reform as they relate to various policy topics and special populations, such as implementation of tribal TANF programs, assistance to victims of domestic violence moving from welfare to work, how the welfare population is changing over time and how programs and services have been restructured.

Research and evaluation studies of child care services assist in promoting effective practices and provide a better understanding of child care supply, demand, unmet need, quality and cost for those transitioning from welfare to work. ACF has also initiated research to develop and evaluate strategies to examine the effects of welfare reform on children and families, and interventions to promote and strengthen healthy marriages.

Four contracts will support new research and evaluation related to healthy marriage: (1) demonstration and evaluation of healthy marriage programs for low-income couples in their child-rearing years who are married or plan to marry; (2) the effects of community approaches including services to improve marriage quality and stability; state and community marriage policies, media campaigns and other marriage-related strategies; (3) an analysis of the financial incentives and disincentives contained in tax provisions and transfer programs as they relate to marriage and family formation for low-income families; and (4) an analysis of options for improving the collection of marriage and divorce statistics at the Federal, state, and local levels.

ACF recently released three-year results of the Early Head Start Impact Study, a random-assignment evaluation comparing outcomes for children and families in 17 Early Head Start programs with outcomes for children not participating in Early Head Start.

Other early childhood evaluations under way include a nationwide random-assignment evaluation of Head Start; an inter-agency initiative to assess the effectiveness of early childhood programs, curricula and interventions in promoting school readiness; several partnerships between academic researchers and local Head Start programs to test program improvements; and an evaluation of child care subsidy strategies for low-income families. The national study of low-income child care includes families in 25 communities within 17 states to examine the family child care environment and how it meets parents' needs for care that support their work-related needs while meeting children's needs for a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.

A national longitudinal study of children and families in the child welfare system is providing valuable information on child and family characteristics and outcomes experienced by families and children in the child welfare system. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-

being (NSCAW) is providing valuable descriptive information including risk factors, service needs and services received on children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system. Additionally, state and program administrative data are being used to assess trends and establish targets for child welfare, abuse and neglect, early learning (Head Start) and child care.