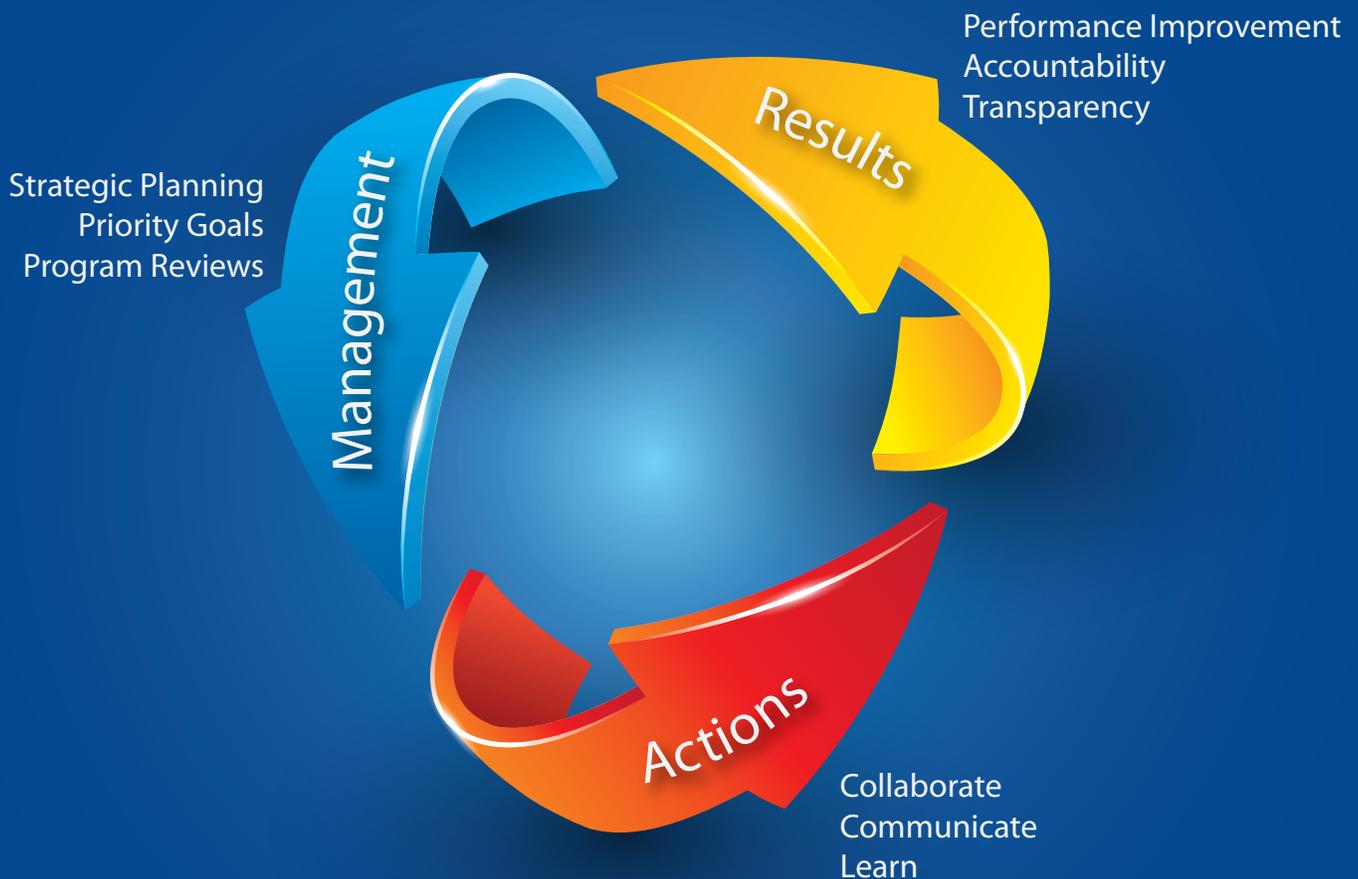




The New Federal Performance System

Implementing the GPRA Modernization Act



The New Federal Performance System: Implementing the GPRA Modernization Act

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Foreword

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, *The New Federal Performance System: Implementing the GPRA Modernization Act*, by Donald Moynihan, Professor of Public Affairs, Robert La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

In this report, Professor Moynihan describes the evolution of the federal performance management system over the past 20 years since the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). He reports recent progress in achieving meaningful performance results within targeted programs. Finally, he tells of anticipated future changes over the next few years as a result of the new requirements of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, which significantly amended the earlier law.

The report grew out of a December 2012 forum on the future of the federal performance management system, which was jointly sponsored by the IBM Center for The Business of Government and the National Academy of Public Administration. Participants represented a wide range of stakeholders and perspectives in the system, including key staff members from the Office of Management and Budget, Congress, and federal agencies. Participants discussed their perspectives and insights on key components of the Modernization Act, including strategic planning, program management, program evaluation, financial and performance reporting, and budgeting.

Forum participants focused on the key challenges now facing government in crafting an effective federal performance management system. A significant challenge uncovered by participants was the need to ensure that the many procedural requirements in the new law do not overwhelm federal agencies in such a way that agency leaders focus on compliance rather than on improving performance.

In response to these challenges and related research conducted by Dr. Moynihan and others, the report offers six recommendations that emphasize actions that can be taken to ensure that the new system improves performance as agencies implement the requirements of the new law. These recommendations range



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from ensuring that performance management links with goals that motivate public servants, to integrating program evaluation and evidence more directly in making performance-based decisions, to ensuring early and ongoing consultation with Congress and key stakeholders.

We hope that this timely report will be useful to agency executives, performance improvement officers, and program managers as well as congressional staffs in understanding the federal performance management system. We also hope this report helps them better understand the challenges that they now face in managing the federal government more effectively, and that they will apply the lessons in this report to increasingly use objective performance evaluation in decision-making for national challenges.



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Introduction

2013 marks the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. GPRA is the starting point and linchpin of the contemporary federal performance system. The durability of this framework testifies to the wisdom of embedding it in statute. It was not swept aside with a new presidential administration, as so many executive-led management initiatives have been, and has been able to incrementally evolve. GPRA was significantly updated with the passage of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA).

Many of the Modernization Act provisions, passed late in 2010, are just now coming into place. It is now a good time to take stock of the new performance system. The purpose of this report is to explain the changes created by the Modernization Act, offer early observations about its implementation, and give insights into how to implement its provisions.

The insights offered draw on an extensive, multi-stage process of consultation with experts and participants working in the new federal performance system. This report builds upon recommendations made by the Next Steps in Improving Performance Working Group, convened by the National Academy of Public Administration and the American Society of Public Administration as part of its 2012 Memo to National Leaders project. The report also reflects the discussion at the December 2012 IBM Center for The Business of Government-National Academy of Public Administration forum, *Performance Improvement That Matters: Implementing a New Performance Management Framework*.

The report proceeds as follows:

- The first section explains the new requirements, roles, and processes put in place by the Modernization Act and how the Act places greater expectations on federal managers than the original GPRA did, even as these managers work in a more complex environment.
- The second section reports on early implementation of the Act by OMB and agencies, and highlights two examples of performance management initiatives being used to monitor program progress: reducing crime on Indian tribal lands and reducing homelessness among veterans.
- The final section presents six recommendations for implementation of the new performance system, as well as action steps for each recommendation.

Forum

IBM Center for The Business of Government and National Academy of Public Administration

Performance Improvement That Matters: Implementing a New Performance Management Framework

On December 4, 2012, the IBM Center for The Business of Government and the National Academy of Public Administration co-hosted a forum on the new performance system now being implemented across government. The forum brought together a wide array of stakeholders, including staff from congressional oversight committees, the Government Accountability Office, the Congressional Research Service, state governments, consulting firms, unions, international agencies, and academia.

The forum included participants from the executive branch who have been implementing the Modernization Act, including performance improvement officers, goal leaders, evaluation experts, strategic planners, and the performance team from the Office of Management and Budget. Dan Chenok, the executive director of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, charged forum participants to:

- Describe the new system
- Develop a common frame of reference for understanding it
- Offer recommendations about its implementation or ongoing challenges

This report draws heavily from the panels and discussions that took place, and includes quotes from participants at the forum.

An agenda for the forum is presented in Appendix I. A list of attendees is found in Appendix II.

Great Expectations: What Does the Modernization Act Mean for the Evolution of the Federal Performance System?

What is the GPRA Modernization Act?

The provisions of the Modernization Act include a series of new requirements, roles, and processes. The new requirements seek to generate more timely data and push leaders to articulate their priority goals more clearly. The new roles create a team of senior managers with the job of leading the performance system, setting goals, ensuring information is available, and conducting frequent data-driven reviews. The new processes seek to structure ongoing attention to the analysis of performance data for improved execution and strategic decisions and for better communication to delivery partners and other stakeholders. The Act also cements in place a set of acronyms that managers are expected to be familiar with:

- COO: Chief Operating Officer
- PIO: Performance Improvement Officer
- PIC: Performance Improvement Council
- CAP: Cross-Agency Priority Goals
- SOAR: Strategic Objective Annual Review

An overview of the new requirements is presented in the box, *New Requirements, New Roles, and New Processes*.

Changes in the New Performance System

Federal managers today must implement a new federal performance system quite different from the one created by the original GPRA. This is not just because of the changes made by the Modernization Act, but also because the context of governance has changed in the last 20 years. It is the combination of these two factors, statute and context, that forms the terrain of the new performance system. In some areas, this combination aligns well. For example, the Modernization Act seeks a new level of transparency in government, and relies on the Internet (Performance.gov) for this goal in a way that would have been difficult to imagine 20 years ago. But in the aggregate, the changes expect more of managers dealing with a more challenging world.

This section reviews three of the most significant changes in the new performance system:

- A stronger framework to encourage performance information use
- The requirement to improve performance through the use of networks
- The need to use the performance system to make strategic choices

New Requirements, New Roles, and New Processes

New Requirements

- Agencies must develop a four-year strategic plan that aligns the strategic planning calendar with the presidential term. This adjusts the previous requirement for agencies to update a strategic plan with a five-year timeline every three years. These new plans would be submitted with the first full presidential budget proposal.
- Agencies must develop an annual performance plan, including agency priority goals. While agencies were previously required to provide performance goals annually, there is now an expectation that they be more closely linked with their strategic plan.
- The Act requires agencies to designate a small number (roughly two to eight) of agency priority goals. These are targets that the agency leader commits to seeking improvement on within a two-year time frame, and must be updated quarterly.
- OMB must produce a federal government performance plan featuring cross-agency priority (CAP) goals and targets for improved government performance, reported and reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- Performance data must be reported via a central website, [Performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov).

New Roles

- Each agency must have a chief operating officer (COO, who is deputy secretary or equivalent of a department) and a performance improvement officer (PIO) to oversee an agency's performance improvement efforts.
- The executive branch must identify specific individuals with primary responsibility for achieving agency priority goals and the cross-cutting CAP goals.
- The Act codifies a government-wide performance improvement council (PIC), made up of the OMB deputy director for management and agency PIOs. The council is expected to share lessons and offer operational advice in implementing performance management practices.

New Processes

- Agencies must hold a quarterly progress review on agency priority and other goals. The COO is required to lead these reviews.
- The cross-agency priority goals must be reviewed quarterly by the OMB deputy director with support from the PIC.
- OMB is expected to annually identify goals agencies failed to achieve, and to require remedial action. OMB will put in place a strategic objective annual review (SOAR) process to fulfill this requirement. SOAR will center on an estimated 300 strategic objectives (assuming 10–20 per agency) that are a subset of agency strategic goals, and is intended to focus on outcomes.

A Stronger Framework: Moving from Compliance to Use

The ongoing goal of the federal performance system has been to improve performance and democratic accountability. For this to happen, performance data have to first be used. GPRA was built on an assumption that the availability of performance data would be sufficient to foster systematic use. The Modernization Act assumes the need to build a more robust framework to ensure use.

Many of the changes in the Modernization Act were first implemented under executive authority during the past decade. The Bush administration created PICs, PIOs and quarterly reviews; the

Obama administration established priority goals and focused quarterly reviews on those goals. These changes were motivated by a belief that the existing federal performance management system prioritized the creation and dissemination of data, but did little to ensure its use. For example, the Bush administration said in 2001:

“After eight years of experience [since the passage of GPRA], progress toward the use of performance information for program management has been discouraging ... Performance measures are insufficiently used to monitor and reward staff, or to hold program managers accountable” (US OMB 2001, 27).

Despite the efforts of the Bush administration to increase use, the Obama administration made essentially the same observation:

“The ultimate test of an effective performance management system is whether it is used, not the number of goals and measures produced. Federal performance management efforts have not fared well on this test” (OMB 2011, 73).

Studies provide support for these negative assessments. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has periodically tracked rates of performance information use since 1997, finding little aggregate change over time, even as employees agree that data have become more available (GAO 2008). An analysis that sought to estimate the effect of GPRA and the Bush-era Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) found that these initiatives did not seem to systematically increase purposeful performance information use, but instead were most strongly associated with a passive approach to use, characterized by a compliance with performance reporting requirements (Moynihan and Lavertu 2012).

In many agencies, this sense of compliance was compounded by a tendency to treat performance management as a reporting responsibility implemented by a small number of staff, or even outside consultants. This furthered a perception of performance management as a task to be checked off rather than as a way of managing; a burden neither relevant to most managers nor requiring much leadership commitment.

The Modernization Act reinforces a focus on the use of performance information. The requirements for quarterly reviews on priority goals and strategic objective annual reviews (SOAR) are intended to establish basic routines of use, with designated actors charged with leading these processes. The Senate report on the Modernization Act explains that these changes are “aimed at increasing the use of performance information to improve performance and results ... Agencies are collecting a significant amount of information, but are not consistently using that information to improve their management and results” (U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2010, 11–12).

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

When we started the Senate Budget Committee’s Task Force on Government Performance chaired by Senator Mark Warner, the first thing we did was to review the original GPRA data to determine if it was being used. We learned that the GPRA data was not being fully used by Congress, OMB or the agencies. We were disappointed to learn that a lot of this good information wasn’t being used to drive decision-making. That was our primary goal with the passage of the Modernization Act, to improve the use.

— Amy Edwards, Senate Budget Committee

The designation that some goals have priority over others is also intended to further their use because of the greater focus on priority settings for those goals. Agency priority and CAP goals will be given systematically more attention and resources than other goals. This change acknowledges a relatively simple but profound point about improving government performance: it is hard and demanding work. It requires systematic attention to tracking high-quality data closely over a sustained period, identifying patterns and casual factors, and coming up with solutions. It means corralling and managing what is likely to be a diverse network of stakeholders. All of this requires managerial attention, which is a limited resource. If it is diffused equally across all programs and all goals, there may not be enough of it anywhere to engineer significant changes. While performance improvement should be a widespread ethos, the effort needed for improvement should be allocated strategically.

The experience of GPRA and the PART suggests that a failure to prioritize goals will limit attention to use. The design of the Modernization Act implies a willingness to accept that not all goals will be managed with equal intensity as long as some goals are managed aggressively. The Act also makes it possible to vary which goals are prioritized at any given time (for example, the 24-month time frame associated with agency priority goals), meaning that when progress is made on one set of goals, administrative attention can then be turned to another.

Improving Performance Through Networks: Managing Goal-Driven Networks

Two profound characteristics of the current federal system are:

- A demand for performance
- The use of service-delivery networks

These characteristics have largely emerged through separate and parallel sets of policy choices rather than a single comprehensive design. For decades, federal policy makers have increasingly turned to state and local governments or non-profit and private sectors for the delivery of services. The contemporary reality for most federal managers is that they are reliant upon stakeholders and service providers from other organizations to implement federal policy. But even as the federal performance system has emerged in the last 20 years there has been relatively little consideration of the difficulties of managing performance without hierarchical control. Nor has there been the systematic development of a skill set for managing goal-based networks.

The Modernization Act increases the need to take a collaborative approach. The program-specific goals of GPRA remain, but the Modernization Act puts a new emphasis on broad agency priority and CAP goals. Such outcome goals are more likely to involve a variety of policy tools and a wider array of stakeholders. OMB's guidance to agencies recognizes this, promoting the need for agencies to collaborate with stakeholders, including those involved in service delivery. The emphasis on CAP goals underlines the fact that many federal tasks require coordination across multiple agencies, and now places greater emphasis than before on fostering cross-agency collaboration.

Federal managers are now being asked to fill two roles:

- Goal leaders
- Network managers

Performance improvement means more than simply figuring out which processes lead to better outcomes. It may also mean building a network where one did not formally exist, or expanding and formalizing an incomplete one. It means engaging members, fostering their

commitment to common performance goals, sharing information with one another, and coordinating their actions toward those shared goals (Milward and Provan 2006; O’Leary and Gerard 2012; Fountain 2013).

The reliance on third parties sometimes provides advantages—flexibility, knowledge, and lower costs—but it is more complex. The actors involved may have varying levels of commitment toward the goal the federal government sees as important, and are subject to indirect forms of control. Creating and maintaining a goal-oriented network is time-consuming work. There is growing knowledge on the skills needed to manage networks that federal managers should draw on (Agranoff 2003; Imperial 2004; Milward and Provan 2006; Provan and LeMaire 2012).

Using the Performance System: Making Strategic Choices in the Context of Tighter Budgets

GPRA called on agencies to make strategic plans, but did little else to ensure that agencies were making strategic choices. This may have been because of the context in which they were initially created. GPRA was first implemented in the context of balanced budgets and economic prosperity in the 1990s. The result is that agencies and Congress did not have to make difficult choices between priorities. The current era sees deficits and strong political pressure to cut spending. In today’s context, agencies face stronger pressure to make strategic choices and trade-offs, and to know how such choices affect performance.

The OMB will use the Strategic Objectives Annual Review (SOAR) process as a mechanism to reinforce strategic thinking. Agencies have traditionally paid most attention to strategic goals for the purposes of simply updating their plans, rather than engaging in a true strategic analysis of progress and trade-offs. When agencies know that they must face annual OMB attention to progress on strategic goals, this should encourage more serious strategic thinking in preparing agency strategic plans.

SOAR gives OMB a mechanism to ask tough questions about progress on high-level goals, strategic trade-offs, the most effective allocation of resources, and legislative needs that will enable them to achieve higher performance. Equally important, it gives agencies the means to ensure outcome focused reviews.

Excerpts from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

We can’t “salami-slice” on our budgets anymore. You have to be able to look at your programs, pull up the data and say if we have to cut x number of dollars, this is what we’re not going to do any more. Is America okay with that? Is there a reason we can stop that program? You have to have the data to be able to make those decisions and make them wisely. You have to have people on your staff that can say if you take that one out, here’s where the ripple effects are going to be because everything is connected. You can’t pull one string without hitting six other strings.

— Toni Trombecky, *Veterans Affairs*

What's Been Done So Far: Assessing the Early Implementation of the Modernization Act

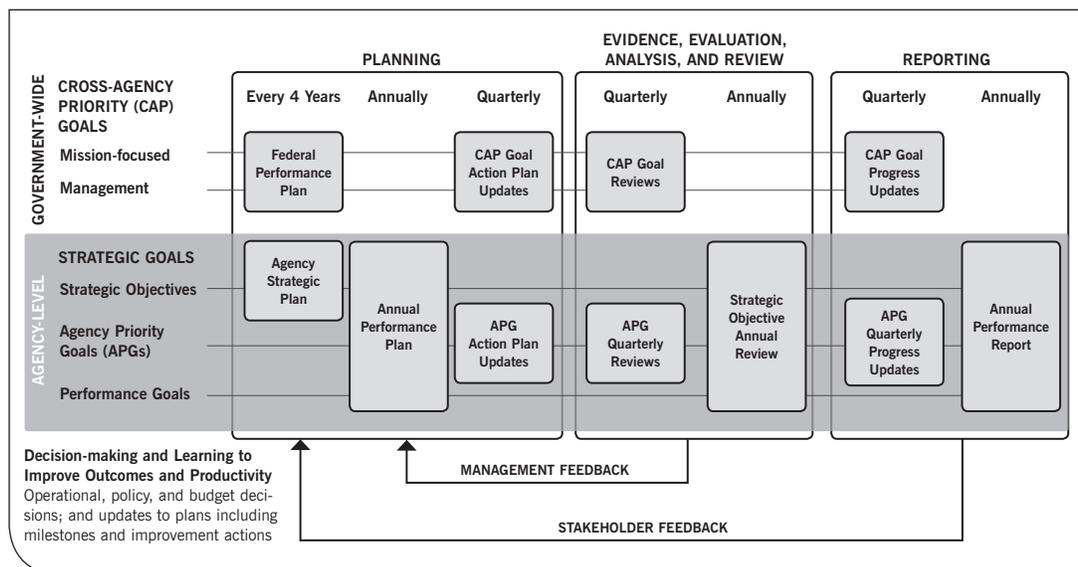
The Modernization Act codified some successful administrative practices from the Bush and Obama administrations. For example, the Bush administration put in place the positions of performance improvement officers and the Performance Improvement Council through Executive Order 13450. The Obama administration retained these roles, and added the practices of requiring agency leaders to commit to agency priority goals, the use of quarterly reviews, and a central government performance website.

Many of the basic elements of the Act will therefore not be dramatically different from current practice, but their codification in law means that agencies can have more confidence that these changes must be treated as permanent. OMB has provided detailed guidance as to what the new requirements mean for agencies in a revised and significantly extended [Circular A-11](#), Part 6. OMB has also developed a graphic summary of the timing of the new requirements, illustrating how they are intended to connect to provide a coherent overall system (See Figure 1).

OMB has articulated four goals for the new performance system, as well as three strategies to achieve these goals. The four goals are to improve:

- Outcomes
- Productivity

Figure 1: OMB's New Performance Management Framework



Source: Office of Management and Budget

- The quality of government interactions (with public, clients, customers, regulated parties, service delivery partners, and other stakeholders)
- Democratic accountability

The following three strategies were adapted to achieve the four goals listed above:

- Use performance information to lead and learn to improve outcomes
- Communicate performance coherently and concisely for better results and transparency
- Strengthen problem-solving networks (OMB 2011)

Using Performance Information: [Performance.gov](#)

The Modernization Act instructs agencies to submit all of the required performance data to a central website in a common format. This breaks with the traditional practice of putting such information only on an agency's website using an agency-designed format. Performance.gov is envisioned to be the primary means by which the Modernization Act improves the transparency and accessibility of government performance data.

OMB created Performance.gov prior to the passage of the Modernization Act; at its inception, it was an internal site for government use only. It was configured for public access in 2011, displaying agency priority goals but not performance information. In December 2012, the site was updated to reflect the first quarterly progress report on agency and cross-agency priority goals, as required by the Modernization Act.

The detail and transparency features in Performance.gov are useful across government agencies. Each agency is featured on a webpage that includes a series of connected strategies, objectives, and priority goals. Agency performance plans and strategic plans are easily accessible. The website also allows individuals to search for programs organized by theme, rather than agency.

Performance.gov presents CAP and agency priority goals. Each goal is described, as are the timing and target for these goals. Under the priority goals there is detailed additional information, including the names and pictures of the goal leaders, discussion of progress and next steps, description of the data, and a list of programs that contribute to the goal. Figure 2 provides an example of what an agency priority goal description looks like on Performance.gov. The example is the Department of the Interior's goal of reducing violent crime in Indian communities. This priority goal also provides a positive example of efforts to improve performance.

Case One: Reduction of Violent Crime on Tribal Lands

As agencies have begun to implement the Modernization Act, there are examples of how they are using the new performance management system to tackle challenging goals. The first such example is the reduction of crime in Indian communities.

Individuals living on reservations are at risk of violent crime at a significantly higher rate than the national average. To address this problem, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) of the Department of the Interior targeted four reservations where crime was exceptionally high, at least five times the national average, and set an agency priority goal to reduce crime in these areas by five percent over a 24-month time period (see Figure 3). At the end of the 24

Figure 2: Priority Goals in Performance.gov

The screenshot shows the Department of the Interior's Performance.gov page. At the top, it says "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR". Below that, there's a "GOAL LEADER(S)" section featuring a photo of Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. To the right, the "AGENCY PRIORITY GOALS" section highlights the goal "Reduce violent crime in Indian communities". A brief description follows: "By September 30, 2013, in addition to continued efforts at four targeted tribal reservations that have achieved reductions of at least 5% in violent criminal offenses, achieve significant reduction in violent criminal offenses of at least 5% within 24 months on two additional targeted tribal reservations by implementing a comprehensive strategy involving community policing, tactical..." There are links for "Learn More", "Download Featured Report", and "Agency Plans and Reports". Below the goal description, there are tabs for "Overview", "Progress And Next Steps", "Indicator List", and "Contributing Programs". The "Overview" tab is selected, showing a "Goal Overview" section with text about the high rate of violent crime in Indian communities and the challenges involved. At the bottom, it notes that the Interior has secured significant experience with implementation of a Safe Communities initiative beginning in 2009 and tracked through a FY 2010/2011.

months, violent crime had dropped by 35 percent on average across the four locations, and has continued to drop. How did they do it? This case presents the following key factors that influenced the achievement of this priority goal:

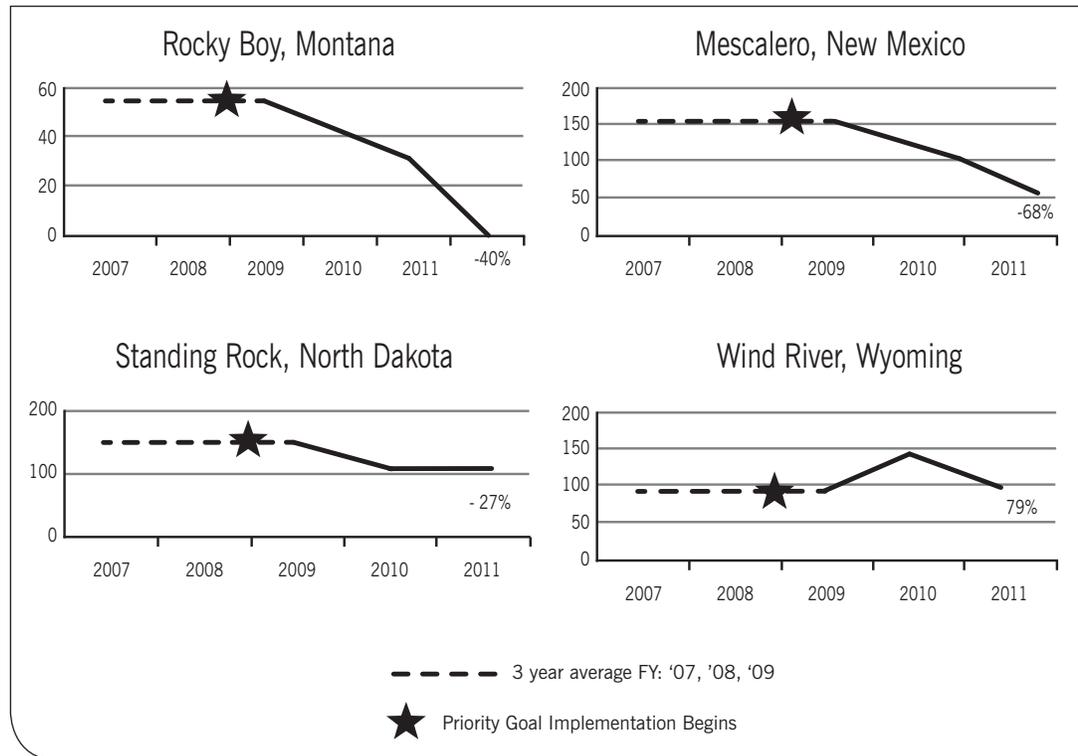
- Building a goal-based network
- Using better data and performing better analysis
- Matching resources with goals

Building a goal-based network. The case illustrates the networked nature of solving a public problem, even in a situation where BIA had its own police force at the front lines. The BIA put in place a strategy of community policing. This means putting more law enforcement officers on the ground, but also requires closer relationships with stakeholders and families in the communities.

In creating a goal-driven network, having a powerful goal of reducing violent crime was helpful, providing a single powerful target that stakeholders and law enforcement could agree upon. The BIA identified service providers in an area who could help form a collaborative of available resources. Community meetings were used to gain information and buy-in from stakeholders. Given the increase in law enforcement activities, tribal leaders were consulted, which increased ownership of the new initiatives by tribal councils. Partners in education, social services, tribal courts, mental health and medical treatment providers, and different law enforcement providers created a network of actors at the front lines who coordinated efforts to align with the new law enforcement surge.

Establishing such networks was a challenge, and the BIA found that sustaining them is also difficult. Law enforcement agreements with stakeholders tended to work best through explicit public commitments, such as a memorandum of understanding.

Using better data and performing better analysis. While the goal mattered a great deal, the BIA also benefited from better data collection, dissemination, and analysis. At the beginning

Figure 2: Priority Goals in Performance.gov

Source: Presentation made by Shelley Metzenbaum, OMB, at the IBM Center-NAPA Forum

the BIA did not have an automated records management system. Data collection was very difficult and absorbed a large amount of resources. The BIA quickly learned that a records management system was crucial to its efforts. With data collection becoming automated, this allowed it to be shared more quickly and enabled a systematic effort to analyze records.

At a local level, better use of data also required investments in capacity. One of the lessons that the BIA drew was that “(t)o implement an effective intelligence-based policing initiative, agencies need to train personnel on analysis of crime statistics and effectively communicate the results” (BOIA 2012, 33).

Matching resources with goals. It is worth clarifying that the dramatic reduction in violent crimes occurred only in the four targeted communities, and such crime has remained high in other areas. Staff levels in the four areas were below the national average and the BIA identified the need for more resources to achieve its goal (BIA 2012, 12). There are more and better trained law enforcement officers on the ground, and the tribal areas have benefited from it. Some working on the project compared it to the surge in Iraq.

The BIA is not doing more with less, but more with more. As agencies consider how to improve outcomes, such conversations will often require investments in more professional service providers, technology, or other needs. The willingness to make such investments is not equivalent to providing broad increases in resources, but rather contingent on goal improvement efforts.

Case Two: Reduction of the Number of Homeless Veterans

Homelessness poses a very real risk for military veterans. At the beginning of President Obama's term, more than 131,000 veterans were homeless. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki (VA) set the goal of eliminating veteran homelessness by 2015. This long-term goal is reflected in a VA priority goal of reducing the number of homeless veterans to 35,000 in 2013, and assisting the housing of an additional 12,200 veterans per year. The pursuit of this goal has spurred a new way of managing how veterans are helped when they leave the armed forces.

This case presents the following key factors that influenced progress toward this priority goal:

- Building a goal-based network
- Matching resources with goals
- Learning from consultations
- Using an evidence-based strategy

Building a goal-based network. The existence of local VA medical centers puts providers on the ground to interact with veterans, linking them to treatment for problems such as physical or mental illness and addiction. Such treatment is a key part of reducing risk factors that result in homelessness, but the VA also determined that it needed to collaborate intensively with another agency that provides a different set of resources and capacities.

With the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the VA developed the HUD-VA supportive housing program (HUD-VASH). HUD provides housing vouchers that veterans can use on private rental units. How intense is this collaboration? The goal leader, Susan Angell, estimated she works 10–15 hours per week with HUD partners.

Beyond HUD, the broader network includes other federal agencies, state agencies, advocacy groups, and community-based service providers. As with the efforts to reduce crime on tribal lands, the VA has sought to deal with homelessness by preventing it in the first place, rather than just responding to it. Working jointly with the Department of Defense, the VA will look for risk factors that make individuals more likely to experience homelessness when they transition out of the armed forces.

Matching resources with goals. The allocation of HUD-VASH vouchers is tied to the proportion of homeless in an area, and the use of those vouchers is another illustration of the principle that resource choices should reflect the best mechanism to achieve a goal.

The VA and HUD have also taken a place-based approach to improving the operation of the network of responders, identifying 21 communities with high rates of veteran homelessness.

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

... we sent top leadership out to a particular city as a team: HUD's top leadership, assistant secretaries, deputy assistant secretaries, and VA leadership. Together, we listened to the community. We listened to VA staff. We listened to HUD staff. We listened to the public housing authority. And then we brought everybody together for a meeting to figure out what is it we all need from each other so we can streamline the process and get our performance to be much better on behalf of the veterans.

— Susan Angell, Veterans Affairs

Each of these communities underwent a “rapid results boot camp” that brought in VA and HUD leadership to work with local providers.

Learning from consultations. The rapid results consultations helped to map out the process to reduce homelessness in each setting, identifying where there might be delays or problems with that process and how to eliminate them. In some cases, local providers were misinformed about rules, imposing red tape when it was not necessary. For example, veterans face repetitive and redundant verification processes from different levels of government, barriers that could be eased by better data-sharing. In other cases, the consultations helped to identify general problems for HUD and VA to fix. An example is the need to speed up the hiring of case managers. Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH have individual case managers who develop specific goals for each veteran. Not having enough such managers creates a bottleneck that limits the ability to put veterans on the HUD-VASH program.

Using an evidence-based strategy. In choosing strategies, VA sought to make decisions that drew not just from local knowledge, but also from research evidence. HUD-VASH relies on a strategy that emphasizes putting the chronically homeless in housing, or quickly re-housing those who have lost a home, rather than making housing conditional on the behavior of the veteran. Once situated in a home, it becomes easier to target the veteran for treatment and support services. Studies suggest that this approach results in better outcomes by reducing the chance that a veteran will simply exit the system.

Where Do We Go from Here: Six Implementation Recommendations

Recommendation One: Connect the Performance System to Public Service Motivation

An underutilized tool for improving performance is to appeal to the motivation that public servants have to help others through their work. A growing body of research from both the public and private sectors shows that this motivation is real and powerful. Public service motivation has been associated with higher performance information use (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012) and higher performance (Bellé 2013).

What can we learn from this research? One point is that the potential for using public service motivation to improve performance has been underutilized. It represents an alternative model to frequently attempted pay-for-performance systems. A second point is that this motivation cannot be taken for granted. It depends upon employees feeling a real connection between their values and those of their organization (Bright 2007). Such connections can be made in a much more systematic way. This does not mean a cynical manipulation of altruistic motivations. It means that the public sector needs to do a much better job of reminding those who work for it of the public purpose served by their efforts.

There are a variety of ways to develop public service motivation in the workplace (see Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondeghem 2008 for a comprehensive summary). But the new federal performance system can play a particular role. Too often employees have experienced the performance system as something that distracts from their underlying goal of helping others. Such a negative relationship becomes more likely when performance goals are monetized via high-powered bonuses (Heinrich and Marschke 2010), seen as a technical tool unrelated to

What is Public Service Motivation?

Public service motivation has been defined as “an individual’s orientation to delivering services to people with a purpose to do good for others and society” (Perry and Hondeghem 2008, vii). It draws from the altruistic desire to help others. While this motivation is not limited to public employees, it is expected to occur in the context of a public institution or mission to distinguish it from similar concepts such as pro-social motivation. Research has associated public service motivation with lower turnover, higher job satisfaction, and work commitment.

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

Almost everyone in the federal government, I believe, comes for those moments in time when they feel like they’re making a difference on something important.

— Kevin Donahue, *Performance Improvement Council*

Key Recommendations

Recommendation One: Connect the Performance System to Public Service Motivation

- Action 1.1: Select goals that motivate
- Action 1.2: Make goals the glue to hold networks together
- Action 1.3: Connect to beneficiaries
- Action 1.4: Create a clear line of sight between actions and goals
- Action 1.5: Celebrate achievement
- Action 1.6: Align employee recognition systems

Recommendation Two: Build a Learning Culture

- Action 2.1: Use quarterly and strategy reviews as learning forums

Recommendation Three: Balance Top-Down Targets with Bottom-Up Innovations

- Action 3.1: Learn from network members
- Action 3.2: Use benchmarking
- Action 3.3: Disseminate lessons, not just data

Recommendation Four: Integrate Program Evaluation into the Performance Management System

- Action 4.1: Create an understanding of program evaluation
- Action 4.2: Redefine performance information to include program evaluation
- Action 4.3: Incorporate evaluation expertise into performance discussions
- Action 4.4: Use delegation of rules as opportunities to evaluate
- Action 4.5: Link performance goals to evaluation outcome variables
- Action 4.6: Link evaluations to funding
- Action 4.7: Make use of administrative data to assess the effects of programs.

Recommendation Five: Ensure Leaders are Committed to Performance Management

- Action 5.1: Take advantage of the performance leadership team created by the Modernization Act
- Action 5.2: Select leaders based on performance management skills

Recommendation Six: Connect with Congress and Stakeholders

- Action 6.1: Agencies and OMB should proactively consult with Congress early in the goal-setting process
- Action 6.2: Speak the language of Congress
- Action 6.3: Congress has a responsibility to engage
- Action 6.4: Involve external stakeholders

actual outcomes, or as a compliance exercise. But performance systems also create opportunities to remind employees of the greater good they serve. In turn, these motivational bases can be used to generate the effort necessary to create better outcomes.

Action 1.1: Select goals that motivate. Every organizational goal chosen represents an opportunity to make a connection to public service motivation. Where possible, agencies should select goals that clearly communicate the ultimate value and importance of public service in making a difference in people's lives.

For example, the Department of Health and Human Services initially selected the following goal to reflect its anti-smoking efforts: "By the end of 2011, increase to 75 percent the percentage of communities funded under the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program that have enacted new smoke-free policies and improved the comprehensiveness of existing policies." This goal is valuable in that it appropriately communicates the processes by which smoking reductions will occur. But it does little to motivate. The department changed the goal to the following: "By December 31, 2013, reduce annual adults' cigarette consumption in the United States from 1,281 cigarettes per capita to 1,062 cigarettes per capita, which represents a 17.1% decrease from the 2010 baseline." This is a more ambitious goal, and more difficult to achieve, to be sure. It is also more clearly motivating, communicating the vital end purpose of the work of public servants.

Action 1.2: Make goals the glue to hold networks together. As discussed above, federal managers tasked with improving performance are also being asked to manage a network that includes some combination of federal agencies, state and local governments, private and non-profit actors, and other stakeholders.

A central challenge in network management is generating equivalent commitment among network members to a common goal, especially if there are tensions between the goals of the network and of the organizations within the network (Milward and Provan 2006). Trust, good governance practices, and strong working relationships can help to overcome this problem.

Motivational goals offer an important means to glue a network together. Both the examples of reducing violent crime on Indian lands and reducing veteran homelessness show how goals that were seen as important and widely shared by network members created buy-in and coordination of effort. When federal managers have limited tools to manage networks, one of the most powerful and under-utilized tools is creating agreement that a powerful motivational goal needs to be addressed through shared effort.

Action 1.3: Connect to beneficiaries. Studies have shown that providing employees with direct evidence of the value of their efforts, through feedback or meeting with beneficiaries, increases performance (Grant 2008). At the VA, senior managers were sent out to the front lines to interact with the veterans who were benefiting directly from their anti-homeless programs: "They came back on board," said Susan Angell. "They were so excited with what they

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

I think that the goal to end veteran homelessness by 2015 is really very pure because it's simple. It's easy to understand. It's visible to every American citizen and it matters. Not having our veterans on the street matters to the American people.

— Susan Angell, Veterans Affairs

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

Federal agencies can do a better job in selling the mission to their own employees. We are much better at selling it to people that we are recruiting. However, the moment people walk in the door, too often we focus on the tasks that they are to do. You're administering a grant program. You're administering a regulatory program. You're working on this program. Sure, on a day-to-day basis they're doing that but they're doing that for a purpose—a result—and that's why the line of sight between daily activities and meaningful results is absolutely vital.

— Christopher Mihm, Government Accountability Office

did. So that was a way to really give your highest leaders in your organization a taste of the solution. They had a taste of success. They had a taste of engagement.”

The implication here is that the motivational power of a goal is increased when it is more than just something that appears on a website, or a performance plan, but is reinforced by tangible connections with recipients. Not all tasks lend themselves to making such connections, and how they will be made will vary by agency. But when agencies select a goal, they should ask themselves how they might find ways to connect to the citizens who benefit from the goal.

Action 1.4: Create a clear line of sight between actions and goals. Research has shown that clearer goals are associated with stronger attraction to mission (Wright, Pandey, and Moynihan 2012) and higher use of performance data (Moynihan, Wright, and Pandey 2012). For employees, part of goal clarity is understanding how actions connect to goals. Several participants at the IBM Center-NAPA forum referred to this as having a clear line of sight: an understanding of how their actions contributed to a broader and important goal.

In practical terms, having a clear line of sight means that employees asked to undertake a particular task should be reminded how it contributes to a broader motivational goal.

Action 1.5: Celebrate achievement. When performance targets are not met, agencies try to figure out what happened and how to do better. There is often less emphasis on celebrating the achievements when goals are made. While it is important to determine why targets are not met, it is also important to celebrate when targets are achieved. One vehicle for publicly celebrating achievement is on Performance.gov.

Celebration of achievement represents a positive feedback loop that reinforces the sense that public work is generating a valuable outcome. It also reduces the possibility that employees come to view performance systems purely as punitive mechanisms that only convey negative messages of failure.

Action 1.6: Align employee recognition systems. OMB should work with OPM and agency leaders to ensure agencies' performance appraisal and recognition systems are aligned to the motivational power of clear goals, linked to results for program beneficiaries, and recognize achievement.

Recommendation Two: Build a Learning Culture

The success of performance systems depends a good deal on employees giving their discretionary time and effort to making them work. Such contributions of effort will be more likely to

occur when the organizational culture supports performance management. But what does this actually mean in practice?

Studies of organizational learning suggest that a learning culture features employees who believe in goals, acknowledge problems, question basic assumptions, and invest their ingenuity to solve problems and improve performance. Performance systems can easily fail to embed themselves into the broader culture, or take on cultural attributes that discourage real learning. For example, organizational learning theory warns that when organizational processes generate defensive reactions among participants, the potential to learn declines (Argyris and Schön 1996). If performance measures are seen as a punitive tool, employees will respond defensively and limit their cooperation.

Action 2.1: Use quarterly and strategy reviews as learning forums. Agency chief operating officers should work with their agency's performance management, program evaluation and evidence, strategic planning, and other relevant offices to create a learning environment for improving performance. Specifically, they should work together to ensure that the quarterly priority reviews and Strategic Objectives Annual Review (SOAR) become key venues where the cultural tone of the new performance management system will be established. These reviews can be used as learning forums, a process by which individual learning is acquired and used for organizational purposes. For the new reviews to succeed, the reviews themselves must feature cultural characteristics to encourage learning, and must occur in a broader cultural context that is supportive of their goals. *Elements of Learning Forums* presents characteristics of successful learning forums.

Collectively, the practices outlined in the box suggest that learning forums succeed best when the actors involved have a cooperative approach, with expectations of mutual support, rather than a confrontational approach. With both annual Strategic Objectives Annual Review (SOAR) and the quarterly reviews there will be a temptation to use these forums to point fingers and allocate blame. But managers ultimately retain a significant information advantage on the tasks they work on, enabling them to largely evade or disrupt a process of control they regard as illegitimate. For example, they may set targets they know will be achieved, or cherry-pick favorable data. The information advantage will be better reduced by creating a cultural tone

Elements of Learning Forums

- Routine event
- Facilitation and ground rules to structure dialogue
- Nonconfrontational approach to avoid defensive reactions
- Collegiality and equality among participants
- Diverse set of organizational actors responsible for producing the outcomes under review
- Dialogue centered, with dialogue focused on organizational goals
- Basic assumptions are identified, examined, and suspended
- Quantitative knowledge that identifies successes and failures, including goals, targets, outcomes, and points of comparison
- Experiential knowledge of process and work conditions that explain successes, failures, and the possibility of innovation

Source: Moynihan 2008

where managers feel comfortable openly discussing problems rather than hiding them. Federal agencies are now increasing their experience in using data-driven performance reviews to analytically review and discuss agency performance (Hatry 2010).

The role of goal leaders inevitably puts them under the spotlight, but this does not mean that others cannot be involved in the search for solutions. Participants at the IBM Center-NAPA Forum discussing using quarterly reviews as a setting where goal leaders explained changes in performance, and an opportunity to invite others to provide insights and resources to deal with problems.

Recommendation Three: Balance Top-Down Targets with Bottom-Up Innovations

One balancing act in creating an effective performance system is between top-down authority, and bottom-up knowledge. The federal performance system should result neither in calcified top-down process requirements that exclude the possibility of innovation, nor in a completely hands-off approach to how network actors implement goals.

The Modernization Act requires, as GPRA did, the federal government to set goals for the programs it funds. The top-down, goal-setting aspect of the system is therefore clear and will be implemented. The federal government has done less well in systematically capturing bottom-up knowledge. The IBM-NAPA forum identified this as a major issue needing additional research, but did identify three lessons.

Action 3.1: Learn from network members. Innovation at lower levels should be encouraged, and the input of network actors incorporated. Learning forums tend to succeed when they incorporate a variety of types of knowledge. Agency chief operating officers should work with their agency priority goal leaders so that every priority goal that depends on other partners — such as states, localities, or non-profits — incorporates contributions from those partners on how the goals should be implemented. In the case of priority goals, this means incorporating knowledge not just from the front lines, but from other parts of the implementation network.

In describing the efforts to reduce violent crime on tribal lands, Charles Addington of the Department of the Interior identified the value of front-line knowledge: “The biggest thing for us was getting our people on board because usually the person that’s the quietest in the room that’s closest to the problem has the answer to the problem. So it’s getting those people engaged ... you have to get those folks to tell you what they’re doing, what do they have to offer, and get some input from them ... You have to be giving me some feedback telling me what the problems are on the ground because me up here in Washington, D.C., I shouldn’t be making the decisions for somebody out there on the ground.”

The participation of actors at multiple levels brings together those who can collectively offer a holistic understanding of different parts of the implementation process. Higher level officials can point to the importance of a goal and offer the authority to deal with problems that might be identified. For example, lower level officials may misunderstand the degree of flexibility they have under federal requirements, resulting in front-line staff constraining themselves with self-imposed rules. Susan Angell describes just such a process that resulted from the consultation of leaders from HUD and VA with front-line officials working to reduce veteran homelessness: “We as government have tons and tons of rules but one of the things I think we learned as leaders by actually going out to a site that was struggling is how many rules they create themselves. They said, ‘Well, you know, VA doesn’t allow this and HUD doesn’t allow that.’ It was like, where did you get that? So we were able to actually shift away some of the structures

that were holding them back. The end result of that was great improvement in timeliness. The public housing authority had all of these processes, half of which they were able to get rid of because VA was already doing it.”

Action 3.2: Use benchmarking. Benchmarking means identifying best-in-class in an industry or function, and comparing key performance metrics against these high performers. It has been underutilized in the federal government. If agencies use it well, it will encourage greater use of performance data to define stretch targets, reveal what factors create success, and motivate employees. Reflecting a learning culture, the goal should be to look for positive outliers.

Identifying high performers is only the first step. Organizational learning means capturing such knowledge systematically, storing it, and sharing it with others. The validity of the performance should first be verified—a common finding in studies of performance management is that all that glitters is not gold. Organizations can sometimes manufacture positive measures of performance while reducing some unmeasured aspect of performance, or implementing perverse processes (Heinrich and Marschke 2010; Soss, Fording and Schram 2011).

Benchmarking may not be relevant for all functions where a peer is not available, but there are many opportunities to use it in the federal government. Any function that is undertaken by distributed units can compare the performance of these units on key items on a more frequent basis. These could be regional offices of the federal government, state and local government recipients of federal grants, or other grantees.

Action 3.3: Disseminate lessons, not just data. The Modernization Act improves the ways in which data are shared within government and with the public. But performance data are just numbers, and improving performance also means finding a way to disseminate lessons learned about how to change those numbers.

These can be broad lessons about how to manage. For example, the Performance Improvement Council has created working groups to develop recommendations on how to set a goal or run a data-driven review. Lessons may also be tactics and strategies about how to improve an outcome. For example, the Department of the Interior collected lessons from the original four tribal lands that reduced crime, then shared the lessons with other areas facing similar challenges. In North Carolina, local municipalities have created a consortium to compare data and discuss best practices (Ammons and Rivenbark 2008). And as we discuss in the next recommendation, evaluations can offer lessons to improve performance that enjoy a strong evidentiary basis.

One complication in lesson-sharing arises when services are delivered by private organizations that may have a financial incentive not to share processes they regard as their intellectual property. For example, a study of an intergovernmental job training program in Florida found a marked reluctance among private providers to share information with one another, short-circuiting the potential for learning (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). Contract arrangements with private actors should include requirements to share best practices for the most effective spending of tax dollars.

Recommendation Four: Integrate Program Evaluation into the Performance Management System

The distinction between program evaluation and performance management will be lost on most, who correctly assume that the two share the same goal of identifying and implementing what works. But the tasks of evaluating programs and measuring program performance have

been treated as distinct. They are undertaken by different staff, often with different professional training, that have come to form distinct and sometimes rival communities in government. Those working from a performance management tradition might not consider program evaluations as performance information, for example; while program evaluators might argue that the failure of measures to offer answers on causality dramatically limit their utility.

The new expectations of the federal performance system demand a greater integration of these approaches, using the relative advantages of each, while remaining centered on the common ground of improving resource allocation and efficiency (Heinrich 2007). Unlike performance data, evaluations provide actual evidence about how government actions might impact performance. Evaluation and performance measures must be complementary forms of intelligence, and a closer integration between the two provides an opportunity for evaluation staff to have another venue by which their research can influence practice, while ensuring a stronger evidentiary basis for management decisions.

Agency chief operating officers and program managers should establish mechanisms for integrating program evaluation with performance management by focusing on key strategic objectives in the agency, the agency capacity for evaluation and performance management, and who is responsible for making this happen. The forum participants defined a variety of ways to better integrate program evaluation into performance management processes.

Action 4.1: Create an understanding of program evaluation. One basic barrier is a lack of understanding of what program evaluation does, and the ways in which it can be used. The Department of Labor has run a series of seminars that explain the basic characteristics of evaluations, plus the findings from new research. Other agencies should follow this model.

Action 4.2: Redefine performance information to include program evaluation. The performance management community has traditionally framed performance information as goals and measures, neglecting consideration of program evaluation results that offer insight into how performance is achieved. A focus on outcome encourages managers to think more broadly, using both performance data and program evaluations as different types of information needed to understand program effectiveness. Agencies can expect OMB to define performance information in this broad manner in the Strategic Objectives Annual Review (SOAR) process, and should follow this example with their own data-driven reviews.

Action 4.3: Incorporate evaluation expertise into performance discussions. Agencies employ talented program evaluators who can improve understanding of how to prioritize competing goals or how to improve performance. In general, this staff is not brought to the table during data-driven reviews. This is a mistake.

Quarterly performance reviews and the strategic objective annual reviews should become venues that incorporate not just program evaluation information, but also the participation of staff trained in program evaluation. Consider the following questions:

- What is the evidence that supports a proposed innovation?
- What is the opportunity or target population that will generate the greatest return?

These sorts of questions are more likely to be posed, and answered, when evaluation capacity is at the table.

As agencies look to improve performance, they are essentially engaged in causal questions about which strategies will work and which are not worth trying. An evidence-based strategy will draw upon evaluation research that suggests that a certain approach is superior to

another. For example, the emphasis on housing first for homeless veterans drew on research supporting this approach.

Action 4.4: Use delegation of rules as opportunities to evaluate. The Obama White House has released guidance on expanding administrative flexibility as a mechanism to reduce burdens on state and local governments. OMB has encouraged agencies to use this as an opportunity for experimentation. As state governments seek waivers from federal rules to try a new approach, the provision of such federal waivers could be contingent on an evaluation to assess its effectiveness.

Action 4.5: Link performance goals to evaluation outcome variables. There should be coherence between the strategic goals of an agency and the types of interventions that are examined by evaluation funds. This will facilitate the value of evaluations for performance management staff. At the Department of Labor, evaluators have what they call a learning agenda, a five-year outline that prioritizes the most pressing knowledge needs. Agencies and programs can identify performance goals that they want to place on that agenda.

The choice of performance measures should also reflect a consideration of existing program evaluations. In many cases program evaluation studies will have attempted to identify valid measures of program outcomes. When performance measures mirror these outcome variables, it increases the potential that evaluations will be used to inform the management of a goal. The Performance Improvement Council has been charged with improving the connection between performance measures and outcome variables from evaluations. Program managers should expect more questions about whether the measures they have map well onto evaluation outcome variables.

Action 4.6: Link evaluations to funding. Another means to spur the use of evidence to improve performance is to link funding to evidence. This can occur in a number of ways. OMB has encouraged agencies to condition formula-based funding on the use of evidence-based practices, providing higher support for grantees that can point to the use of these practices.

OMB has also identified three different tiers of evidence to inform funding choices:

- Promising, but unproven, innovations can seek development grants.
- Projects where there is initial evidence of success can apply for larger validation grants.
- Projects where there is substantive evidence of success can apply for scale-up grants of up to \$25 million.

This tiered approach has been employed by the Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program and the Department of Health and Human Services Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Home Visiting programs.

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

At the Labor Department the evidence-based foundation is really two-pronged. One prong is evaluation. The other is performance management. They go hand in hand. They are complementary but not the same thing.

— *Demetra Nightingale, Department of Labor*

A more ambitious effort to link evaluations with funding decisions is taking place in the state of Washington. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy provides a model for how to link evaluative work to legislative decisions (Pew Center for the States 2012). Based on summaries of program evaluations for different types of program designs, they estimate the comparative return on investment for different types of programs. Such analyses may help legislators to decide on funding for programs, but may also inform the choices that managers make in deciding what types of interventions will best achieve a priority goal.

Action 4.7: Make use of administrative data to assess the effects of programs. The gold standard for program evaluations is randomized-controlled trials. For complex government programs, these designs are unrivalled in their ability to identify what factors are associated with outcomes, but can also be expensive and require a long-time horizon. However, the increasing availability of data that incorporate administrative records offers a less expensive option to assess the effects of a program. For example, administrative data could be used to track high school graduates over time, identifying outcomes on higher education, income, incarceration, or use of social programs. Or administrative data could be used to estimate the effects of social programs, such as health insurance, on individual outcomes.

Recommendation Five: Ensure Leaders are Committed to Performance Management

One of the clearest research findings about performance management is that such systems are more likely to succeed when agency leaders are perceived as committed to the performance system, or to results in general (Moynihan and Lavertu 2012). Leadership commitment means more than talking about performance. Employees will notice if words are not accompanied by the commitment of leadership time and organizational resources to performance management efforts. Without such commitment, agency employees will be less likely to commit.

In the cases of reducing veterans' homelessness and crime on Indian reservations, leadership commitment to the goal was present and widely understood. Charles Addington of the Department of Interior describes how top-level leadership generated lower-level buy-in: "I think the big thing for us was the support internally from our deputy secretary all the way down. I think if we would have had one of those levels in there that wasn't supportive, it would have been greatly more difficult to get everybody to take it on because there's so many moving parts, so many different programs that had to be a part of this."

Action 5.1: Take advantage of the performance leadership team created by the Modernization Act. The notion that leadership matters is hardly new. The more pressing question is how to generate such commitment for the new performance system. The design of the Modernization Act can be seen as a deliberate effort to change the nature of leadership responsibilities so as to give greater attention to performance. It does this in a number of ways. First, the naming of particular actors (COOs, PIOs, goal leaders) creates a leadership team in each agency, and a

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

There are agencies that have a pretty mature evaluation capacity and in some cases a mature evidence base where we can now say, "Okay, we know what works, let's look for how to build that into our program designs so that we are scaling those activities and shedding what isn't working."

— Kathy Stack, OMB

collaborative of leaders across government (in the form of the Performance Improvement Council). Second, the visibility, limited number, and short-term nature of high priority goals is intended to make them more tangible to leaders. Third, the assignment of goal leaders creates at least one actor who has a strong incentive to champion a goal.

Collectively, these changes are intended to reshape leadership responsibilities in ways that prioritize management and performance. New policy proposals and unanticipated events will always demand the time and attention of leadership, which may come at the expense of performance issues. The new routines created by the Modernization Act discipline leaders to set aside the time to think systematically about both the improvement of existing goals and strategic choices for the future.

Action 5.2: Select leaders based on performance management skills. Another way to ensure leadership commitment to performance is to select those who have a track record of caring about it and managing it well.

The new expectations placed on chief operating officers, performance improvement officers, and goal leaders should be reflected in the selection of appointees with the skill set to fill these expectations. Experience in managing with data should carry greater weight than in the past.

Recommendation Six: Connect with Congress and Stakeholders

Congress has a paradoxical relationship with the federal performance management system. On the one hand, it has been the author and primary force behind legislation that creates the basic foundations of this system. It also holds a unique capacity to convene a public dialogue about federal performance through its oversight and budgeting functions, and has included requirements in the Modernization Act for agencies to treat Congress as a key participant in goal-setting.

For all that, Congress has been ambivalent in engaging with performance management. In some cases, it sets explicit goals in law and mandates specific measurement practices which agencies then incorporate in their performance management systems. In other cases, it delegates this authority to agencies, or has not made sufficient use of performance measures.

Since the setting of goals is also the setting of policy, it is understandable that the legislative branch may be reluctant to accede to any initiative that it perceives as offering the executive branch greater power than is authorized. Participations at the IBM Center-NAPA Forum suggested that while some members of Congress are not interested in using performance information to support their decision-making, the majority simply know little about it, or found little reason to be interested. There are not currently strong incentives for Congress to pay attention to performance information, and if relevant committees are interested in such measures they can simply ask agencies to produce them.

Excerpt from IBM Center-NAPA Forum

You have to have the leadership behind it. Leadership is the key success factor. If you don't have the leadership behind it, you're dead in the water. Don't even bother. But if you have that, then you can move to how do we work together.

— Toni Trombecky, Veterans Affairs

The way in which Congress has historically engaged with performance management is problematic because goal clarity is central to mission achievement. If decisions that emerge from the Strategic Objectives Annual Review (SOAR) process are undercut by Congress, or if Congress identifies its own set of priority goals for agencies, the possibility of a unified coherent performance system is seriously eroded.

The Modernization Act offers a fresh start and new opportunity for Congress to make use of the performance management system. The executive branch can do more to encourage this, but ultimately Congress has a responsibility to fulfill the role it has laid out for itself in the Modernization Act.

Action 6.1: Agencies and OMB should proactively consult with Congress early in the goal-setting process. The Modernization Act requires agencies and OMB to actively consult with Congress and stakeholders in setting all types of performance goals. Agencies are required by law to reach out to Congress on the agency priority goals, and the administration is required to do the same on the cross-agency priority goals. For cross-agency priority goals, OMB must consult with key budget, appropriations, and government oversight committees.

Historically, agencies develop goals which are shared with Congress only after vetting from OMB. This dynamic exists because of a tradition of pre-decisional confidentiality that originates with the budget decision-making system and the desire to reflect a consistent approach across agencies and presidential priorities. While an appropriate standard in budgeting, congressional staff who participated in the Forum reported that the use of this practice for performance management has been problematic, giving Congressional committees the sense that consultation is being done after decisions were made.¹

The key leaders in the performance management system can do more to proactively engage with relevant Congressional committees for a meaningful consultation process, beginning with the updates to their strategic, annual, and priority goal planning efforts scheduled to take place during the course of 2013.

Action 6.2: Speak the language of Congress. Improving the congressional consultation process cannot depend solely on meetings. Having useful and clearly understandable information in advance of a meeting is essential to creating a context for meaningful dialogue.

The acronym-heavy language of performance management can be obtuse, and the relationship to the values of Congress unclear. Congressional members and staff are used to receiving information that has been carefully designed to meet their interests. This is generally not their experience with performance data produced by the executive branch. When Congressional staff are directed to a website with performance data, they often find very detailed performance reports, or are offered budget justifications designed around performance goals. Because it is not formatted in a way useful to their needs, they have usually ignored them, and sometimes chided agencies for providing such data.

COOs should be expected to proactively reach out to their congressional committees to find out what performance information is of particular interest to them, and work with them to

1. In addition, the Committee Report accompanying the GPRA Modernization Act discusses the legislative intent of the consultation process: "GPRA also established a consultation process so that agencies could take Congressional views into account as appropriate. However, little evidence exists that agencies have formally or significantly considered the input of key stakeholders when developing goals and objectives. In waiting to consult with relevant congressional stakeholders until a strategic plan has been substantially drafted and vetted within the executive branch, agencies forego important opportunities to learn early on about specific concerns that will be critical to successful implementation," p. 5.

agree on the best way to communicate these data in a way that meets their interests. They need to set aside the language of performance management, and explain clearly how the new performance system helps committees to manage the issues they care about. These may be goals that reflect constituent interests, but committees may also be engaged by consideration of agency priority goals, or of non-mission based goals that reflect congressional directives (for example, Freedom of Information Act requests that capture transparency goals).

Action 6.3: Congress has a responsibility to engage. While the executive branch can do more to engage with Congress, the ultimate responsibility remains with Congress to engage on performance issues in a systematic way. Congressional leadership in both houses will have to develop ways to coordinate input across multiple oversight, budget, appropriations, and authorization committees, especially for cross-cutting agency goals.

The congressional leadership should articulate a priority for using performance information as it carries out legislative responsibilities. Congress is not a monolithic entity, but at the very least appropriations, authorization, and oversight committees should consider relevant performance data as part of their decision-making. Budget, appropriations, and authorization committees could be encouraged to incorporate federal priority goals in funding decisions.

Relevant committees should meet with agencies when they reach out to discuss their goals, and also review the goals agencies set in their annual performance plans, raising questions if they need additional information about the proposed goals and planned agency actions.

GAO has pointed to examples where Congress has identified performance problems, and used oversight and legislative functions to enable improved performance that reduces costs and improves citizen services. The GAO plays an important function in educating members, proposing questions and inquiries that committee members can employ to oversee agencies (see [GAO-12-215R](#)).

Action 6.4: Involve external stakeholders. As with the original GPRA, the Modernization Act seeks to embed processes of democratic accountability by allowing stakeholders to provide input on strategic goals. Stakeholders also offer a key to drawing in Congress. When committees start hearing from stakeholders that strategic and priority goals deserve attention, they will start paying attention. Stakeholders can play a role in convening forums that bring together actors from the executive and legislative branch to talk about performance and policy issues.

An example is the role of labor in performance processes. Executive Order 13522, issued in 2009, creates labor-management forums to improve service delivery and calls for labor involvement at pre-decision stages for any major management changes. Up to now, this mechanism has not been widely used. The management changes that may emerge because of efforts to improve performance provide an excellent opportunity to include this group of stakeholders into the performance system.

Another good example of involving external stakeholders is The Collaborative Forum, administered by the National Academy of Public Administration, which is an engagement mechanism for the Office of Management and Budget's Partnership for Program Integrity Innovation. For more information about The Collaborative Forum, see box *About the Collaborative Forum*.

Conclusion

The Modernization Act has moved the federal government a step closer to applying an organizational learning model to dealing with policy and management problems. The evolution of the federal performance system itself can also be an example of learning. Progress may seem slow and unsteady at times, but over the course of 20 years the system has clearly evolved. The federal government has captured, stored, and disseminated lessons on how to upgrade the performance system, learning from past mistakes and experimenting with new approaches. It captures our current beliefs, which will undoubtedly need to be revisited and revised as experience and new knowledge causes us to revisit those beliefs.

About The Collaborative Forum

The Collaborative Forum is a community of federal, state, local, and non-government stakeholders who work together to improve federally funded, state-administered programs. It has brought together both public and private sector partners in a way that provides benefit to all and allows for a constructive and collaborative ideas sharing process.

Convened in 2010 to consult on pilot ideas for the Partnership Fund for Program Integrity Innovation, the Collaborative Forum has evolved into a dynamic learning community where stakeholders discuss important topics and exchange ideas for improving program integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Through monthly meetings, webinars, and other presentations, the Forum provides many opportunities for members to share best practices and learn from one another while helping to advance the improvement of service delivery, efficiency, and the reduction of waste.

The Collaborative Forum is operated by the National Academy of Public Administration.

Appendix I: Forum Agenda

IBM Center for The Business of Government and
National Academy of Public Administration

*Performance Improvement That Matters:
Implementing a New Performance Management Framework*

December 4, 2012

- 8:45 a.m. **Presentation: OMB Perspective: A Vision of Performance Improvement.**
OMB provides a strategic context of what it has done in recent years to improve agency performance and what its new guidance is envisioned to do to implement the GPRA Modernization Act in the next few years.
- 9:30 a.m. **Panel: Agency Perspectives—Agency Priority Goals and Performance Reviews.**
There are 117 agency and cross-agency priority goals. Goal leaders have been leading teams to make progress against these goals. What is the experience of goal leaders? What have they accomplished and what strategies have they used that could be inspirations for others?
- 10:30 a.m. **Panel: Agency Perspectives—Linking Strategic Planning, Annual Reviews, and Evidence-Based Decision-Making.**
What are some promising practices in conducting strategic planning and evidence-based annual reviews of strategic objectives? How do we use evidence and other performance information at the federal level to best inform policy and budget decisions? Are there models from other agencies, states, or localities that can inform practice?
- 12:15 p.m. **Moderated Lunch Discussion: Developing Meaningful Consultation with Stakeholders.**
What strategies could lead to meaningful consultations with stakeholders when agencies develop their strategic plans and set priority goals this summer? What have agencies done in the recent past? What will congressional stakeholders look for? What options might be tried in the future?

1:15 p.m. ***Moderated Discussion: How Do We Integrate These Elements to Make Them Useful and Used?***

How do we integrate these different components—strategic planning, strategic objectives annual reviews, quarterly performance reviews, evaluations—into core agency decision-making processes? How can we make these integrated processes valuable for agencies, Congress, and other stakeholders? How do we avoid just creating more compliance requirements that are not useful or used?

1:45 p.m. ***Wrap Up Discussion: From Process to Performance: What else do we need to focus on? What are potential next steps?***

2:00 p.m. **Conclude**

Appendix II: List of Forum Participants

IBM Center for The Business of Government and
National Academy of Public Administration

*Performance Improvement That Matters:
Implementing a New Performance Management Framework*

Charles Addington, *Department of the Interior*
Susan Angell, *Department of Veterans Affairs*
Dan Blair, *National Academy of Public Administration*
Clinton Brass, *Congressional Research Service*
Jonathan Breul, *Government Performance Coalition*
Dustin Brown, *Office of Management and Budget*
Mark Bussow, *Office of Management and Budget*
Dan Chenok, *IBM Center for The Business of Government*
Bruce Chew, *Monitor Group*
Alan Cohn, *Department of Homeland Security*
Laura Craig, *Government Accountability Office*
Dennis Culhane, *University of Pennsylvania*
Elizabeth Curda, *Government Accountability Office*
Teresa Curristine, *International Monetary Fund*
Jon Desenberg, *Performance Institute*
Kevin Donahue, *General Services Administration*
Amy Edwards, *Senate Budget Committee*
Judy England-Joseph, *Partnership for Public Service*
Evan Faber, *Project on Forward Engagement*
Andy Feldman, *Office of Management and Budget*
Michael Filler, *International Brotherhood of Teamsters*
Leon Fuerth, *Project on Forward Engagement*
Gary Glickman, *Office of Management and Budget*
Ruth Gordon, *IBM Center for The Business of Government*

Matt Gripp, *National Academy of Public Administration*
Harry Hatry, *Urban Institute*
Pamela Haze, *Department of the Interior*
Brenna Isman, *National Academy of Public Administration*
Philip Joyce, *University of Maryland*
John Kamensky, *IBM Center for The Business of Government*
Michael Keegan, *IBM Center for The Business of Government*
Ted Kniker, *Performance Institute*
Janice Latimer, *Government Accountability Office*
Ben Licht, *Government Accountability Office*
Allen Lomax, *Community Indicators Consortium*
Curt Marshall, *Center for Accountability and Performance*
Shelley Metzenbaum, *Office of Management and Budget*
Chris Mihm, *Government Accountability Office*
Bill Miracky, *Monitor Group*
Asma Mirza, *Office of Management and Budget*
David Moore, *National Governors Association*
Donald Moynihan, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*
Betsy Newcomer, *Office of Management and Budget*
Demetra Nightingale, *Department of Labor*
Scott Pattison, *National Association of State Budget Officers*
Marcus Peacock, *Senate Budget Committee*
Paul Posner, *George Mason University*
Jeffrey Press, *Performance Improvement Council, General Services Administration*
Steve Redburn, *National Academy of Public Administration*
David Rosenberg, *Grant Thornton*
Robert Shea, *Grant Thornton*
Garth Spencer, *Senate, Carper, HSGA*
Kathy Stack, *Office of Management and Budget*
Hal Steinberg, *Association of Government Accountants*
Toni Trombecky, *Department of Veterans Affairs*
Claudia Urrabazo, *House, Congressman Cuellar*
Gary Van Landingham, *Pew Center for the States*
Joanna Watkins, *World Bank*

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About the Author

Donald Moynihan is Professor of Public Affairs and served as the Associate Director of the La Follette School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 2009–2012. His research examines the application of organization theory to public management issues such as performance, budgeting, homeland security, election administration, and employee behavior.

The Academy of Management's Public and Nonprofit Division named his book, *The Dynamics of Performance Management: Constructing Information and Reform*, the best book for 2009. Journal articles Moynihan has authored have won awards from the Public and Nonprofit Division of the Academy of Management (2002), the *American Review of Public Administration* (2003), and *Public Administration Review* (2007). On three occasions Moynihan has won the American Society for Public Administration Wholey Award for outstanding scholarship on performance in public and nonprofit organizations (2009, 2011, and 2013). He won the 2011 National Academy of Public Administration/Wilder School award for scholarship in social equity. The University of Wisconsin–Madison gave him a Romnes Faculty Fellowship in 2009. Moynihan received the 2012 Distinguished Research Award from ASPA and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration.

Moynihan is the co-editor of *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* and the co-editor of *Public Administration Review* for the *Theory to Practice* section. He serves on the editorial board of *Public Management Review*, *American Review of Public Administration*, *State and Local Government Review*, and *Public Performance & Management Review*. He is a member of the APPAM Policy Council and a former member of the Board of Directors for the Public Management Research Association, the Executive Council for the Academy of Management Public and Nonprofit Division, and the Executive Council, Public Administration Section of the American Political Science Association. In 2011 he was elected to the National Academy of Public Administration.

Moynihan completed his Bachelor of Arts in public administration at the University of Limerick, and his master's degree and Ph.D. in public administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.



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