

TBAC Meeting - March 16, 2010

DOI Strategic Plan Revision Update - Summary

(by LeRon Bielak, DOI Strategic Planning Coordinator)

- The Strategic Plan revision process appears to have resumed in earnest in March
- Pamela Haze, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Budget and Business Management has become the senior point person on the Strategic Plan revision effort and has initiated several steps to restart the revision process:
 - Meeting with the Department’s Planning Office and Strategic Planning Coordinator to review the requirements for completing the revision process and identifying key issues. I identified several issues that needed immediate attention:
 - Inadequacy of communication with stakeholders since last November when Assistant Secretary Suh called for a postponement of public, tribal and employee meetings that were scheduled after October 23 due to perceived issues with field employee lack of involvement in the process.
 - Need for bureaus and offices to be responsive to public comments received and providing their own recommendations for changes.
 - Need for a decision on how to proceed with public, tribal and employee meetings that were postponed.
 - Recognizing that time is a significant issue in implementing a plan by October 1, 2010. DOI would have to operate under the current plan again in FY 2011, if implementation is not timely this year.
 - DAS Haze has initiated taken several steps to resume the process:
 - Initiating meetings with the bureaus to discuss their recommended changes to the plan and their reactions to stakeholder recommendations on structural and metric changes. There is also tacit agreement that bureaus and offices should address other recommendations of a procedural or process nature (management or operational considerations).
 - Agreeing to hold the Portland Tribal meeting that was postponed (likely timeframe of late April or Early May). Also willing to consider 1-2 additional tribal meeting opportunities given recent input from TBAC.
 - Field employee focus meetings will be held in late April to early May to help address the issue of inadequate field involvement in the revision process.

- The plan is still slated for implementation October 1. However, the steps required will demand a strict adherence to the schedule. At this point, a fully revised draft may not be submitted for a required 45 OMB review until July 1, meaning that initiation of the final DOI clearance process may not occur until mid-August, or later if Congressional consultation has not been completed.
- Other Issues
 - Internal and external stakeholder comment has pointed to issues concerning the overall structure (“Framework”) of the plan and such issues have been addressed in part and continue to be resolved.
 - There has been a worrisome pattern in recommendations toward a greater use of output and workload activities for performance measures as opposed to outcome (results-oriented) measures.

For the past decade, the Department has taken the difficult step of changing our performance approach from one that is task-directed toward one that is more results-focused. The advantage of the results orientation is intended to force the question of whether all those tasks/outputs being performed are actually generating the outcomes and achieving the goals we must reach to fulfill our missions.

The reasons why there seems to be a tendency toward measuring outputs/tasks, not outcomes probably include:

1. Outputs and tasks are viewed as more controllable than outcomes.
2. They are often easier to measure.
3. Some outcome measures do not change very rapidly and therefore annual change may appear insignificant
4. If outputs demonstrate more tangible and rapid change, it is more useful for budget justification purposes.
5. Depending on one’s perspective, people may argue that what we call an output is really the outcome they desire (“one person’s ceiling, is the other person’s floor”)

The answer to this debate likely lies in where, when and how different metrics are used. Performance measures can be used at different organizational levels (Department , bureau/office, or field level) and for different purposes (Annual Performance Reports, Budget justifications, management decisions, performance evaluations, etc.) The type of measure employed is dependent on its placement within the organizational hierarchy as well as on the situation in which it is used. In short, a Departmental Strategic Plan should emphasize outcome (results) measures. Bureau and field strategic or operational plans, while necessarily connected to the Departmental Plan, can use intermediate and output level measures to a greater extent. Annual Performance Reports must focus on GPRA strategic plan measure targets and results. Budget

justifications also must employ GPRA outcome measures, but can use output measures to supplement justifications (particularly in those cases where outcome measures may change slowly year to year). In the case of management decisions and performance evaluations, either type of data can be employed to its best benefit.

- A note on comments received
 - We received well over 600 separate recommendations on the Strategic Plan. Half of the comments were measure-related. Another quarter of the comments were procedural in nature, while about 13% were focused on the structure of the plan or the “Proposed Framework”. The remainder dealt with funding, management, legislative or organizational considerations.
 - Comments from the American Indian and Native Alaskan communities represented about 45% of all the recommendations that we received and the type of recommendations offered generally reflected the breakout shown above. Clearly, you have done more than your fair share to convey your concerns and recommendations for the benefit of this process. This is much appreciated.

- TBAC Questions/Concerns
 - There is a concern that the schedule may not allow for the proper integration of plan revisions for the OMB FY 2012 budget submission in September. (Note: DOI has faced this situation previously and managed to transition. In part, this will depend on the degree to which the current plan is changed. Strong internal coordination and schedule discipline will be needed).
 - Question on whether BIA has a strategic plan. (No, but I recall a TBAC resolution or statement of intent that a BIA plan be developed. I have not seen a BIE strategic plan, but do not recall if the TBAC resolution covered BIE. A discussion at a prior TBAC indicated that about a half-dozen BIA Regional –level strategic/operational plans have been developed.)
 - Question on what TBAC can do to facilitate/support the completion of the revision process. (Primarily, in your interactions with DOI senior leadership, to urge them to give priority to reviews and approval actions so as not to unnecessarily delays in the process – and to be responsive to requests for positions on recommendations and procedural comments referred to their organizations.)