

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

While USDA has faced significant management challenges, the Department has improved since the third quarter of 2002, when it had three red progress scores. However, USDA still lags behind other Cabinet Departments on the management agenda.

President's Management Agenda

	<i>Status</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<i>Human Capital</i>	(R)	(G)
USDA's status will remain red until significant progress is made in implementing its new human capital strategic plan. USDA completed a skills gap analysis for its top 21 mission-critical positions, initiated an executive development program and a mentoring program, and established an accountability program to assess human capital progress.		
<i>Competitive Sourcing</i>	(R)	(R)
USDA's status is red because it has not met the 15 percent competitive sourcing goal. USDA has converted some positions to the private sector. However, USDA has not subjected a significant share of conservation technical assistance to competition.		
<i>Financial Performance</i>	(R)	(G)
USDA's status is red since USDA has persistent material weaknesses, and compliance with government-wide spending restrictions remains a challenge. USDA is using a federally compliant financial management system, and it received a clean consolidated audit opinion for the first time, a significant step forward. USDA is working to reduce erroneous payments, especially in Food Stamp and Child Nutrition Programs.		
<i>Expanding E-Government</i>	(Y)	(G)
USDA's status is yellow for E-Gov because it lacks an Enterprise Architecture. It is developing one and has made sound business cases for IT investments.		
<i>Budget and Performance Integration</i>	(R)	(Y)
USDA's status is red as little actual integration has occurred. USDA developed a strategic plan reflecting its purposes but needs to expand the number of outcome based performance measures. USDA must complete common performance evaluations and implement an expanded budget and performance integration plan adequately linking performance with budgetary decisions.		

Program Assessments

Fourteen USDA programs received uneven PART reviews. Considerable time was devoted to developing useful performance measures to improve accountability. USDA must still improve the quality of its goals. For instance, the Rural Electric Utility Loans and Guarantees program has no suitable measures.