



**CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE IN ACCOUNTABILITY  
 REPORTING (CEAR ©) PROGRAM  
 SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

Performance Accountability Reports for  
 Fiscal year ended September 30, 2004

**COMMENDABLE PRACTICES**

<b>MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Entity</b>
Agency head letter	Department of the Interior, Agency for International Development
Narrative description and pictorial display of the various levels in the performance management model	Department of Energy, Department of State, Agency for International Development, Highway Trust Fund
Identification of trends and challenges	Department of Education, Federal Aviation Administration
Identification of criteria for identifying material weakness in management controls	Department of State
Presentation of material weaknesses and corrective action plans	Department of Defense
Financial management system plans	Department of the Interior
Forward looking information	General Services Administration
Analysis of the financial statements	Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, General Services Administration, Social Security Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, United States Patent and Trademark Office
Summary of financial management plans	Department of State <sup>(2)</sup>
President's Management Agenda progress and status	Department of Education
Improper Payments Information Act detail	Department of Agriculture, <sup>(2)</sup> Department of State, <sup>(2)</sup> Federal Aviation Administration <sup>(1)</sup>
Timely payments/electronic payments	Department of State <sup>(2)</sup>
Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act	Department of State <sup>(2)</sup>
User fees	Social Security Administration <sup>(1)</sup>
Audit follow-up	Department of Agriculture

<b>PERFORMANCE SECTION INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Entity</b>
Description of how performance information is presented	Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of State, Social Security Administration
Presentation of all aspects of performance	Department of State, General Services Administration, Social Security Administration
Explanation of performance measures and analysis of results	Department of Defense
Use of symbols to provide a quick distinction between met and unmet targets	Federal Aviation Administration, Social Security Administration
Explanations of unmet targets and plans for meeting them	Department of State, Social Security Administration, United States Patent and Trademark Office
Summaries of evaluation findings and recommendations	Department of State
Presentation of Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) results	Department of Education, Department of State
<b>FINANCIAL SECTION INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Entity</b>
Chief Financial Officer letter	Department of Agriculture, Agency for International Development
Auditors' report	General Services Administration, Federal Aviation Administration
Footnotes	Federal Aviation Administration
Auditors' report on the status of the prior year's audit findings	Small Business Administration, Highway Trust Fund
Inspector General's summary of most serious management and performance challenges	General Services Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration
<b>ACCESSIBILITY AND READABILITY AND OTHER</b>	
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Entity</b>
Appearance of involvement of professional designers and writers	Department of Education, Department of State, Corporation for National and Community Service
Table of Contents—complete and succinct	Agency for International Development
Information for accessing the report	Department of Education, Corporation for National and Community Service, Environmental Protection Agency

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Entity</b>
Foreword or other section explaining the purpose and/or content of the report	Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, Department of State, Agency for International Development, Corporation for National and Community Service, General Services Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Government Accountability Office
Narrative and charts that explain and illustrate the performance management, measurement, and reporting process	Government Accountability Office
Placement of relevant human interest and other vignettes within the report to support the narrative and retain reader interest.	Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, Department of Labor, Environmental Protection Agency, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, General Services Administration, Federal Aviation Administration
Use of colored page headers or edges to identify sections of the report	Department of Energy, Department of State, Corporation for National and Community Service, Small Business Administration
Use of formatting, pictures, charts, and color to facilitate understanding and retain reader interest	Department of State, Corporation for National and Community Service, General Services Administration, Highway Trust Fund, United States Patent and Trademark Office
Request for comments	Department of Education, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Federal Aviation Administration
Acknowledgements, requests for comments	Agency for International Development, United States Patent and Trademark Office
Issuance of a summary report	Department of State, Federal Aviation Administration, General Services Administration, Small Business Administration, Government Accountability Office
Issuance of a CD-ROM containing the report	Department of Labor, Department of State, Agency for International Development, Small Business Administration, Government Accountability Office

- (1) Presented in Financial Section
- (2) Presented in an appendix

## EXAMPLES OF CREATIVITY

### **Department of Agriculture**

- Beginning the report with an identification of its purpose.
- Description of the audit follow-up process; definition of audit follow-up terms.
- Definitions of the criteria for identifying material deficiencies in management controls, material financial system non-conformances, and reporting a corrected or downgraded material deficiency.

### **Department of Defense**

- Including a Year in Review to provide a compelling and clear synopsis of accomplishments during the year.

### **Department of Education**

- Identification of a special phone number and Internet address for persons needing telecommunications devices; Making report available in alternate forms, e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, CD.
- Beginning the Management's Discussion and Analysis with a two-page spread, printed on different color stock, that presents brief, highly readable vignettes about several of the Department's program and management achievements.
- Building the Management's Discussion and Analysis around a theme.
- Adding colors to the organization chart to show the distribution of primary responsibilities over the various organizational units, e.g., executive leadership, external relations, programs, initiatives, budget/accountability, and operations.
- Using headers with titles on each page to help readers know where they are in the report, as well as locate other sections.
- Providing URLs for obtaining additional information about matters discussed in the report.

### **Department of Energy**

- Inclusion of a side-bar that lists the legislated reporting requirements that are met by the Department's Performance and Accountability Report.

## **Department of Labor**

- List of Internet addresses of the Department's components and other interesting and frequently used sites provided on inside back cover.

## **Department of State**

- Including a CD-ROM of the entire Performance and Accountability Report in an envelope attached to the Report's inside back cover.
- Providing a description of the improvements to the performance reporting process.
- Providing a table that depicts the manner in which performance is rated in regard to performance targets, budget results, timeliness, and impact on future operations.
- Using headers with titles on each page to help readers know where they are in the report, as well as locate other sections.
- Including a section that lists and provides the reasons for changed indicators or targets.
- Including a list of the Department's major publications including Internet addresses.

## **Agency for International Development**

- Using the About This Report section to list the relevant statutes and identify how each defines a requirement for the Performance and Accountability Report.
- Preceding the Management's Discussion and Analysis with three "Top Ten" major achievement lists: Afghanistan Reborn, USAID in Iraq, and Business Transformation.
- Beginning the Performance Section with a description of the evolution of USAID's strategic planning process.

## **Corporation for National and Community Service**

- Providing on the inside front cover addresses and phone numbers with which more information about the Corporation and its programs can be obtained

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

- Using footnotes in the Management's Discussion and Analysis to identify the source for reported performance results.
- Providing URLs for obtaining additional information about matters discussed in the report.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

- Introducing the Performance Section with a chart that depicts the agency's three strategic objectives (goals); and for each, the expected outcomes, the underlying elements, and explanations of the measures for each element.
- Including a list of changes to the performance measures.

### **General Services Administration**

- Description of the controls and procedures used to validate and verify each of the five types of data presented in the Performance Section.
- Providing a side bar box that describes the meaning of "progress" on the President's Management Agenda.

### **Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

- Definition of what constitutes a serious management challenge in the Inspector General's summary of the most serious management and performance challenges.

### **Office of Personnel Management**

- Presenting a sidebar explanation of actuarial gains and losses and how they can affect the Statement of Net Cost.
- Listing the criteria for determining a weakness in management control.
- Listing, in the Inspector General's summary of the most serious management and performance challenges, the criteria used to identify a challenge.

### **Peace Corps**

- Presenting as a side-bar, the budget, finance, and accounting seminars provided Peace Corps' financial management and other staff.

### **Small Business Administration**

- Providing a list of agency Internet addresses at which information about SBA programs can be obtained.
- Using color-codes next to the page numbers indicating the section of the report.
- Using color codes to signify the status of agency actions needed to address the Inspector General's summary of the most serious management and performance challenges.
- Including with the acronym definitions, a description of the program or organization and the Internet address for obtaining additional information.

### **Social Security Administration**

- Blending together the past year's accomplishments for each strategic objective, while simultaneously showing how the activities meet the challenges associated with each objective and relate to the President's Management Agenda initiatives and Government Accountability Office and Inspector General reports issued during the year.

### **Federal Aviation Administration**

- Enhancing the report's attractiveness by including a header on each page depicting the first powered flight and the recent first commercial flight into space.
- Providing the Internet addresses for related organizations.
- Providing the Internet address for accessing the electronic version of prior years' Performance and Accountability Reports.

### **United States Patent and Trademark Office**

- Providing a table that presented the target, actual results, and a statement specifying met or not met for the six most important performance measures on the report's inside front cover.
- The Inspector General stating in the introduction to the Summary of the Most Serious Management and Performance Challenges that detailed information about his work on the challenges is available on the Inspector General's Internet site, and providing the address for the site.

## **Government Accountability Office**

- Presenting a table of mission, goals, themes, objectives, and core values on inside front cover clearly depicting the interrelationships of these elements; and a subsequent table that depicts the relationships between strategic goals and strategic objectives.
- Presenting an organization chart that depicts how goals are distributed among organizational component
- Including the 2005 targets in tables summarizing performance.
- Presenting four-year moving averages for selected measures.

## **PRACTICES IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT**

### **Overall**

- Numerous reports suffer from difficult-to-read writing styles, e.g., redundancies, verbosity, stiltedness, incorrect syntaxes.
- Several reports include material that is not necessary for reporting performance and accountability, which adds unnecessarily to the report length.

### **Management Challenges**

- Including in the Management's Discussion and Analysis, or elsewhere, a lengthy management response to the most serious management and performance challenges summarized by the Inspector General in the Financial Section, even though that discussion duplicates the assessment of the agency's progress addressing the challenges that the Inspector General is required to include with his or her summary.

### **Chief Financial Officer Message**

- Ambiguity regarding whether the letter is addressing audit-related material weaknesses or FMFIA-related material weaknesses.

### **Auditors' Reports**

- Identification of the location of management's assertion on internal control when auditor provides an opinion on internal control.