

## SECTION 210—PREPARING AND SUBMITTING AN AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

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**Summary of Changes**

Describes new content and timeframes required in strategic plans according to the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (sections [210.3](#) and [210.4](#)).

Describes electronic drafts and final delivery of plans to OMB via the MAX community (sections [210.7](#) and [210.8](#)).

Explains that agencies may update their strategic plan this year using an addendum (section [210.11](#)).

### **210.1 What is an agency strategic plan?**

An agency's strategic plan defines its missions, long-term goals, and the approaches by which it will monitor its progress in addressing specific national problems, needs, or challenges related to its mission. It appraises the agency's capabilities, assesses the operating environment, and provides for evaluation of the agency's strategy. A strategic plan presents a commitment to perform by describing goals the agency aims to achieve, what actions the agency will take to realize those goals, and how the agency will deal with challenges and risks that may hinder achieving results. The strategic plan should explain why goals and strategies were chosen.

An agency's strategic plan should provide the context for decisions about annual performance goals, priorities and budget planning. Agencies need to translate the long-term goals in their strategic plans to annual goals and performance goals. Agencies should update performance goals in the Annual Performance Plans to help the agency achieve the long-term goals in its strategic plan.

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 requires agencies to prepare a strategic plan, make it available on the agency website, and notify the President and Congress of its availability.

### **210.2 What is the purpose of strategic planning?**

In addition to fulfilling the GPRA Modernization Act requirements, the strategic plan serves a number of important management functions related to achieving an agency's mission. An agency's strategic plan is a valuable tool for communicating to agency managers, employees, delivery partners, suppliers, Congress, and the public a vision for the future. Above all, an agency's strategic plan should be used to align resources and guide decision-making to accomplish priorities and improve outcomes. It should inform agency decision-making about the need for major new acquisitions, updated information technologies, hiring, skill development, and evaluations. Strategic plans can also help agencies invite ideas and stimulate innovation to advance agency goals. An agency formulates its strategic plan with inputs from the OMB, Congress, the public, and the agency's personnel, partners, and stakeholders and makes the plan easily accessible to all.

- **Leadership.** The strategic plan allows agency leadership to establish and communicate priorities and direction through a strategic and unified vision.
- **Planning.** The strategic plan is the foundation of an agency's planning system because it provides direction for programmatic and management functions to help execute the strategies needed to reach goals. Executives should use the strategic plan to provide guidance to agency [components](#) for planning their program implementation. The strategic plan should not be a binding document that prevents agencies from learning from experiences and adapting their plans to changing circumstances.
- **Measurement.** The strategic plan features strategic goals that state what the agency wants to accomplish in terms of outcomes or results. Each strategic goal should be supported by performance goals with progress monitored using targets, measures and timeframes. Agency strategic plans provide the framework for other plans and reports where agency performance goals and related analyses should be communicated and monitored.
- **Aligning organizational and individual results.** The activities of each employee should clearly link to the strategic plan. For example, the Senior Executive Service personnel system requires the Office of Personnel Management certify the agencies' performance appraisal systems, with OMB concurrence. Overall, employee performance drives organizational performance. Individual performance plans should have appraisal standards that sufficiently link to successful accomplishment of program performance goals included in the agency's Annual Performance Plans and reports. Similarly, the performance goals appearing in performance plans and reports should clearly link to successful accomplishment of the agency's strategic goals.

### **210.3 What are the parts of an agency strategic plan?**

There is no prescribed format for the agency strategic plan. However, the plan should present a structured format that contains the specific elements required by the GPRA Modernization Act and by OMB. The strategic plan must include:

- **Mission statement.** A brief, easy-to-understand narrative, usually no more than two or three sentences long, that defines the basic purpose of the agency and is consistent with the agency's core programs and activities expressed within the broad context of national problems, needs, or challenges. Strategic goals and supporting activities should further the agency's mission. In addition to the mission statement, many agencies also include a vision statement to express how the agency intends to accomplish its mission in broad terms, especially when an agency has a diverse set of related missions, or numerous sets of strategic goals.

- [Strategic goals](#). The GPRA Modernization Act requires general, outcome-oriented, long-term goals for the major functions and operations of the agency. Agencies use strategic goals to articulate clear statements of what the agency wants to achieve relevant to its national problems, needs, or challenges, and how it expects to achieve them.
- [Performance goals](#). The GPRA Modernization Act requires the strategic plan to describe the how the agency's performance goals support strategic goals. For each strategic goal included in the strategic plan, the agency should describe a limited number of performance goals. At agency discretion, the specific, measurable, performance goals may be grouped or organized under other general goals or objectives that support the agency's longer-term strategic goals in the strategic plan.
- [Priority Goals](#). Agencies with Priority Goals must incorporate their FY 2012-2013 Agency Priority Goals that are established concurrent with the FY 2013 Budget release. If applicable, the agency should briefly describe with whom and how it is working with other agencies to achieve its Agency Priority Goals.
- [Federal Priority Goals](#). Agencies that are asked to lead or contribute to Federal Priority Goals must integrate in to their strategic plan a description of how relevant agency goals contribute to the Federal Priority Goals. The agency will include the commitments of goal partners where applicable.
- External factors. The GPRA Modernization Act requires the identification of key factors external to the agency and beyond its control that could significantly affect the achievement of its goals. External factors are those that are not of the agency's own making. External factors may be economic, demographic, social, or environmental. A strategy's dependence on the actions of Congress, other federal agencies, states, local governments, or other non-federal entities are also external factors that need to be addressed in the agency strategy.
- Strategies. In discussing each strategic goal, the agency should describe the following in a level of detail appropriate for a long-term plan:
  - Program or management strategies the agency is planning to take to further the achievement of its goals and the processes, workforce needs, technology, and other information needed to carry out its mission and achieve its goals. The resources informed by the agency's resource management plans that estimate requirements and address the opportunities and challenges in making resources usable and effective.<sup>1</sup>
  - Evidence explaining why the agency thinks the strategies described are likely to work.
  - The roles and responsibilities of key agency programs, administrative activities, and external agency partners (e.g., other federal programs, grantees; state, local, tribal, and foreign governments; major long-term contractors, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> A strategic plan is not a budget request; the projected levels of goal achievement must be commensurate with anticipated resource levels. The strategic plan should not bind the Administration to new budget or legislative commitments.

- Links to Supporting Documents, where useful. (see details [200.10](#))
- Consultation with Congress. All agencies must include a description of how the strategic plan's goals incorporate views and suggestions obtained through the agency's congressional consultations. While agencies are required to consult with Congress at least once every two years on their strategic plans, a timing that reflects the regular changes in congressional membership, agencies are not required to update their strategic plan every two years. (See [210.12](#) for more on interim updates)
- Program Evaluations. The strategic plan should describe the program evaluations used in establishing or revising strategic goals with a schedule for future evaluations. The agency's schedule of future evaluations should go beyond simply listing evaluation topics for planned studies and instead should briefly describe the objectives of planned evaluations and why they are relevant to decision-making.

#### **210.4 What timeframes for goals are included in strategic plans?**

The strategic plan will cover a period of not less than four years forward from the fiscal year in which it is published, starting the first Monday in February of any year following the year in which the term of the President commences. Agencies may set strategic plan goals for longer periods of time, and are encouraged to provide context for understanding the goals and strategies in their plans.

For interim strategic plan updates published in February 2012, concurrent with the President's Budget, the update should cover a period through February 2014 at minimum, when the next strategic plan is due.

#### **210.5 Who should prepare the agency strategic plan?**

Agencies should engage their organizational components and delivery partners in the development of the strategic plan. The preparation of a strategic plan is an inherently governmental function, and the plan is to be drafted only by federal employees. However, when preparing a plan, agencies may be assisted by non-federal parties, such as consultants or contractors who are hired specifically to provide technical input on the design and assembly of the plan, and who are not solicited for their input on policy or budget issues. The transmittal should include an acknowledgment and brief description of the contribution by a non-federal entity in preparing the plan.

#### **210.6 What input should agencies solicit outside the Executive Branch in the development of strategic plans and when?**

When preparing a strategic plan, agencies must consult with the Congress and OMB, and should consider the views of other interested and potentially-affected parties, taking care to conduct external consultations at a [reasonable administrative burden](#). Consultation with external stakeholders could include hosting public meetings on the draft plan, posting the draft plan on the internet and inviting comment, after OMB has reviewed the draft. Agencies must consult with Congress at least every two years on their strategic plans and should briefly note how feedback was integrated either in their strategic plan updates or in Annual Performance Plans. (See also [210.3](#) on strategic plan content and [210.12](#) on interim updates)

#### **210.7 When should agencies submit drafts of strategic plans to OMB?**

Consistent with current policy and practice regarding interagency clearance of certain material being sent to the Congress, agencies should submit to OMB for review and clearance an advance copy of an updated strategic plan or addendum at least 45 days prior to the date for transmitting the plan to the Congress. This coming fiscal year, agencies should submit draft strategic plans or addendums for OMB review on December 22, 2011 by posting the draft document on MAX at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/C5VxIQ>. If key content related to the strategic plan draft, such as

defined Agency Priority Goals, is not ready for review by this date, due to the budget process, agencies may submit a draft with placeholders or may email OMB at [performance@omb.eop.gov](mailto:performance@omb.eop.gov) and the appropriate Resource Management Office contact to request an extension.

### **210.8 How should agencies publish strategic plans and deliver them to Congress?**

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 requires agencies to make the strategic plan available on the agency website and notify the President and Congress of its availability. Notification to Congress is transmitted electronically by the agency head. Transmittal letters are addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President and the President pro tempore of the Senate.

When delivering notification to Congress, agencies should also notify the OMB Director by posting a copy of the final document on MAX at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/C5VxIQ>. Related submission questions may be emailed to [performance@omb.eop.gov](mailto:performance@omb.eop.gov).

### **210.9 When must agencies next update their strategic plan according to the GPRA Modernization Act?**

Agencies are required to publish an updated strategic plan, which meets several requirements of the GPRA Modernization Act, concurrent with the publication of the FY 2013 Budget in February 2012. After the February 2012 update, agencies must issue a new strategic plan in February 2014.

### **210.10 What are the new requirements related to the revised agency strategic plan due in February 2012 as compared to strategic plan requirements that existed prior to the passage of GPRA Modernization Act?**

Section [210.3](#) should be used as a basis for updating agency strategic plans; however, the following three parts of strategic plans are new in statute and must be considered for the February 2012 publications or updates; 1) Federal Priority Goals, where applicable, 2) Agency Priority Goals, where applicable and 3) congressional consultation.

### **210.11 Our agency recently issued a strategic plan. How can our agency meet interim strategic plan requirements outlined in the GPRA Modernization Act in February 2012?**

Agencies that were planning to issue a strategic plan in 2011 may choose to wait to publish their new plan until February 2012. Depending on the extent to which the agency needs to integrate new content in its strategic plan in accordance with the GPRA Modernization Act, in February 2012 agencies may choose to publish either:

- A new strategic plan
- An addendum for their existing strategic plan with updates.

By July 29, 2011, agencies must notify OMB how the agency will update its strategic plan (i.e. new plan or addendum) in 2012. A table will be posted on MAX for agencies to notify OMB how they intend to update the agency strategic plan at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/BwVwIg>. Related questions should be emailed to [performance@omb.eop.gov](mailto:performance@omb.eop.gov)

### **210.12 Can strategic plans be updated in the interim, before the end of the four-year revision cycle?**

Agencies may make adjustments to their strategic plan in advance of the four-year revision cycle prescribed by GPRA Modernization Act. Interim adjustments do not alter the four-year revision cycle for strategic plans.

An agency need not consult with Congress or conduct outreach to potentially interested or affected parties when preparing interim adjustments, unless such adjustments reflect significant changes in the environment in which the agency is operating. Significant changes to an agency's strategic plan should be made using a more extensive update process with review by OMB. Consultation requirements apply in these instances.

**210.13 How should interim updates be communicated or published?**

Interim adjustments to the strategic plan, such as new Agency Priority Goals, generally do not require a new publication of the full strategic plan. For example, an agency may append an interim adjustment (e.g., newly defined Priority Goals) to its budget submission to OMB as a separate, easily found section that presents the needed adjustments to the strategic plan if any. Such interim adjustments should be communicated in the Annual Performance Plan that is sent to OMB in September and to Congress in February and should be made easily accessible to the public. Interim adjustments to the strategic plan should be made available on the agency website with the most current strategic plan so that readers can understand the most current agency plans (e.g., addendum).