

Validation of Performance Measures

The Department has made progress in improving its data collection, verification, and validation strategies. Interior bureaus have improved their performance measures, and the Department has developed an internal reporting and tracking system and improved oversight of performance management activities. While progress has been made, more work needs to be done to further improve the Department's performance data and systems. The Department is developing new self-assessment tools and approaches to help make further improvements to performance and data reliability.

As the Department developed its strategic plans and annual performance plans, the focus was on constructing the goals and measures that are appropriate for our programs, outcome oriented, and capable of producing measurable results. As these initial plans were prepared, Interior bureaus and offices had considerable discretion to develop the means they use to verify and validate the performance measures, data, and data collection systems.

This bureau/office discretion has produced a variety of approaches to determining the accuracy and reliability of performance data. Information collection and reporting systems have been developed to accommodate the specific types of data and mission information needs of each bureau. Some have developed and re-engineered physical data monitoring systems and electronic databases to capture and record data that provides critical information for both GPRA reporting and Interior decisionmakers. Data captured at the field level in many instances is recorded electronically on laptop computers for easy downloading and verification at the regional and national levels. Data discrepancies are then more easily identified and resolved between regional and field personnel as necessary. Fiscal 1999 was the first year agencies were required to report on their GPRA performance measures. Interior bureaus have learned from this process and have improved many of their performance measures based on the lessons they have learned through tracking and reporting performance data.

Quarterly Data Reporting

The Department has developed a quarterly data reporting system to track progress in achieving GPRA goals. The bureaus are required to electronically submit performance data on a quarterly basis into a central web-based database containing all Department and bureau performance data. The quarterly submittal schedule provides the ability to measure progress towards individual performance goals throughout the annual performance planning period. Departmental managers are able to access performance information through this new system.

The Departmental Management offices meet at midyear with bureau deputy directors and planning staff to review performance results to date and discuss GPRA-related strategies, issues, and successes. The Departmental Management offices intend to meet with bureau leadership on a more regular basis to review performance data and to encourage self-assessments using a departmental data verification and validation matrix currently under development. In addition, the Interior Management Council (IMC) has taken an active role in monitoring departmental performance information. The IMC reviews summaries of the quarterly reports and addresses related issues as they arise.

Self-Assessments

The Department is developing new tools to help improve the accuracy and reliability of performance information. Interior is developing a verification and validation matrix for use by the bureaus and offices as a self-assessment tool for determining the accuracy and reliability of the performance information. This matrix uses a multi-faceted approach involving accuracy of data handling, data standards and definitions, data quality and limitations, management checks and reviews, and system integrity and security. As the majority of the data is collected by the bureaus at the field level, the matrix will provide guidelines for developing consistent and comparable data collection strategies. It also addresses practices and conditions that can affect data reliability as that data moves through the process of collection, aggregation, and reporting.

A condensed Baldrige quality self-assessment tool has also been developed and tested as a means of targeting organizational improvements. Some will highlight issues that can affect data reliability.

Coordination with the Office of Inspector General (OIG)

The Department coordinates with the OIG regarding the status of the performance data and information being reported in our GPRA documents. As the OIG becomes more familiar with using the GPRA performance information in audits, the Department expects to receive their assessments of Interior's performance information and data systems. This will help the Department ensure accuracy and accountability in its reporting to Congress. The OIG, GAO, and other federal agencies have been valuable consultants in the effort to develop a data validation and verification approach for Interior.

Program Evaluations

Program evaluations are an important tool in analyzing the effectiveness and efficiency of Interior's programs, and evaluating whether they are meeting their intended objectives. Interior programs are evaluated through a variety of means, including performance audits, financial audits, management control reviews, and external reviews from Congress, OMB, and other organizations such as the National Academy of Public Administration and the National Academy of Science. The Department uses self-assessments to verify that performance information and measurement systems are accurate and support strategic direction and goals. Data collection and reporting system processes are reviewed and improved through the use of customer and internal surveys.

Interior also relies on outside reviews and audits of our strategic planning and performance management processes by GAO and the OIG. GAO has conducted several reviews of Interior's strategic plans and annual performance plans, as well as more specific reviews of individual bureau GPRA implementation efforts. These reviews have been very helpful in identifying best practices and focusing our attention on areas needing improvement. For example, GAO's report "National Park Service—Efforts to Link Resources to Results Suggest Insights for Other Agencies" (GAO/AIMD-98-113) commended the Park Service's approach of combining a bureauwide plan with individual plans for each park unit, while recognizing the difficulty that many bureaus, including the Park Service, have had in linking performance goals to budget and accounting systems. In its 2000 audit plan, the OIG has identified performance measures that are related to the areas or programs being examined. The OIG plans to incorporate analyses of performance measures as a part of their ongoing audit processes.

The annual performance plans for Interior’s bureaus include more detailed discussions of specific performance evaluations and their relationship to the bureau programs. Some examples of planned program evaluations are listed in *Figure 11*.

Figure 11

Representative GPRA Program Evaluations		
Bureau	Program/Goal	Methodology/Purpose
Goal 1: Protect the Environment and Preserve Our Nation’s Natural and Cultural Resources		
BLM	Fire management program.	General program evaluation by team.
OSM	Small Operator Assistance Program (SOAP) grants. Related to environmental protection goal.	Questionnaire to states with SOAP grants to determine proper program achievement.
Goal 2: Provide Recreation for America		
BOR	Providing quality recreation at BOR sites.	OIG audit on whether BOR maintained facilities according to Interior and BOR requirements; one source is BOR recreation compliance reviews and action plans.
Goal 3: Manage Natural Resources for a Healthy Environment and a Strong Economy		
BLM	Grazing permit renewals.	Team evaluation of progress toward meeting congressional mandate on permit renewal.
MMS	Follow-up audit of the Royalty Management Program.	OIG audit to determine whether MMS implemented recommendations in prior OIG audit reports on controls for automated information systems.
Goal 4: Provide Science for a Changing World		
USGS	Hydrologic hazards.	An external review of the program conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration.
USGS	Upper Midwest Sciences Center.	An OIG review of USGS support of the Corps of Engineers.
Goal 5: Meet Our Trust Responsibilities to Indian Tribes and Our Commitments to Island Communities		
BOR	Native American technical assistance.	Internal program evaluation of technical assistance and other accomplishments.
MMS	Indian Direct Payments program.	An internal, alternative management control review. The scope of work is still being developed.