

SECTION 210—PREPARING AND SUBMITTING A STRATEGIC PLAN

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210.1 Preparing a strategic plan: The main elements

The basic requirements for strategic plans are set forth in Section 3 of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). A strategic plan contains the following elements:

- **Agency mission statement.** A mission statement is brief, defines the basic purpose of the agency, and corresponds directly with the agency's core programs and activities. An agency's program goals should flow from the mission statement.
- **One or more strategic goals.** Also termed "general goal," a strategic goal is a statement of aim or purpose that defines how an agency will carry out a major segment of its mission over a period of time. The goal is expressed in a manner which allows a future assessment to be made of whether the goal was or is being achieved. Most strategic goals will be outcomes, and are long-term in nature. In a performance plan (performance budget), strategic goals should be used to group multiple program outcome goals; the program outcome goals should relate to and in the aggregate be sufficient to influence the strategic goals or objectives and their performance measures.
- **A description of the means and strategies that will be used to achieve the goals.** The agency strategic plan must describe the processes, skills, technologies, and various resources that will be used to achieve the strategic goals. (These are often called "means and strategies.") These may include:
 - ▶ Operational processes, such as changes in work methods or sequencing, workforce adjustments, and shifts in responsibility for particular tasks;
 - ▶ Staff skills, and the development, introduction, and use of technologies; and
 - ▶ Human resources, capital assets, information technology, and other resources.

Descriptions should be brief. More detailed data should be provided if a significant change in a particular means or strategy will be essential for goal achievement.

- **A description of the relationship between outcome-oriented, long-term performance goals and annual performance goals to the agency's strategic goals.** An updated and revised strategic plan should briefly outline:
 - ▶ The type, nature, and scope of the performance goals being included in annual performance budgets; and
 - ▶ How these long-term and annual performance goals relate to the strategic goals, and their use in helping determine the achievement of the strategic goals. The Program Assessment Rating

Tool (PART) process serves to ensure that annual performance goals have ambitious targets and are measurable. Also, the PART process clarifies the relationship among strategic, long term and annual performance goals.

- **Identification of key factors that could affect achievement of the strategic goals.** If key factors (external to the agency) cannot be identified, a statement of such should be included in the plan. Achievement of strategic goals can be affected by certain previously prospective conditions or circumstances occurring during the time period covered by the plan. These conditions are identified in the plan as key factors, and provide insight on the assumptions an agency used when defining its goals. Key factors may enhance or nullify these assumptions and the likelihood of goal achievement. Goal achievement may also be predicated on certain conditions (events) not happening. Key factors are often called external factors, as they are introduced by external forces or parties, and are not of the agency's own making. The factors may be economic, demographic, social, or environmental, and they may remain stable, change within predicted rates, or vary to an unexpected degree. Achievement of goals can also depend on the action of the Congress, other Federal agencies, States, local governments, or other non-Federal entities.
- **A description of program evaluations used in preparing the strategic plan, and a schedule for future evaluations.** A description of completed program evaluations that were used in developing the strategic plan, and a schedule for future program evaluations. For additional information on program evaluations, see Questions 2.6 and 4.5 and Appendix B, in the PART guidance, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part/fy2008/part_guid_2008.pdf, as well as “What Constitutes Strong Evidence of a Program’s Effectiveness?” at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part/2004_program_eval.pdf.

An agency's strategic plan keys on those programs and activities that carry out the agency's mission. Strategic plans provide the overarching framework for an agency's performance budget. Revisions of a strategic plan focus on developing a performance budget, updating performance measures and targets, and implementing PART improvement plans (also known as follow-up actions).

Strategic plans should guide the formulation and execution of the budget. A strategic plan is a tool to be used in setting priorities and allocating resources consistent with these priorities. A strategic plan is not a budget request; the projected levels of goal achievement must be commensurate with anticipated resource levels.

See section [200.2](#) for further definitions of "strategic goal", "performance goal", "performance measures", "targets", and "performance budget."

210.2 Preparing a strategic plan: Format and other features

No specific format is prescribed for your strategic plan. An updated strategic plan is a complete plan, containing all required plan elements.

Your plan should outline the process for communicating goals and strategies throughout the agency, and for assigning accountability to managers and staff for goal achievement. The nature and dimension of your management-related initiatives and reforms may merit the inclusion of a management section in your strategic plan. An agency may describe significant risks that threaten achievement of the strategic goals. These risks are associated with internal agency operations and functions, and are separate and distinct from external factors.

If appropriate, include a classified appendix. A classified appendix covers any material specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive Order, to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy.

A strategic plan must cover the major functions and operations of your agency. You have discretion to omit support-type activities and operations. Strategic plans prepared primarily for your agency's internal use (such as those prepared at a program or component-unique level) may cover a greater range of functions and operations.

You should develop a single agency-wide plan. The strategic planning process is sufficiently mature in all agencies to support preparation of a single agency-wide plan. However, GPRA does allow an agency with widely disparate functions to prepare several strategic plans for its major components or programs. In these instances, an overview that brings together the component plans is prepared. Please consult with the appropriate OMB office and secure its approval if your agency will be unable to prepare a single agency-wide plan.

A strategic plan spans a minimum six-year period, the fiscal year it is submitted and at least five years forward of that fiscal year. (For example, a plan submitted in FY 2008 would cover FY 2008 through FY 2013.) A plan may be for a period longer than six years; for example, containing a project completion goal ten years in the future. A strategic plan, while covering a minimum six year period, is only current for three years.

210.3 Submission of strategic plans

(a) *Timing of strategic plan submissions.*

An agency submits an updated and revised strategic plan to the Congress and OMB within three years of submitting its previous strategic plan. An updated plan will often retain, unchanged, the elements of a previous strategic plan, such as the mission statement.

Consistent with current policy and practice regarding interagency clearance of certain material being sent to the Congress, agencies should provide OMB with an advance copy of an updated strategic plan at least 45 days prior to the date for transmitting the plan to the Congress and making it available to the public.

(b) *Consultation and outreach.*

When preparing a strategic plan, agencies must consult with the Congress and OMB and solicit and consider the views of interested and potentially affected parties. Consultation could include hosting public meetings on the draft plan and posting the draft plan on the internet and inviting comment. This consultation and outreach may result in contrary views being expressed.

(c) *Transmittal of plans to the Congress and OMB.*

The plan is transmitted to the Congress and OMB by the agency head. Transmittal letters are addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President and the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the Director of OMB. Distribution is also made to relevant committees of the Congress. The letter transmitting the agency's strategic plan to the Congress includes a summary of the consultation and outreach processes, and any contrary views that resulted.

GPRA states that the preparation of a strategic plan is an inherently governmental function, and the plan is to be drafted only by Federal employees. However, when preparing a plan, agencies may be assisted by non-Federal parties, such as consultants or contractors. The transmittal should include an acknowledgment and brief description of the contribution by a non-Federal entity in preparing the plan.

Strategic plans are a matter of public record, so the public should be afforded the opportunity to access the completed plan. Your agency should place the strategic plan on its website, or make it available through other electronic media, generally, a strategic plan should become publicly available when the plan is transmitted to the Congress.

210.4 Interim adjustments to strategic plans

(a) *Scope of interim adjustments.*

You may make minor adjustments to a strategic plan in advance of the three-year revision cycle. Adjustments can include changes to the strategic goals, the means and strategies used to achieve the goals, the key external factors, or the program evaluation schedule. Modifications may reflect altered circumstances or evaluations of program performance. Interim adjustments are selective and do not produce widespread changes in a plan. You need not consult with the Congress, or conduct outreach to potentially interested or affected parties when preparing interim adjustments.

Significant changes to your strategic plan are made using the more extensive update process, even if this accelerates the three-year revision cycle. Consultation requirements apply in these instances. Interim adjustments, on the other hand, do not alter the three-year revision cycle for strategic plans.

(b) *Transmittal of interim adjustments.*

Interim adjustments do not require a formal transmittal. Append an interim adjustment to your budget submission as a separate, easily found section, and present only the adjustments, not the entire strategic plan. The interim adjustments should be included both in the performance budget sent to OMB in September, and in the performance budget (congressional justification) sent to the Congress in February. You should distribute, or otherwise make publicly available, the interim adjustments so readers can reference or review the most current strategic plan content.