

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2006

Contact: Jennifer I. Curtin, MPA

Director of Public Affairs, AGA

703.562.0770

jcurtin@agacgfm.org

AGA RESEARCH STUDY DISCUSSES THE USEFULNESS OF PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS (PARs)

Alexandria, VA – One of the tenets of citizen-centric government is public accountability – providing information so that citizens can judge for themselves just how well their government is performing and managing resources is the subject of a cooperative study, released today by the Association of Government Accountants (AGA).

The study entitled, *PAR: The Report We Hate to Love*, is the sixth in a planned series of studies covering areas of interest to government financial management community. The project was broken into four parts: a survey of current writings on public reporting, a discussion forum, face-to-face interviews and an Internet survey. AGA set forth to determine the usefulness of Performance and Accountability Reports (PARs) for their intended audiences, and how that usefulness can be improved.

PARs evolved out of a series of cascading government management reforms, beginning in the early 1990s with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Act. Legislators saw the need to develop sound financial management practices, thus creating the framework for capturing, measuring and reporting performance information necessary to manage for results for state, local and federal governmental entities.

The project's goal was to gain the views of users or preparers of the PAR either through face-to-face interviews or through an online survey. Close to 100 people representing federal, state or local government agencies participated in this process. More than 90 percent of the survey respondents agreed that: different users have different information needs; information at the business level is more useful; highest priority is accountability to the taxpayers; and the report should focus on a few key metrics.

Recommendations for improvement include: focus on performance, not compliance; one size does not fit all; leverage the web and cascade information through links; keep documents succinct and simple; focus on a few metrics and include unit cost metrics; and reach out to a broader audience.

"Accountability and transparency should be the goal for all governmental entities," says Relmond P. Van Daniker, DBA, CPA, Executive Director, AGA. The PAR enables state, local and federal government to tell taxpayers how their money was spent during the past fiscal year. Understanding the business of government is vital."

This report was commissioned by AGA's Corporate Partner Advisory Group. It was sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers, AOC Solutions, Booz Allen Hamilton, IBM and CSC. Joseph A. Kull, CGFM, Director of Federal Financial Management Services, PricewaterhouseCoopers; Lawrence Dyckman, Booz Allen Hamilton; Frank Sullivan, CGFM, AOC Solutions; Amit Magdieli, IBM; Charles Carrigan, CGFM, CSC; and David Bell, CGFM, Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services led the research effort.

To view the report, visit: www.agacqfm.org/research/downloads/CPResearchNo6PAR.pdf.

The Association of Government Accountants is a 14,000-member professional Association devoted to meeting the continuing professional education needs of financial managers at all levels of government, the private sector and academia. For more information about the Corporate Partners Advisory Group (CPAG) Research Program, please contact Anna Miller, AGA Director of Research at 800.AGA.7211, ext. 313, email at amiller@agacqfm.org, or visit AGA's website at www.agacqfm.org.

###