

SECTION 250 – AGENCY PRIORITY GOALS**Table of Contents**

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Summary of Changes

Adds guidance requiring a clear assessment of goal achievement to be included in the final quarterly progress update and Implementation Action Plan reporting for any two-year APG cycle. Clarifies guidance on quarterly progress updates and reporting in a Presidential transition year.

250.1 To which agencies does this section apply?

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 requires those Federal agencies covered by the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act of 1990 to submit Agency Priority Goal (APG) information to OMB and to review

progress on the APGs at least on a quarterly basis. The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 provided the OMB Director discretion to determine which agencies need or do not need to set Priority Goals.

While non-CFO Act agencies and agency components are not required to set Agency Priority Goals, OMB strongly encourages all agencies to follow the practice of prioritizing the goals they have in their strategic and annual plans and to adopt the measurement and management practices that are established for the Priority Goals. These practices include organization leaders and other managers frequently reviewing progress on specific priorities to figure out how to improve performance and resolve problems.

250.2 What is an Agency Priority Goal?

An Agency Priority Goal (APG) supports improvements in near-term outcomes, customer service, or efficiencies, and advances progress toward longer-term, outcome-focused strategic goals and objectives in the agency's Strategic Plan. It is a near-term result or achievement that leadership wants to accomplish within approximately 24 months that relies predominantly on agency execution to be accomplished, not new legislation or additional funding. Agency Priority Goals reflect the top implementation-focused, performance improvement priorities of agency leadership and the Administration, and therefore do not reflect the full scope of the agency mission.

The need to identify Agency Priority Goals stimulates conversations and requires decisions about agency priorities, trade-offs, measurement, evidence, strategies, timing, and those responsible for leading implementation efforts. At least quarterly reviews of progress on Agency Priority Goals led by agency leaders are intended to keep all levels of the organization focused on the goals and ensure that sufficient time, resources, and attention are allotted to addressing specific problems or opportunities related to the goal.

The identification of a limited number of Agency Priority Goals does not mean that other agency goals are unimportant. Agencies may have important goals in their Strategic Plans or performance plans as well as legislative and policy priorities. They may also have other priorities that do not lend themselves well to specific, measurable, near-term targets. Agencies should consider all agency goals and activities on a spectrum of priority levels and allocate resources and management attention accordingly.

250.3 What primary criteria must agencies use in their setting Agency Priority Goals?

Agency Priority Goals must:

1. Advance priorities for agency leadership and the Administration;
2. Rely predominantly on strong agency execution to be accomplished, not new legislation or additional funding;
 - Align with the resource levels proposed in the President's Budget (or as appropriated by the Congress)
3. Support improvements in near-term outcomes, customer service, or efficiencies, and advance progress toward longer-term outcome-focused goals in the agency's Strategic Plan;
 - The submission to OMB demonstrates how the Agency Priority Goal supports a strategic objective included in the agency Strategic Plan

- The goal statement clearly identifies the problem or opportunity the agency is trying to address and is framed in a way that can be easily understood by the public
4. Be able to discern if the goal has been achieved by the end of the 24-month period;
 - The Agency Priority Goal has indicators and quarterly milestones to track progress
 - The goal statement has a clear completion date, target, and indicator(s) (which can be measured or marked by a milestone to gauge progress)
 5. Be ambitious yet achievable within the 24-month period.

OMB encourages agencies to develop clear and concise goal statements that will drive and easily communicate performance improvement throughout the agency and to external audiences. However, if an agency strongly believes that multiple targets in the goal statement are integral to achieving the goal or an alternative form performance goal is warranted, the agency should discuss with OMB.

250.4 What additional criteria should agencies consider when developing Agency Priority Goals?

Agencies should consider several additional criteria when developing Agency Priority Goals:

- Objectives set forth in the President’s State of the Union Address, Executive Orders, or management priorities or initiatives identified by the Administration in memoranda;
- The views and priorities of the Congress and other stakeholders;
- Whether quarterly reviews are likely to speed progress on the goal. For example, while in some instances only annual data may be available, the use of quarterly milestones may be appropriate for the established APG;
- Areas where cross-component/Bureau or cross-agency coordination is needed to improve outcomes;
- Potential to improve understanding of the agency’s impact on people or communities;
- Potential to improve efficiencies by:
 - Maintaining a level of performance at a lower cost;
 - Improving performance levels at a lower cost;
 - Improving performance levels at the same cost;
 - Improving performance levels to a greater degree than costs are increased; and
 - Potential to reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication.

Generally, goals should take into account the available evidence, including any available evaluation results, and whether the goals and indicators have been validated through research. This should be well correlated with ultimate outcomes, implications of available research on the appropriateness of the measure, and

whether the available research indicates that the use of the measure may encourage negative unintended consequences.

250.5 Can multiple agencies work together to set joint Agency Priority Goals?

Yes. Advancing outcomes in certain programmatic policy areas or priorities may be strengthened through shared strategy development and implementation that require collaboration and coordination across multiple agencies. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collaborated with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on initiatives to reduce veterans homelessness while the Department of State (Dos) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have used a joint APG to lead efforts to control the HIV epidemic in select countries while also leveraging the expertise of other government agencies contributing to this work including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Labor (DoL), the Department of the Treasury, and the Peace Corps. Agencies are encouraged to consider setting joint APGs in such areas. When setting joint APGs, agencies should also establish regular quarterly joint performance reviews to help align the identification and resolution of barriers across program silos.

250.6 Do all Agency Priority Goals have to address outcomes?

Agency Priority Goals should support improved outcomes which can include the quality of agency interactions with the public, improvements in the effectiveness or efficiency of agency operations or the achievement of the agency’s long-term goals described in its Strategic Plan. When output goals are used, the agency must have appropriately robust evidence demonstrating a link between the output and the outcome goal or well-developed logic showing how progress on the output targets is likely to influence the outcomes, with a plan to confirm the logic over the longer term.

250.7 For what purpose will OMB review selection of the Agency Priority Goals?

OMB will review proposed Agency Priority Goals by the criteria outlined above, as well as for submission completeness, quality, and the ambitiousness of the target. Ultimately, Agency Priority Goals should reflect the priorities of the agency’s senior leaders and the Administration, informed by the views of the Congress and other stakeholders.

250.8 How many Agency Priority Goals should agencies have?

Agencies should identify between 2 and 8 Agency Priority Goals. When determining the number of goals, each agency should consider:

- Agency mission, size and scope; and
- Input, as appropriate, from congressional authorizers and appropriators, OMB, White House policy councils, program and management leadership, delivery partners, the public, and other key stakeholders.

250.9 What time period do Agency Priority Goals span?

The Agency Priority Goals are two-year goals, although they can contribute to longer-term goals. Agencies have the flexibility to describe the longer-term goals in the APG “Overview.” Indicators used to track progress against the goals should cover the full fiscal year to the extent possible, and quarterly indicators

and/or milestones will follow the fiscal year quarters. Agencies may choose monthly indicators and milestones, if preferred.

250.10 What is the relationship of Agency Priority Goals to the agency Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report?

Agency Priority Goals are a subset of an agency’s performance goals and should be those that represent the highest implementation priorities of the agency leader and the Administration and are not dependent on new legislation or new funding to accomplish within a 24-month period. In most cases, Agency Priority Goals will directly contribute to the advancement of at least one strategic objective.

Agency Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans should reflect agency priorities among activities planned, including incorporation of the Agency Priority Goals. Agencies should discuss and provide a summary of progress made in the Annual Performance Report. See section [210](#).

250.11 What happens to the old Agency Priority Goals after the two-year performance period has ended and a new set of Agency Priority Goals is established?

The Agency Priority Goals of previous cycles (e.g., FYs 2016-2017, FYs 2018-2019) are archived and remain publicly available on Performance.gov. Agencies may want to continue to track progress on ‘retired’ Agency Priority Goals and related indicators as part of their Annual Performance Report as, for example, a performance goal and where aligned with the current Administration policy. A discussion of the final results of progress of APGs should be included in the applicable Annual Performance Report.

In some cases, agencies may choose to set a new target for an Agency Priority Goal after an initial two-year performance cycle has been completed. When setting new Agency Priority Goals, agencies may opt to reset, reframe, or maintain an existing goal if needed.

250.12 How does the final quarterly update of a two-year Agency Priority Goal cycle differ from other quarterly updates during the two-year performance period?

Agencies will follow the usual quarterly updating process for the final quarterly update of any APG implementation and reporting cycle (e.g., FY 2019, Quarter 4 of the FYs 2018-2019 cycle) while also being required to include a clear statement in the quarterly update and Implementation Action Plan that definitively states whether the goal was achieved relative to the goal’s impact and achievement statements. This summary of performance statement will help the public, delivery partners, and other stakeholders understand performance achievements in accordance with the goal target(s).

250.13 How does a Presidential transition year affect quarterly progress reviews and reporting of Agency Priority Goals?

The GPRA Modernization Act requires agencies to report quarterly updates of progress made towards achieving Agency Priority Goals to a centralized website: Performance.gov. These APGs are intended to focus efforts toward achieving the priorities of the Administration leadership under which they were established. Consistent with this intention, in the event that a Presidential election leads to a change in Administration, reporting on the APGs established by a different Administration to Performance.gov is discontinued in a transition year (e.g., 2021) for the remainder of that APG cycle’s performance period (e.g., FYs 2020-2021 APG cycle). Agencies and teams working on implementation efforts of a previous Administration’s APGs should shift the focus of their efforts on furthering the work and activities of goal strategies where they are aligned with the policies and priorities of the current Administration, and report the results of progress as part of any subsequent performance goals or programmatic performance indicators

as applicable in the agency's next Annual Performance Report covering the APG performance period (e.g. FY 2021 APR). Agencies should consult with their appropriate OMB Resource Management Office in determining whether an APG would be aligned with the policy priorities of the current Administration. Additionally, agencies have flexibility in structuring continued quarterly, data-driven performance reviews where applicable. Such reviews should continue where leadership can utilize the reviews as a mechanism for focusing on the underlying program or programmatic activities contributing to the agency's goals and priorities, diagnosing problems, and finding opportunities for performance and operational improvements.

250.14 When must agencies next establish or update their Agency Priority Goals, and what is the relationship between APGs and the FY 2023 President's Budget?

Agencies will next establish or update their Agency Priority Goals (APGs) concurrent with the FY 2023 President's Budget, and cover FYs 2022-2023. The process for determining, reviewing, and executing Agency Priority Goals complements the budget process. For example, the FYs 2020-2021 Agency Priority Goal development were linked to the FY 2021 budget submission process, and agencies were asked to align targets with the resource levels proposed in the FY 2021 President's Budget. The FYs 2022-2023 Agency Priority Goal development should be linked to the FY 2023 budget submission and accompanying agency strategic planning process. Agencies will be required to align FYs 2022-2023 APG targets with the resource levels proposed in the FY 2023 President's Budget.

If the Congress enacts a resource level that differs significantly from the President's Budget, agencies may elect to realign targets with enacted levels. To ensure ongoing alignment with Administration budget policy, some targets may need to be revised during the 2023 budget process, following annual appropriations, or after the enactment of significant authorizations.

However, agencies should choose Priority Goals that rely predominantly on implementation and do not require new legislative authority or significant additional funding. This does not preclude the agency from selecting a Priority Goal in an area for which the agency is also requesting additional funding; however the success of the goal should not depend on new funding. Agencies can pursue goals that require new legislation or funding, but those goals should be reflected in the strategic and Annual Performance Plans and such requests should be made through normal legislative and budget channels. While the FYs 2022-2023 Agency Priority Goal targets will be reviewed as part of the FY 2023 budget process, programs supporting Priority Goals are not specifically protected during the FY 2023 budget deliberations.

250.15 What Agency Priority Goal information will be made public?

Information on Priority Goals are published on Performance.gov and must also be included in the agency's Annual Performance Plan and Report, to include a summary discussion of progress made on priority goals per the content table in section [210](#). Progress updates and next steps will continue to be updated each quarter on Performance.gov. See section [210](#) for additional information and guidance on the reporting of APG information in the agency's Annual Performance Plan and Report.

Additionally, to ensure consistency of reporting and standardize information elements that must be address in APG Implementation Action Plans, a reporting template provided by OMB is utilized for APG reporting to Performance.gov. APG Implementation Action Plan reporting templates are available for agency and APG implementation team use on "Submission Portal > APG pages" on [MAX Community](#).

250.16 How should agencies construct APG Goal Statements, and are they required to include specific quantitative targets within the Agency Priority Goal statement?

Successful APGs address a problem, have a set completion date, a target, and an indicator. The format of APG goal statements will generally include two sentences, and written in a narrative form:

- 1) an impact statement that describes the broader outcome or problem/opportunity being addressed by the goal; and
- 2) an achievement statement that clearly reflects what the agency wants to achieve. The achievement statement will start with "By September 30..." followed by a quantitative target.

A quantitative target within a goal statement (e.g., how much of what by when, possibly narrowing by indicating where and/or for whom) is strongly encouraged, as it helps the organization focus on specific actions needed to achieve the goal. However, alternative form or qualitative goal statements may be appropriate in certain cases. Such alternative form goal statements may be supported by milestones that make it possible to assess if progress is being made or, in other circumstances, progress across a suite of indicators. Agencies are encouraged to include baseline data in the goal statement (e.g., reduce by 10 percent from a previous year's level of baseline), although goals for which data collection will be initiated but for which the data are not yet available are acceptable, provided dates for initiating or continuing data collection are set as milestones.

An example of an effective APG goal statement that follows this framework is:

*Support the global effort to end preventable child and maternal deaths (**Impact Statement**). By September 30, 2015, U.S. assistance to end preventable child and maternal deaths will contribute to reductions in under-five mortality in 24 maternal and child health U.S. Government-priority countries by four deaths per 1,000 live births as compared to a 2013 baseline (**Achievement Statement**).*

250.17 Do all Agency Priority Goals (APGs) have to relate to a Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goal?

No. In order for the Federal Government to make progress towards its Cross-Agency Priority Goals, some agencies will have goals that contribute to a CAP Goal, but not all Agency Priority Goals will directly or indirectly contribute to a CAP Goal.

250.18 What is the timeline for agencies to begin developing the next cycle of Agency Priority Goals covering FYs 2022-2023?

OMB, agencies, the Performance Improvement Council and relevant policy councils will next establish Agency Priority Goals covering FYs 2022-2023 with release of the FY 2023 President's Budget in February 2022.

Date	Action
June 4, 2021 (concurrent w/ 2021 Strategic Review submission)	Agencies submit to OMB for review draft impact statements for FYs 2022-2023 APGs (see 250.13).

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Date	Action
September 13, 2021 (concurrent with Budget submission)	-Agencies submit to OMB draft impact and achievement statements for FYs 2022-2023 APGs (see 250.13).
November, 2021	OMB provides feedback to agencies on finalizing FYs 2022-2023 APG goal statements as part of the FY 2023 budget process.
January 14, 2022	-Final draft FYs 2022-2023 goal statements begin final OMB clearance.
February 7, 2022 (concurrent with Budget publication)	-FYs 2022-2023 goal statements are published on Performance.gov.
February 18, 2022	Agencies submit full initial draft FY 2022 Q1 Quarterly Performance Update (aligned to FY 2023 APP) for FYs 2022-2023 APGs for OMB review.
March 18, 2022	Agencies submit final draft FY 2022 Q1 Quarterly Performance Update for FYs 2022-2023 APGs for OMB review.
April 7, 2022	Publish FY 2022 Q1 Quarterly Performance Update for FYs 2022-2023 APGs and CAP Goals.

250.19 How much external stakeholder engagement is expected in Agency Priority Goals development?

Agencies are encouraged to consult with the Congress, OMB and both Federal and non-Federal stakeholders early in the process, beginning in summer 2021, and discuss possible goal areas before goals are finalized. Agencies should consider stakeholder perspectives when formulating their goals. If stakeholder engagement is a significant barrier, this should be discussed with OMB. Agencies should keep in mind the importance of engaging stakeholders who will be critical to the success of agency efforts, such as bureaus, employees, and delivery partners.

250.20 How should agencies engage Congress in the Agency Priority Goals development process?

Agencies should work with their legislative affairs offices to determine the best ways to consult with the Congress on their Priority Goal areas, in advance of defining Agency Priority Goals with OMB. Agencies should consult with the Congress, obtaining both majority and minority views from the appropriate authorizing, appropriations, and oversight committees, on Priority Goal issue areas, generally prior to submitting action plans, but should consult with the OMB examiner while planning for the timing of congressional outreach. Agencies may find it easiest to start discussions about the next set of Agency Priority Goals in the context of providing the Congress an update of progress on current APGs or other agency performance planning efforts for developing new or revised management priorities.

250.21 Can Agency Priority Goals be changed after they have been approved and published? If so, by what criteria and process?

In general, after they have been approved and published Agency Priority Goals should only be changed in exceptional circumstances. The possibility of missing a target is not a justification for a goal change. Possible justifications for a change include:

- The agency wants to make the goal more ambitious;

- The original goal included an error;
- Intervening events have had a significant impact on the agency’s ability to accomplish the goal; or
- Enacted appropriations significantly changed the amount of funding available from levels projected during the goal setting process.

Proposed changes to APGs that affect the goal statement or goal area must be submitted in writing via email to performance@omb.eop.gov from the agency goal leader with the approval of the agency’s Chief Operating Officer and Performance Improvement Officer. The goal change requested will be directed to the OMB’s Deputy Director for Management, the OMB Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management and the relevant OMB Program Associate Director with copies provided to the relevant OMB Deputy Associate Director(s) and Branch Chief(s). The letter or written correspondence should explain why the goal change is needed, what has changed since the goal was published concurrent with the President’s Budget, why it is necessary to make the change and how the change will be explained to the public. Agencies will also have to write a short summary of the reasoning and justification underpinning the goal change, to be posted on [Performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov).

