AGENCY LEADERS DISCUSS ADVANTAGES OF PART PROGRAM

Agency leaders discussed the strategic advantages of using the Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART) program to more effectively manage organizational and programmatic results. They conferred with each other about how their agencies have been impacted by the PART program at an Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation Leadership Forum meeting on March 8, 2005.

“Recent trends seem to be showing that governments at all levels are becoming results oriented. A landmark 10-year retrospective of the implementation of GPRA by the U.S. General Accountability Office notes that GPRA focuses on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction, and that it is intended to improve congressional decision making by providing more objective information on achieving goals and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of federal programs and spending. The question is: how do we move from the gathering of performance information to how do we use performance information to manage better?” said ISPPI Director Robert M. Tobias.

Robert J. Shea, Counselor to the Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, gave a presentation discussing the ways in which the PART program could be utilized by agencies.

Marta Brito Perez, Associate Director, Human Capital Leadership and Merit System Accountability, Office of Personnel Management, spoke about how the PART program is tied to strategic human capital management.
Introduction and Discussion by ISPPI Director Robert M. Tobias

“What are the strategic advantages to an agency of aggressively using the PART program to more effectively manage organizational and programmatic results?”

Introduction:
Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implement (ISPPI) Director Robert M. Tobias opened the meeting with a brief overview of the mission and goals of ISPPI, followed by a discussion by agency leaders on whether agencies have used low PART scores as justification for change.

Leadership Forum participants discussed the difficulties in using PART, which include:

- It is viewed as a headquarters activity
- It hasn’t reached field levels
- Outcomes are hard to define
- It is difficult to translate to field levels
- There is too much room for interpretation
- It hasn’t addressed the differences between pay-band and GS-scale

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What actions can be taken to use the PART program to create a higher performing organization?
The goal of every program is to get better every year. All programs achieve expected results and work toward continuous improvement by: defining success; setting clear plans and timelines; and addressing flaws and improving performance. The PART program can be used to identify strategies to improve performance by: investing in high pay-off or high priority activities; increasing accountability, efficiency, and productivity; and improving program design.

Program reassessments demonstrate that implementation of PART recommendations improve program performance. Trends identified in PART reassessments are:

- Agencies identified effective ways to drive results and implement lessons learned across their programs, especially when focused on similar results.
- Agencies have used PARTs to justify incremental increases to program budgets highlighting that the PART is not just a tool for decreasing funding.
- PART has caused agencies to think more systematically about how they measure and improve program performance.
- Agencies have improved efficiency measures and marginal costs metrics to better drive results.
- Agencies now have the information and tools to look across similar type programs to identify redundant programs and share best practices with other program managers.

There has been limited success in implementing funding and legislative recommendations. However, the PART program is still being used to achieve results and work towards continuous improvement. One action being taken to improve the PART program is to implement cross-cuts through the use of PART in: Block Grant Programs by improving performance of large, social service block grants across agencies; Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) by identifying best practices, especially in the proposal. Application, review and scoring process; and Credit Programs by sharing best practices information and improving program and financial management performance. Other actions include: continuing PART assessments; tracking PART recommendations; providing high level support for certain legislative/funding recommendations; and incorporating Results Commissions and a Sunset Commission.

Mr. Shea’s presentation can be found on the ISPPI web site, [www.american.edu/spa/isppi](http://www.american.edu/spa/isppi), at the Leadership Forum, February 8, 2005 prior meetings tab.
According to Ms. Perez, alignment with strategic goals—doing the right work—and managing performance—doing the right work right—leads to agency program performance results. Tools for aligning and managing include: labor/management relations, communication, diversity management, pay for performance, awards, and performance appraisal.

Ms. Perez presented several steps for building a results-oriented performance culture:
- Ensure agency leadership is committed and communicates that commitment.
- Ensure the agency’s strategic plan is shared with and/or is accessible to all agency employees.
- Ensure that employees have a direct line of sight between performance expectations and recognition systems and the agency mission.
- Create a culture of continuous communication that includes feedback, coaching, and mentoring.
- Train managers and supervisors in performance management and coaching.
- Create a “reward environment” beyond compensation and benefits to attract, retain, and motivate employees.
- Hold managers accountable for an effective performance management process.
- Hold managers and employees accountable for achieving results.
- Ensure the agency performance management program differentiates between high and low performance.
- Maintain a pay system that is performance-based, resulting in a distribution of pay raises and bonuses based upon individual contribution, organizational performance, and/or team performance.
- Ensure the agency is responsive to the needs of diverse groups, resulting in a positive work environment conducive to all employees achieving their potential without fear or abuse.
- Have managers, unions, and employees work together to accomplish the agency’s mission through effective communication and problem solving.

This will lead to: a government with talented and imaginative people; meaningful measurement of performance; awards and rewards for employees who surpass expectations; and a culture of achievement characterized by flexibility and accountability.

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