

AU/ACSC/105/2000-04

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

GPRA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ACQUISITION
WORKFORCE

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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April 2000

20010924 089

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Preface

How ironic, that on one hand, the government is accused of waste, abuses, duplication and bureaucracy. Yet on the other hand, you hear the cries of federal agencies having to do more with fewer resources. How do we know if federal agencies are running effectively and efficiently? How are they measuring their worth and value to this nation? The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 is designed to bring this information to the public. These are questions that I will address in this paper. I chose this topic because of the Acquisition Career Management and Resource Division's, SAF/AQXD, curiosity on this subject and its potential for being applied to the Acquisition Professional Development Program and its processes. I always thought of performance measures as a way of doing business, however, I quickly learned that agencies struggle with the concept of performance management, development of performance metrics, linking performance metrics to key business processes, and with the collection and analysis of the data. Not surprisingly, I struggled with these issues, as well, while tying them into the Acquisition Professional Development Program. This paper is intended to serve as a guide. It will address the purpose of Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, some of the trials and tribulations since its enactment and its significance to the acquisition workforce. It has given me great pleasure to learn about this topic and given me the opportunity to find out more about the nature of our business.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Lt Col Lombardi, my research advisor, for his guidance and assistance. Additional appreciation is extended to Major Hubert, SAF/AQXA,

Chief of Acquisition Reform Deployment, for providing invaluable insight on this topic and to Mr. Matthew Benavides, SAF/AQXD, the Assistant to the Associate Director of Acquisition Career Management, for providing support on this intriguing topic.

Abstract

Whether you call it management by objective, balanced scorecard, or total quality management, the principles of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), makes good business sense. However, GPRA is not just a fly by night concept, it is the law; slowly taking hold and continuing to evolve. The purpose of GPRA is to ascertain whether an organization is operating efficiently and effectively. Even though the requirements of GPRA apply to federal agency heads, the Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) should embrace its intent. The purpose of this research paper is to discuss the concept of GPRA, develop and link goals and performance measures to key APDP processes and provide recommendations to ensure continuity of the program and overcome the challenges regarding GPRA requirements.

Many organizations are struggling with the principles of GPRA and are wrestling with the development, collection and analysis of performance measures. The Air Force Career Management and Resources Division, SAF/AQXD, is taking a step forward by expressing interest in the topic to enhance their business practices. SAF/AQXD is heading in the right direction. They recognize the importance of a strategic roadmap. At the forefront of their strategic planning is top management support to exploit strategic opportunities, like the concept of GPRA to monitor the professional development of the acquisition workforce. This research paper is intended to ensure the effective management of APDP by using the principles of GPRA as a framework.

SAF/AQXD leaders should:

- Continue to support the principles of GPRA,
- Use the suggested goals and performance measures as a starting point,
- Advocate recurring strategic team meetings to refine and analyze SAF/AQXD's strategic and performance plans, subsequent measures and results,
- Construct an avenue to solicit, reflect and act upon customer (students, supervisors, functional boards, consortium schools) feedback,
- Investigate the integrity of performance data, and
- Maintain the aggressive schedule to integrate data systems.

The data for this paper was compiled through research via the Air University Library, Internet sites, SAF/AQXA, the Acquisition Reform Office, the Air Force Acquisition Training Office and the Air Force Manpower and Innovation Agency. A limited number of interviews were conducted to receive background information, guidance, and to determine the extent of its use within acquisition.

Part 1

Introduction

The intent of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 is to make federal agencies accountable to the American people for their program performance and the results thereof. It requires them to set goals, measure their performance and report their accomplishments. Many organizations are struggling with the principles of GPRA and are wrestling with the development, collection and analysis of performance measures.

The acquisition workforce must be prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century. To face these challenges, they must ensure that the acquisition workforce is well trained, flexible and more effective than ever before. Agency heads for Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, etc., are federally mandated to comply with GPRA, however, these principles can be extended to all subordinate organizations. The Air Force Career Management and Resources Division, SAF/AQXD, is embracing the principles of GPRA to improve the primary business of the organization—effective management of APDP.

The material herein is intended as a guide. It addresses the intent of the law, some of the trials and tribulations since its enactment, and its significance to the acquisition community. To assist SAF/AQXD with the concept of GPRA, organizational goals and performance measure have been developed and are provided as a starting point. In addition, recommendations are

provided to ensure successful continuity of the program and to overcome the challenges regarding the requirements of GPRA.

Part 2

Background

The law simply requires that we chart a course for every endeavor that we take the people's money for, see how well we are progressing, tell the public how we are doing, stop the things that don't work, and never stop improving the things that we think are worth investing in.

—President Clinton upon signing GPRA

Definition of GPRA

Public Law 103-62, also known as the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), was passed to restore the confidence of the American people in the federal government. This Act was initiated to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal programs. It is a “performance-based budgeting” system that attempts to measure performance and link resources to results. Simplistically, the federal agencies are tasked to set goals, measure results, and assess their impacts.

Origin and its Purpose

Republican Senator William Roth introduced the bill in the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs in 1990. In the two years that followed, many hearings and modifications were made. Then came a lull in activity around the 1992 presidential election. Surprisingly, by the time the House version of the legislation was introduced in February of 1993, the bill sailed

through with overwhelming support. President William Clinton signed the legislation on 3 August 1993. Its purpose is¹:

- To improve the confidence of the people in the government by holding agencies accountable for achieving program results;
- To stimulate reform with a series of pilot projects that could be used as example for others;
- To help managers improve service delivery by requiring them to plan for meeting program objectives and providing them with information about program results;
- To improve congressional decision making by providing information on achieving statutory objectives and relative effectiveness of various programs.

The ultimate goal of this latest performance budgeting initiative is to improve budget and resource allocation decisions by linking resources to results. Another way of viewing this is to relate data on program performance to appropriation structures.

Requirements of GPRA

The requirements of GPRA are built around three key processes: **the strategic plan, annual performance plans and annual program performance reports.**

The GPRA requires the **strategic plan** to include²:

- A comprehensive mission statement covering major functions and operations of the agency.
- General, outcome related goals for each major function and operation of the agency.
- A description of how each of the goals will be achieved. Included in the description would be the operational processes, skills and technology, and the human capital, information and other resources required to meet the goals and objectives.
- Any external factors that may affect achievement of goals.

The GPRA requires the **annual performance plan** to include³:

- Objective, quantifiable, and measurable performance goals.
- A description of the operational processes, skills and technology and the human, capital, information, or other resources required to meet the performance goals.
- Performance indicators to measure success in meeting outputs, service levels, and outcomes for each program.
- A basis for comparing actual program results with the established performance goals.

The GPRA requires the **annual performance report** to include⁴:

- A review of the successes in achieving the performance goals.
- An explanation when a performance goal has not been met.
- A description of corrective actions, as required.

GPRA's delivery schedule of these products is outlined in this Four-Step Plan⁵:

1. Requires all federal agencies to submit a five-year "strategic plan" that contains general goals and objectives for all major functions and operations. The law requires agencies to update their strategic plans every three years. (Accomplished September 30, 1997)
2. Agencies develop an annual performance plan that expresses agency goals in a measurable form or alternatively, that includes descriptive statements of minimally acceptable and successful programs. (Submitted September 1997 for fiscal year 99 to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and has occurred every fiscal year thereafter)
3. Agencies deliver annual performance reports to the President and the Congress. Performance reports are agency report cards designed to measure the success of programs by comparing actual results with performance goals. (For the first time, agencies must report on their performance by March 31, 2000)
4. To crosswalk budgets and performance.

As simplistic as these steps may appear, in implementing the principles of GPRA, many challenges have been exposed since its inception, seven years ago. Organizations continue to struggle with the principles of GPRA. They lack support and guidance, wrestle with the development, collection and analysis of performance measures and are suspicious of its intent and impact to their programs.

Notes

¹ Beryl A. Radin, "The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA): Hydra-headed Monster or Flexible Management Tool?", *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 4 (July 1998): 307-316.

² Alice Maroni, "DoD implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)," *Armed Forces Comptroller* 41, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 23-26.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Francois Melese, "The Latest in Performance Budgeting: The Government Performance and Results Act," *Armed Forces Comptroller*, 44, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 19-22.

Part 3

Challenges In Implementing GPRA

There is a wide divergence of views about this management reform effort. It is a tangled set of expectations and experiences that reflect quite often-competing views about the process. The General Accounting Office (GAO) adamantly supports compliance with the GPRA and related laws. It is seen as a way to vigorously attack the problems of program duplication, waste and mismanagement within the federal government. However, the following concerns challenge agencies in implementing this initiative.

Agencies are slow to adopt performance based budgeting and are discouraged with this effort for many reasons. They lack support and guidance, wrestle with the development, collection and analysis of performance measures and are suspicious of its intent and impact to their programs.

Support and Guidance

“Overall agencies have complained that OMB does not do enough to support them, and in particular that it does not do enough to answer all their calls and questions. OMB’s response is that it supports GPRA, that it is doing what it can to advance it within existing resources and priorities, and that it would be better to grow performance-based management than to declare by directive.”¹ Congressional leaders advocate OMB taking on a stronger leadership role in helping agencies produce useful strategic and performance plans. However, guidance and direction are

minimal. Agencies continue to struggle in developing performance based management plans and measurements on their own.

Ironically, Congress could be the real problem. Congress' inattention, critical attitude and irresponsibility can stifle this initiative. They "must have the political courage to acknowledge their role in creating and failing to solve the problems for which they now excoriate agencies."² In August and November 1997, House Majority Leader Dick Armey graded federal agency strategic draft and final plans, respectively. The Department of Defense, along with several agencies, received an F on their strategic plans. As a result of these findings, in August 1998, Congressional decision-makers considered these strategic plans useless. GAO responded by saying legislators should shy away from grading the process and focus their attention on redundant programs and resolving political choices brought to light by the merits of the program. This program is still considered in its infancy. It continues to be a learning process for all. Congress, OMB, and other agencies should build on their experiences by working together on key performance issues, which will help make future strategic plans more useful.³ In March 2000, Congress will have the opportunity to act responsibly with the information agencies will provide in their performance plans. Based on agency performance assessment input, Congress at this point, can oversee, react and respond to the analysis provided by the agencies. Congress should be objective, provide guidance and alert agencies of areas that contain government duplication, weaknesses, strengths or practices that inhibit effective or efficient operations.

In addition, there is great concern and debate in government circles today regarding mid-manager involvement and training in the "performance" movement. "Christopher Wye, Director of the Center for Improving Government Performance at the National Academy of Public Administration, said in a Sept 6 (1999) commentary in Federal Times that most employees active

in the performance movement are motivated largely out of personal initiative and enthusiasm, not by agency design."⁴ On the other hand, no matter how promising an idea, other sources indicate few mid-managers will take up the lead without top management support. Some mid-managers state performance goal setting is the top manager's responsibility and top managers should seek their input, which is seldom done. In October 1999, Sen George Voinovich, R-Ohio, requested another survey from GAO to determine middle management involvement in performance based programs. GAO hopes the survey will indicate how seriously the Results Act is being taken in all tiers of the federal government.

Data Collection

"The greatest hurdle we face to getting good performance reports is the quality of data the government produces."⁵ There is great skepticism regarding the data received considering many agencies lack or have outdated systems that do not track output. A GAO audit of federal financial statements revealed that the government's ability to conduct its affairs is severely limited due to financial weaknesses, issues in fundamental record keeping, incomplete documentation, and weak internal controls.⁶ "GPRA not only requires reasoning out the *raison d'être* for existing programs and the desired results for new ones, it also means measuring outcomes. But measurement rests on good data, a commodity many say is sadly lacking in most agencies today."⁷ Additionally, agencies face challenges in evaluating program results and ensuring the validity and integrity of the data.⁸ As a result of issues regarding the validity and integrity of this data, Congress and OMB must be sensitive to and judicious with the analysis received.

Uncertainty

"The path to performance-based management is fraught with uncertainty about many crucial factors, including the extent of leadership support, the intended uses of the performance data, the long-term availability to support performance data systems and the validity and reliability of the data themselves."⁹ Also, management feels GPRA will either cut their program or reduce their funding allocation, especially on poorly performing or highly visible political programs. Because of these fears, the information being reported by the managers may not be a true indication of the health of the organization. To make this initiative a success, it will require support, receptive organizational cultures and incentives. Support must come from agency leadership influencing the cultural change and institutionalizing incentive programs to show the benefits of having an efficient and effective organization.

Notes

¹ Christopher Wye, "Results Act is Getting Results from Bottom Up," *Federal Times* 35, no. 31 (6 Sep 1999): 15.

² Anne Laurent, "The Results Act: Playing Chicken," *Government Executive* 30, no. 1, (January 1998): 51.

³ Brian Friel, "GAO Suggests Performance Plan Fixes," n.p.; on-line, Internet, January 2000, available from <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0998/090998b1.htm>

⁴ Editorial, "Focus on Performance Should Start at the Top," *Federal Times* 35, no. 41 (15 November 99): 30.

⁵ Fred Thompson, "Faulty Data Plagues Compliance with Results Act," *Federal Times* 35, no. 33, (20 September 1999): 21.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Anne Laurent, "Performance Anxiety," *Government Executive* 30, no. 3 (March 1998): 20-26.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ Kathryn Newcomer, "Results-Oriented Management Requires Culture Change," *Federal Times* 35, no. 6, (7 June 1999): 15.

Part 4

Why Apply GPRA to APDP

Who hangs on, wins.

—German Proverb

To begin the discussion of applying GPRA principles to the Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP), let's look closely at who SAF/AQXD is, what their responsibilities encompass, and then elaborate as to why they should apply these principles.

Who is SAF/AQXD?

The Career Management and Resources Division resides in Rosslyn VA with a satellite Air Force Acquisition Training Office at Randolph AFB TX servicing military and civilian members worldwide. Its primary responsibility is to ensure:

Air Force compliance with the requirements of Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act and promote professional development of the acquisition workforce. SAF/AQXD is responsible for acquisition workforce determination, career management policy and oversight, support of the Director of Acquisition Career Management and the Acquisition Professional Development Council, acquisition career management liaison with OSD and sister services, acquisition training, and acquisition functional representation to AF personnel.¹

The above resides under the auspices of the Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP).

What is APDP?

The Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) is an Air Force career development program for military and civilian personnel occupying acquisition positions. It was established by the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Acquisition) in response to the 1989 Defense Management Report (DMR) and subsequently the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1990. DoD 5000.52-M, "Defense Acquisition Education, Training and Career Development Program," Nov 95 established specific standards to be met by persons occupying acquisition positions. To ensure individuals meet these standards, the Air Force established the APDP through which individuals can be certified at Level I (Basic), Level II (Intermediate), and Level III (Advanced). The certification checklists provide a concise description of the education, experience, and training required to meet the standards for certification in acquisition career fields.²

What is DAWIA?

DAWIA" refers to the 1990 Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. Its purpose is to improve the effectiveness of the military and civilian acquisition workforce and thereby improve the acquisition process. The legislation is specific on the minimum qualification standards of those performing functions integral to the acquisition process, and defines critical acquisition positions.³

By recognizing these terms, it will be easier to understand the designing and development of the performance measurement system.

Why GPRA?

Changes have been inevitable and SAF/AQXD must continue to prepare and face the challenges of the 21st century. In preparation for the future, they must measure how well they are doing. Performance measures are a living document. They should be adjusted and revised as the need arises to meet the objectives. By monitoring performance measures, SAF/AQXD can have a profound effect not only in efficiency and effectiveness, but also in quality, service and cohesiveness. The results will guide them toward achieving the mission. The results rule. The toughest challenge is making clear the connection between programs and results. The program

needs to be designed to protect their investment, the acquisition workforce. Why protect this investment? The stakeholders demand it. Who are the stakeholders? Besides the American public, it is the Warfighter. In using the framework of GPRA, a well trained workforce to get a product or service "faster, better and cheaper" to the Warfighter is put in place.

By applying the principals of GPRA it should improve management decision making, promote better internal management of programs and increase accountability to everyone. Effective planning will enhance mission performance by defining priorities and identifying specific areas management should pay close attention to. There is a "need to recognize and measure what is important, what makes sense, things that display trends over time and things that tell us what needs to be done and done better."⁴ In addition, understanding GPRA may soon be critical to obtaining funding for programs within the Department of Defense. Let's look at some techniques that will help in designing an effective performance measurement system.

Notes

¹ Draft Acquisition Career Management Functional Activities, no date.

² "Air Force Acquisition Training Office Operating Procedures for Acquisition Training," October 1999, 1-22; on-line, Internet, January 2000 available from http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/acq_workf/training/policy.html

³ "The Acquisition Professional Development Guide," n.p.; on-line, Internet, January 2000, available from http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/acq_workf/apdp/apdp.html

⁴ "Performance Measures to Support Mission Essential Tasks," n.p.; on-line, Internet, January 2000, available from http://www.afmia.randolph.af.mil/afmia/mip/mipp/perf_mgt/documents/dir_of_perf_mngt_doc.htm

Part 5

Successful Performance Based Measurement Techniques

Many things difficult to design prove easy to performance.

—Samuel Johnson

In the past ten years, the acquisition environment has seen many technological and legislative changes that have impacted their processes and acquisition workforce. Even with vast changes and scarce resources, the acquisition workforce is expected to deliver timely best value products or services to the customer, while upholding public policy and trust. To achieve this effort, the public has entrusted SAF/AQXD under DAWIA to groom and “professionalize” the acquisition workforce. How do they define and shape the acquisition workforce of today and tomorrow, take steps to improve its effectiveness, and partner with policy makers to ensure that the APDP policy provides the framework to achieve this vision? One such tool is to embrace the principles of GPRA. Agency heads are federally mandated to comply with GPRA, however, the principles can be extended to all subordinate organizations. Outlined below are steps SAF/AQXD should consider when designing a performance based measurement system:

Designing a Performance Based Measurement System

The design principles for an effective performance measurement system are as follows¹:

1. To formulate a clear, coherent mission, strategy and objectives.
 - Objectives flow from strategy, providing the basis for development of specific measures and standards. Include secondary and intangible objectives.

- Revise or redefine periodically as the program evolves.
- 2. To develop an explicit measurement strategy.
 - Use the formal program mission, strategy and objectives as a foundation.
 - It is the blueprint for the design and development of the measurement system.
 - Measurement system includes the categories of measures called for (input, output, outcome, etc); data definitions, data collection, storage, access, and reporting formats; and specification of the technological environment.
 - Provide for the needs of all important users
- 3. To involve key users in the design and development phase.
 - To acquaint key decisionmakers and other interested parties with the power and limitations of the measurement system, their active participation in the design and development phase is well advised. Mere consultation is not sufficient. Although this is time-consuming and arduous process, it is necessary in order to lend credibility to the effort as well as to avoid future misunderstandings.
- 4. To rationalize the programmatic structure as a prelude to measurement.
 - Take account of the crucial relationship between program structure and meaningful measurement.
 - Review multi-program/multi-goal to disentangle diverse programs where no compelling argument can be offered for their continued aggregation.
 - Extensive reorganization of programs (and agencies) is not out of the question.
- 5. To develop multiple sets of measures for multiple users, as necessary.
- 6. To consider the customer(s) of programs and systems throughout the process.
 - Consider the needs, desires and satisfaction of customer at each stage of the organizational learning process: formulation of goals and objectives, development of measures, and evaluation for organizational learning and quality improvement.
 - It is especially important to relate customer-satisfaction measures to operational measures so the impact of changes in the efficiency and quality of operational results can be examined in the context of customer needs and satisfaction levels.
- 7. To provide each user with sufficient detail for a clear picture of performance.
- 8. To periodically review and revise the measurement system.
 - Engineer flexibility into the design of the performance measurement channel.
- 9. To take account of upstream, downstream, and lateral complexities.
- 10. To avoid excessive aggregation of information.

As mentioned earlier, development of performance management system will not come easily.

“Decision makers must understand, in some intimate sense, the nature of the systems which they seek to monitor, in all of their inherent complexity. The following concerns will be inherent in the design, development and operation of virtually any performance measurement system:

- Divergent perspectives (different audiences require different information),
- Unclear mission and objectives (a fact of governmental life),
- Multiple and contradictory organizational, program, and system goals,

- Monitoring vs. evaluation informational needs (Barnow 1992),
- Lack of consideration of the full range of outputs and outcomes (Osborne and Goebler, 1992), and
- Measuring customer satisfaction in a regulatory environment (Swiss, 1992)

Performance measurements, at best, can be a useful supplement to a closer, more in-depth understanding of programs and the systems in which they are embedded. But they cannot replace the expert judgments, which are borne of direct experience. Such expertise is the true basis for learning, adaptation, and improvement.”²

“Attributes of a good performance measures are meaningful (reinforce goals/requirements), understandable (logical, communicated), reliable, valid, show trends over time, economically collected, timely, and drives appropriate action-improvement.”³ The critical piece of this act is developing successful measures and analyzing their results. Therefore, “successful measures must be relevant (applicable, pertinent, and important), specific (defined, distinct, and explicit), measurable (assessable and can be calculated), agreed upon (settled and resolved) and communicated (announced and made known).”⁴ Receiving timely, reliable and standardized information will reveal where resource decisions have to be made. Applying proper analysis from accurate and reliable source data will ultimately reduce costs to the organization.

Developing measures should also begin by benchmarking against like organizations, but SAF/AQXD’s sister service counterparts have not begun the process of formally linking performance to results. Therefore, they are clearly paving the path.

Getting reliable performance data and motivating managers to use it will become more important each day. The concept of GPRA has taken hold within the Air Force. The Air Force has termed it “Performance Management.” For further direction, guidelines for explaining the processes and tasks associated with “operationalizing” quality have been published in AF Instruction 90-1102, Performance Management. This instruction explains how performance management principles will improve the Air Force organization and how mission essential tasks

are accomplished. Simplistically, the Air Force performance management steps are “plan, do and assess.” Naturally, these steps coincide with the principles of GPRA.

Department of Defense Measurement Systems

As we know, GPRA requires all federal agencies to engage in a cycle of *strategic planning*, *performance planning*, and *performance evaluation report*. In step with the requirements of the law, the Department of Defense submitted their *strategic plan*, the May 1997 Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), to Congress and OMB by September of 1997. Shortly thereafter, the Department adopted a mission statement and corporate level goals reflecting the QDR. The *performance plan* was submitted to Congress with the budget for FY99 (Appendix J of the Annual Defense Review). The *performance evaluation report* is to be provided to Congress by March 2000.

Appendix J of the Annual Defense Review is DoD’s GPRA *performance plan*. Within this appendix, parts of GOALS 3 and 6 refer to the acquisition workforce and other acquisition elements. Under GOAL 3, “prepare now for an uncertain future by pursuing a focused modernization effort that maintains U.S. qualitative superiority in key war-fighting capabilities,”⁵ the acquisition workforce is addressed in detail under Appendix F, Defense Acquisition Workforce Implementation Report. Appendix F displays the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) reporting requirements for all the components. Some of the other elements addressed under GOAL 6, “fundamentally reengineer the Department and achieve a 21st century infrastructure by reducing costs while maintaining required military capabilities across all DoD mission areas”⁶ are to:

- Create a world class learning organization by offering 40 or more hours annually of continuing education and training to the DoD acquisition-related work force and

- Eliminate layers of management through streamlined processes while reducing the DoD acquisition-related work force by 15 percent.

These issues fall under the umbrella of SAF/AQXD. SAF/AQXD mission statement, goals and measures are explored to ensure congruency with the requirements of the DoD performance plan (the Annual Defense Review) and to show the criticality of pursuing the development and employment of performance measures.

Notes

¹ Robert S. Kravchuk and Ronald W. Schack, "Designing Effective Performance-Measurement Systems Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993," *Public Administration Review* 56, no. 4 (July 1996): 348-358.

² *ibid*

³ "Performance Measures to Support Mission Essential Tasks", n.p.: on-line, Internet, January 2000, available from

http://www.afmia.randolph.af.mil/afmia/mip/mipp/perf_mgt/documents/PMtrng.ppt

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ "Appendix J, GPRA Performance Plan for FY1999", n.p.: on-line, Internet, 13 January 2000, available from http://www.dtic.mil/execsec/adr98/apdx_j.html

⁶ *ibid*

Part 6

Applying GPRA Agenda to APDP

If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.

—Laurence J Peter

The GPRA requires the strategic plan includes a comprehensive mission statement, outcome-related goals and an annual performance plan to ensure results meet the goals. SAF/AQ mission statement and goals will be reviewed and used as a reference to develop, describe and support the proposed goals and performance measures for SAF/AQXD.

SAF/AQ Mission Statement and Goals

SAF/AQ's mission statement is clear, concise and flexible:

Provide the leadership, direction, policy and resources to acquire superior systems, supplies, and services to accomplish the Air Force mission.

SAF/AQXD's mission statement supports AQ in the following manner

Develop and implement human resources policy and oversee the effective use, training and management of organic and support contractor personnel supporting the Air Force acquisition mission. Direct compliance with the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act.

SAF/AQXD focuses on the acquisition personnel needed to support the overall mission while satisfying the requirements of DAWIA. As we can see, the mission statements are

congruent, a critical step of GPRA. The next step is to develop goals and objectives that describe how we are going to accomplish the mission.

Excerpts of SAF/AQ's goals and objectives that are applicable to the APDP process are provided:

OUR PEOPLE¹:

Goal 1: Invest in our people for the future.

We support our people. We will continually and aggressively strive to improve communication, training programs, and activities, which will foster esprit de corps.

Objectives:

- Keep our people informed and solicit candid feedback.
- Commit to train, develop, and manage our people to maintain a professional team.
- Strengthen emphasis on career development.

The above goal advocates the professional development of acquisition personnel.

INTERNAL PROCESS

Goal 2: Optimize SAF/AQ Internal Process

We constantly work to improve our productivity. Increase productivity will allow us to more efficiently meet our customer's needs while at the same time lead the reengineering of the acquisition process to deliver weapon systems better, faster, and cheaper.

Objectives:

- Conduct reengineering of internal SAF/AQ processes
- Implement an integrated acquisition information system.

The above goal allows all of AQ to make significant strides and improvements to the way we do business and operate.

ACQUISITION SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS

Goal 3: Improve Acquisition System Effectiveness

As the policy maker for Air Force Acquisition, SAF/AQ directly impacts the methods used to acquire DOD weapon systems. We must strive to improve Air Force acquisition to deliver weapons better, faster, and cheaper.

Objectives:

- Aggressively streamline the acquisition process to improve responsiveness.
- Improve acquisition planning to ensure program success.
- Ensure maximum use and dissemination of best practices to improve process efficiency.
- Provide technology options to the warfighters to improve combat capability and reduce the cost of ownership.

The above goal focuses on ensuring we have the processes in place to shape and prepare the acquisition workforce (with knowledge, skills and ability) to respond to the warfighter needs.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Goal 4: Build and Improve External Relationships

To be credible and effective participant in the process to procure weapon systems that meet mission needs, SAF/AQ must build and maintain solid relationships with the MAJCOMs, OSD, Congress and industry. We must work diligently to provide innovative solutions to user challenges to meet mission needs as affordably and rapidly as possible.

Objectives:

- Improve overall working relationships with OSD and Congress to ensure credibility and improve our products.

The above goal emphasizes sharing information with customers to improve our business process.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Goal 5: Satisfy our Customer's Needs

Customer Satisfaction is the final test of our performance as a team. The only method to ensure that we are meeting our mission requirements is to ensure that we are satisfying our customer's requirements.

Objectives:

- Identify our customers and how we interact with them
- Improve product/service quality

The above goal stresses satisfying customer needs. The information received from customers is critical in developing measures of success.

At the time of this paper, the goals for SAF/AQXD were still a work in progress. They had not yet been released and were unavailable for this report. However, SAF/AQXD has a detailed strategic roadmap in place that describes their focus on the future, desired end state and action plans on how to get there. They are focusing on five major thrust areas: (1) the Acquisition Workforce 2002 and beyond, (2) Acquisition Resource Management, (3) DAWIA and the future, (4) Total Workforce Management and (5) Cultivating Legislative Understanding and Support. Even though SAF/AQXD is working on this step of the strategic planning process, the following goals and performance measures are proposed as a guide and a contribution based on the above indicators.

Proposed Goals

SAF/AQXD's charter is to enhance the quality of the acquisition workforce by attracting qualified personnel, improving the skills and knowledge of current personnel, and maintaining the very highest professional standards while keeping abreast with policy changes. Besides supporting AQ's goals, the proposed AQXD goals pay close attention to the organization's required activities. Unfortunately, the proposed goals will have to be redressed by the

organization to ensure they cover varied expectations. The proposed goals fall short of involving key users, an important design principle for an effective measurement system. Active participation of key decision makers/customers is encouraged to lend credibility to the process and ensure customer desires are met. With this in mind, the proposed goals are provided as a baseline.

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 1: Comply with and respond to DAWIA and any other legislative mandates, professional development initiatives, and changes. The reason this goal is important is because SAF/AQXD will continue to have responsibility of adhering to the provisions of DAWIA and any other changes which will impact or influence the makeup of the acquisition workforce. Therefore, we must be cognizant of our workforce structure and impending gaps. This goal affords SAF/AQXD the opportunity to improve and question the provisions of DAWIA and identify potential approaches to benefit the readiness of the acquisition workforce.

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 2: Train and sustain qualified members of the acquisition corps. This goal is important because SAF/AQXD must monitor the total acquisition workforce structure to determine that it meets the Air Force's operational and modernization plans of today and the future. Qualification and certification standards in accordance with DAWIA must be met. We must ensure our acquisition workforce is optimally prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 3: Improve the acquisition training cycle. The training life cycle process begins with the identification of the mandatory acquisition training requirements from the field to the posting of successful completion in the student's personnel record. Presently, the training cycle is complex, laborious and riddled with various management

systems. By monitoring the throughput, avenues to innovate and compress the training cycle process for faster, better, and cheaper results will be identified.

Proposal of SAF AQXD Goal 4: Bestow a quality Acquisition Professional Development Program to all our customers. This goal is important as well because a cohesive program will produce the optimal product, a synergistic acquisition workforce. A win-win situation will result when we listen closely to our customers: the public, Congress, OSD, the acquisition workforce, and the warfighter. SAF/AQXD must institutionalize surveys to receive feedback regarding the program and its processes. Are we satisfying the customer's needs, are we applying and employing the right career progressive decisions? Are we providing the most current, accurate and relevant mandatory acquisition training? Are we exploiting suggestions from our customers? We must reflect on the feedback from the surveys and take immediate appropriate action.

Proposed Performance Measures

As mentioned earlier, we must measure what is important to APDP. The proposed performance measures should be considered critical to SAF/AQXD's mission and their strategic roadmap. They are not all-inclusive or definitive, but a starting point in meeting the objectives of GPRA. A team (consisting of internal and external customers) should validate the proposed performance measures, develop any other measures and establish target levels applicable to the acquisition career development program. By consistently monitoring these measures, SAF/AQXD will know where they have been, where they are and where they want to be; the importance of assessing performance measures. Keep in mind that one of the keys to performance measures is not always quantification or numbers, but assessment and evaluation of

the information. The following proposed performance measures are associated with the proposed goals:

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 1: Comply with and respond to DAWIA and any other legislative mandates, professional development initiatives, and changes.

Proposal - Metric 1a: Required vs. Actual AQXD Staffing Levels

- By Civilian/Military/Other
- By Grade/Rank/Other
- By Series/AFSC
- By Program
- By Budget and Actual Costs

Purpose: To identify the staffing posture required for supporting the execution of APDP. It will also determine if the operating budget can maintain the manpower structure as required and as it exists.

Proposal - Metric 1b: Required vs. Actual Total Force Structure (Acquisition Positions)

- By Organic and Inorganic (Contractor or Other Support)
- By Civilian/Military/Other
- By Functional Area
- By Grade/Rank/other
- By Series/AFSC
- By MAJCOM/Base

Purpose: To identify the total acquisition workforce structure composition by the various definitions of the acquisition corps. This information is required to baseline the workforce by

mix and levels and to determine gaps between what is needed and what we have. This becomes crucial information for determining appropriate recruitment actions and for making end strength adjustments within the appropriate workforce stalls.

Proposal - Metric 1c: Number of Qualified Acquisition Personnel Occupying Non-Acquisition Positions (same as breakdown 1b)

- By name, location and last time occupied an acquisition position
- Certification level and number of years in acquisition

Purpose: Identify potential and existing resources in the total workforce inventory that do not presently occupy an acquisition position. Personnel occupying non-acquisition positions with acquisition credentials are a potential resource for recruitment purposes. These are viable sources that we could potentially tap for filling critical vacancies.

Proposal - Metric 1d: Status of acquisition career development initiatives to complement the workforce.

- Interchangeability of civilian and military positions
- Blending civilian and military professional career paths
- Acquisition Demonstration Project (Selective field testing of an alternative civilian personnel system, performance based, to streamline and provide a method of progression through the ranks. Employee compensation is based on contribution to the mission.)

Purpose: These programs are being introduced to permit flexibility and consistency in the personnel and professional development process. Close monitoring of the effects of the above programs can help managers overcome delays in processing personnel actions or ensuring the same career development opportunities to all acquisition personnel.

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 2: Train and sustain qualified members of the acquisition corps.

Proposal - Metric 2a: Certification Levels of the Acquisition

- Same breakdown as Metric 1b

Proposal - Metric 2b: Number of Certification Waivers Issued (breakdown like 1b).

- Reasons for Issuance

Proposal - Metric 2c: Number of acquisition personnel not certified within the statutory requirement of 18 months (breakdown like 1b).

- Due to Education
- Due to Training (identify courses lacking)
- Due to Experience (identify time lacking)

Proposal - Metric 2d: Dollars Expended on Education

- Type of education (college, continuous education, etc)
- Number of students trained by type of education
- Unfunded education requirements

Proposal - Metric 2e: Dollars Expended on Mandatory Acquisition Training

- Number and Cost of Out of cycle requests
- Number and Cost of TDY by type of course delivery mode (resident, on-site, satellite, web-based, etc) and number of students trained
- Cost per student by type of course delivery
- Unfunded training requirements

Purpose: All of the above measures will monitor the career progression of the acquisition workforce. It will identify whether certification levels have been met and education and training

opportunities have been exploited. In accordance with the law, acquisition personnel must be certified to the level of their position within 18 months of occupying the position. The individuals should meet education, training and experience requirements to obtain certification. The above indicators maintain the integrity and inventory of qualified and certified professionals and highlight deficiencies requiring corrective actions.

Proposal - Metric 2f: Track Continuous Education for all acquisition personnel (breakdown like 1b).

- Type of training (i.e. conference, lunch and learn, symposium, etc.)
- Number of individuals trained and cost expended by organization and SAF/AQXD
- Number and by name those not completing 80 points (classroom hours) in two years

Purpose: Presently, funding for continuous education is not available from Congress even though continuous education requirements have been imposed on the acquisition workforce to maintain acquisition proficiency. Tracking and monitoring of continuous education will identify the type of education received, identify those who are not in compliance with the minimum hours required and identify the costs being borne.

Proposal - SAF/AQXD Goal 3: Improve the acquisition training cycle

Proposal – Metric 3a: Training requirement vs. allocations vs. input vs. attendance (breakdown like 1b).

- By priority
- By course delivery mode

Proposal – Metric 3b: Attrition rate (breakdown like 1b)

- By reason

Proposal – Metric 3c: Cancellation rate (breakdown like 1b)

- By Course/Class/Location
- By Reason

Purpose: All of the above metrics will reflect the training requirements of our customers and highlight the actual training quotas received, applications processed and number of students attending and completing the courses. Service training seats are allocated based on previous year execution rates. The above metrics will baseline and identify mandatory training availability and execution and underscore administrative or programmatic changes, which validates or impacts the training requirement by customer.

Proposal of SAF AQXD Goal 4: Bestow a quality Acquisition Professional Development Program to all our customers.

Proposal – Metric 4a: Demographics of the Acquisition Workforce –Service Computation Dates, Aging, Retirement Eligible, and Accessions (breakdown like 1b)

Purpose: To anticipate and adequately plan for reshaping, “rightsizing”, and an aging workforce. This information is critical in posturing expertise in areas that will be impacted by attrition factors.

Proposal – Metric 4b: Solicit, track and address feedback surveys from our customers: student, supervisor, consortium school, field training managers, etc.

- Take action if suggestion or pattern is noted.

Purpose: To determine adequacy of the acquisition training and education structure and curriculum by receiving feedback from customers and providing input to schoolhouses, instructors and functional boards to make applicable changes to training material. The survey will serve, as a tool, to ensure the training is qualitatively useful.

Proposal – Metric 4c: Identify training and education cost savings alternatives or efforts.

- Status and Schedule of any systems integration or development
 - Modernization of Personnel Systems
 - Defense Acquisition University Operating Support System
- Modification of mandatory acquisition training schedule to support our requirements which results in significant cost savings or cost avoidance

Purpose: All of the above measures recognize opportunities to update or upgrade our processes to make them efficient or effective. If revisions are necessary, these changes should be brought immediately to the attention of appropriate parties (consortium schools, functional boards and legislative committees) for resolution.

Linking Performance Measures to Fiscal Accountability

“Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska warned agencies failing to develop acceptable strategic plans required by the Results Act may have their appropriations put on hold until they comply.”² Under the GPRA, agencies are to account for the money they receive and execute, demonstrate the importance of their program and provide purpose and contribution to bettering this country to the public. The agencies’ efforts should concentrate not only on tracking spending, but managing their finances. The APDP budget is approximately \$10M. Besides, receiving this direct appropriation, SAF/AQXD is responsible for managing another \$10M received from the Defense Acquisition University to cover TDY expenses incurred by students attending mandatory acquisition training courses at consortium schools. The proposed metrics should measure the dollars provided to sustain the operation and ensure the minimal or reasonable level of funding required to monitor whether the business activities are operating effectively and

efficiently. Developing solid baseline information and collecting useful and accurate data to measure performance at all levels of the organization will be the biggest challenge for SAF/AQXD.

Performance Data Systems

The acquisition career management program is comprised of a myriad of complex, multi-use knowledge information domains, which include legacy systems and new applications, hosted on various platforms. These systems are either dated, cannot communicate with other systems, or do not provide results oriented data. Overall, similar to other agencies, the management systems are inadequate and not wholly linked, henceforth, rarely being consistent or timely. The acquisition career management program comprises of the following systems:

Defense Civilian Personnel Data System, Military Personnel Data Systems, Acquisition Career Management System, Expert Level Personnel Review Tool, Virtual Blue Room, Defense Acquisition University Operating Support System, Army Training Requirements and Resources System, Air Force Materiel Command Education and Training Management System, and the Air Force Training Management System.

SAF/AQXD is making strides in performance based management by solving technology problems. They acknowledge and are confronting the lack of good performance data and related systems. They are aggressively pursuing these issues with serious effort. Currently, SAF/AQXD is committed to creating an Integrated Digital Environment for all Air Force acquisition and sustainment programs, which will support all AQ business activities and provide immediate access to needed information. While integrating data systems, SAF/AQXD should also take positive steps to improve the accuracy of the information residing in these systems. Because of the nature of the business, this will take time.

Notes

¹ "SAF/AQ, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Acquisition, Strategic Plan 1996," n.p.; online, Internet, January 2000, available from http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/acq_ref/strategic

² Anonymous, "Results Act: The Long Hot Summer," *Government Executive* 29, no. 8, (Aug 1997): 6.

Part 7

Summary

If we perform our assigned mission tasks with excellence and improve that performance in a measurable way, we are operationalizing quality.

—General Michael Ryan and F. Whitten Peters
AF Chief of Staff and Acting Secretary of the Air Force

Recommendations

Even as recently as July 13, 1999, at a Washington Conference called “Excellence in Government”, agency officials, government experts and congressional officials addressed concerns surrounding the move toward a performance-focused government. These concerns were¹:

- The OMB was not taking enough of a leadership role in offering guidance to agencies as they craft their performance plans
- Neither Congress nor OMB has issued criteria that will be used to judge agency performance reports
- The task of gathering and disseminating information required to compile the performance reports may overwhelm staff and information systems at many offices and agencies
- Some agencies may require unique measurement criteria as they assess their performance.
- Programs with high political value may need to be reassessed
- How the performance of one agency program will be judged when other government programs also are aimed at the same goal. An example is teen pregnancy addressed by both the Education Department and the Health and Human Services Department.

These concerns should not be a deterrent; the concept is sound. Top management leaders of SAF/AQXD should:

- Continue to support the principles of GPRA,
- Use the suggested goals and performance measures as a starting point,
- Advocate recurring strategic team meetings to refine and analyze SAF/AQXD's strategic and performance plans, subsequent measures and results,
- Construct an avenue to solicit, reflect and act upon customer (students, supervisors, functional boards, consortium schools) feedback,
- Investigate the integrity of performance data, and
- Maintain the aggressive schedule to integrate data systems.

Even though GPRA has been in existence since 1993, it is still considered to be in its infancy, slowly overcoming the challenges plaguing agencies. Movement to performance based management does not happen overnight. However, with time and perseverance, SAF/AQXD can master goal setting and performance monitoring and will reap the benefits of performance based management.

Conclusions

The acquisition workforce must be prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century. To face these challenges, we must ensure that our acquisition workforce is well trained, flexible and more effective than ever before. The basic concepts of the GPRA have been addressed so that we may gain knowledge of its potential. Understanding the results of our performance will ensure the protection of our most critical resource, the acquisition workforce. They are the ones to get the product or the service to the warfighter, faster, better and cheaper.

SAF/AQXD is clearly on their way to mastering goal setting and performance monitoring. The principles of GPRA can be incorporated to improve the primary business of the organization—effective management of APDP. SAF/AQXD has developed a strategic roadmap. At the forefront of their strategic planning is top-level management support and lower level enthusiasm to exploit strategic opportunities, like the concept of GPRA. They have even recognized and are taking strides in integrating their data collection systems. The information in this research paper serves as a guide in implementing the principles and the proposed goals and measures and recommendations serve as stepping stones in implementing the concept. SAF/AQXD has all the ingredients to make this effort a success, to protect its resources and be available to respond to all their customers, including the public.

Notes

¹ Steven Watkins, "Performance Based Government Sparks Concerns," *Federal Times* 35, no. 25 (26 July 1999): 3.

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