







The PIC's Goal Playbook



WHY

In today's world, solving big hairy problems requires flexible, cross-functional solutions. The siloed organizational structure of the Federal Government can impede our ability to meet these problems head on. The good news is that we are increasingly working across structures to identify long-standing problems, set clear goals, and implement solutions.


WHAT

Sports teams use playbooks as a set of strategies to inform how to respond to the situation on the field. This set of plays is designed to help individuals and teams think through how to  and  a goal; develop a plan for the way forward; and achieve the goal through execution and continuous refinement of the  tracking progress, and continuous  improvement. While inspired by the Cross Agency Priority (CAP) Goal and Agency Priority Goal (APG) processes which identify ambitious, time-limited goals, we hope this playbook will be a useful resource when applied to any new goal or initiative.

WHO

 You are an APG or CAP Goal team member, these plays will help you build a goal Action Plan and think  through how to implement strategies and achieve your goal. The playbook complements, but does not replace, OMB-issued guidance. If you are a member of the performance management community, you can use this playbook to facilitate the goal setting, defining, planning, and implementation processes with the teams who will be responsible for the goal. If you are neither of the above but want to solve a complex problem by setting a goal and working methodically to achieve it, we hope you'll find useful elements in here.

HOW

While the plays are broken into three phases - Set  Define, Plan, and Achieve - we see all of these activities as interrelated and interdependent. It's critical to loop back and forth throughout the phases as you learn more and the environment you're working in inevitably changes. An alternative, more holistic view of the plays may look something like this:

Cross-cutting Goal Roadmap



The Performance Improvement Council (PIC) staff can help you at any point in your goal journey, and if we can't help you ourselves, we can connect you to excellent resources across government. To that end, you'll see that each play has a resource section. While external resources (not developed by the PIC staff) are not formally endorsed by the PIC staff and definitions may not match our own perfectly, we find them useful. If there is a resource that you think others would find useful, let us know at picstaff@gsa.gov.



The P3 Plays

1. Make Specific Commitments
2. Determine a Path Forward
3. Assess Success
4. Capture Valid Information
5. Generate Insights
6. Understand what to Track
7. Manage and Deliver Results
8. Share Information

9. Drive Needed Changes

10. Power Play: Enable and Invest in Culture

See the Rules

Phase 1: Set and Define

Making specific commitments to a limited number of actions and results allows organizations and teams to focus efforts and resources for maximum impact. If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.



Play: Set the Goal

While priorities may fluctuate and shift over time, identifying desired outcomes and setting specific goals around those outcomes will give programs a clear, steady purpose. Developing and adhering to goal selection criteria sets organizations and teams up for success by ensuring goals will be relevant over the lifecycle of the goal.

Key Questions:

- What criteria should be used to select a goal? Which criteria matter more than others? Who sets the criteria and prioritization method?
- What is the goal area(s) that meets your criteria and rises to the top in terms of priority?
- Does the goal clearly address a critical problem and/or opportunity?
- Would this goal, and the contributing affiliated programs, benefit from elevated attention from leadership, regular monitoring and discussion, and possible public reporting?
- Does the potential implementing program(s) have sufficient authority, resources, and levers to move the needle for the proposed goal?
- Is the goal reflected in the priorities and incentive structures for the implementing agency, teams, and individuals? Is there buy-in throughout the delivery chain? If not, is there potential for this?
- Who will/should champion the goal? How much influence do/will they have among the key stakeholders? (see “build the goal team”)

Checklist

- ☐ Develop goal selection criteria in coordination with the appropriate senior leaders and communicate criteria for goal selection.
- ☐ Develop and communicate the method of prioritizing, ranking, or otherwise assessing comparative value of proposed goals.
- ☐ Develop a list of goal options and articulate, share, and incorporate feedback on those goal options with relevant stakeholders. (see “identify key stakeholders”)
- ☐ Select which goal or goals will move forward for further refinement and planning.

- ☐ Begin engaging with the potential goal champion/leader, discuss expectations, and gain a tentative or tacit agreement to engage further.

Resources:

- Agency Priority Goal success factors and recommendations developed by the Performance Improvement Council
- Cross Agency Priority Goal lessons learned from the Set and Define Phase compiled by the Performance Improvement Council
- Developing program goals and objectives from the Department of State. Find the full guide [here](#).
- Setting Performance Targets [guide](#) from the GovEx team
- [Techniques and Tools to Help You Make Business Decisions](#) by Sammi Caramela
- [The Seven Deadly Sins of Setting and Communicating Goals](#) by ChangeFactory



May: Refine the goal statement



Once a goal area has been identified, developing a clear goal statement - specific, time-bound, measurable - is critical to framing and articulating the goal and vision of success for internal and external stakeholders. The process of developing the goal statement should cultivate a robust conversation around and decision on what success looks like.

Key Questions:


- What is the problem we're trying to solve? Whose problem is it? How do we know that it's a problem?
- Why are we doing this? Why does the effort matter?
- How ambitious should the goal be? Attainable to drive achievement? Aggressive to drive improvement? Almost impossible to drive transformation?
- What does the desired future state look like? How will we know we've been successful? What is the baseline and target?
- Are the problem, goal, and future state articulated in terms of a clear outcome or target?
- If the following people were to read the goal statement, what do we want them to know? US citizen; media; delivery partner; federal employees in contributing agencies. Does the goal statement speak to each audience? (see "develop a communications strategy")

Checklist


- ☐ Develop an inventory of available key measures to consider in the goal statement and solicit input from relevant stakeholders. (see "determine how to measure progress").
- ☐ Develop a one sentence goal statement that explains the planned action or initiative and the intended outcome including the key metric or milestone that will indicate whether the goal has been achieved.
- ☐ Develop a succinct theory of change that maps the causal relationship between the goal and the outcome defined in the goal statement. Consider creating a visual representation of assumed or documented causal connections. As planning continues, further flesh out the map to include the steps in between the goal and the outcome.

- ☐ Develop a methodology for setting a target that is both ambitious and realistic. Review the methodology with a data expert or statistician. (see “determine how to measure progress”).

Resources:

- Agency Priority Goal Overview developed by the Performance Improvement Council
-  **The Power of Goals** by Robert M. Sheehan, University of Maryland
- Setting Performance Targets **guide** from the GovEx team
- **What is this thing called 'Theory of Change'?** by Ann-Murray Brown
- Developing program goals and objectives from the Department of State. Find the full guide [here](#).

Play: Build the Goal Team

 A goal's success is contingent upon having a limited set of senior leaders in place who are committed to providing vision and support, being a spokesperson for the goal, and delegating authority to make decisions and to take action, while accepting accountability for the goal's results. Equally as important is a dedicated staff-level team that is given the authority to implement the key strategies over the course of the goal.

Key Questions:

- Which organizations are most directly aligned with the implementation efforts of the goal?
- Who is in the most appropriate position to make decisions with regard to key strategies?
- Who is passionate about the work?
- Who are the deputy goal leaders that can help drive change over the course of the goal?
- How will this goal be staffed? What knowledge and skills do we need to harness in order to meet or exceed the goal? Where will the people come from? How much time will they need to commit?
- What governance structure will be most effective for this goal? (see “manage for success”)

Checklist

- ☐ Identify and gain the commitment of one or more senior leaders who will help prioritize and enforce priorities. Begin to discuss and document expectations.
- ☐ Identify and create a list of career staff who will be involved, with initial estimates of their time and availability.
- ☐ Consider goal leadership and team incentives and accountability mechanisms (e.g., inclusion in annual performance plans, required presence and active role in data-driven review sessions, routine check-ins with senior leader, etc.). (See “manage for success”).

Resources:

- How to build and use a responsibility (RACI) chart from the Performance Improvement Council
- **New Research Shows Why Focus On Teams, Not Just Leaders, Is Key To Business Performance** by Josh Bersin
- **We Don't Need The Best People, We Need The Best Teams** by Greg Satell

Phase 2: Plan

Planning is the act of considering and committing to a path forward in order to coordinate decisions and intended actions. The planning process should include multiple stakeholders, consider the needs of key customers, identify and plan for risk, and take into account timeline and resource constraints. The resulting plan should guide decision-making at both the strategic and operational level and be a living document updated on a regular basis.



Play: Assess the Landscape

Understanding the lay of the land sets the stage for designing a path forward which can help goal teams avoid pitfalls, manage risk, and take advantage of opportunities. Assessing the landscape and identifying key stakeholders go hand-in-hand.



Key Questions:

- Who or what are the most influential people or organizations that can help or hinder success?
- What is our assessment of risk to implementing the goal? What is the worst that can happen? What is the potential reward for varying risk paths?
- What are potential barriers to achieving or exceeding the goal achievement?
- What connections/relationships, emerging trends, or complementary efforts could be leveraged for this goal effort?



Checklist

- ☐ Identify and document the key challenges inherent in the goal (calculation of potential pain).
- ☐ Identify and document the opportunities related to the goal (calculation of potential gain).
- ☐ Begin a stakeholder analysis that will continue to be fleshed out in the planning process. (See “identify key stakeholders”).
- ☐ Complete a risk assessment.



Resources:

- **SWOT Analysis - A tool for making better business decisions** by the Department of Agriculture’s Risk Management Agency
- How to conduct a SWOT from the Performance Improvement Council
- Conducting a comprehensive situational analysis from the Department of State. Find the full guide [here](#).
- Cross Agency Priority Goal lessons learned from the Plan Phase compiled by the Performance Improvement Council
- **Playbook** for how to put in place an Enterprise Risk Management program in order to identify and manage risk by the Chief Financial Officers Council and the Performance Improvement Council

Play: Identify Key Stakeholders

When goals that are championed by individuals or organizations rarely operate in a vacuum. Along with building the core goal team, knowing who and what exists in the orbit of the goal space will help clarify how to best coordinate efforts to achieve maximum impact.

Key Questions:

- Which entities inside the Federal Government are delivering programs and services related to this goal? How are they contributing? What about non-federal individuals or organizations?
- How will we coordinate the efforts of the key players across organizations? Across functions? How can we maintain momentum with our coordination efforts?
- What existing processes and governance structures can we leverage to coordinate across this shared goal?
- Is there a legal (GPRAMA) need to consult with Congress? If so, how can that best be leveraged to move the goal forward?



Checklist

- ☐ Continue to build out a stakeholder map (see “assess the landscape”) with descriptions of roles, overlap, complementary programs or services, and competing programs or services.
- ☐ Map the delivery systems for each of the contributing programs to better understand how they are delivering services and to whom.
- ☐ With a deeper understanding of key stakeholders, adjust the goal team as needed.
- ☐ Examine which Federal and non-Federal organizations and people impact and influence but do not directly contribute to the goal.
- ☐ If appropriate, consult with Congress and document what transpired.

Resources:

- How to conduct a delivery system analysis from the Performance Improvement Council
- **Stakeholder analysis toolkit** by the Manchester Metropolitan University Business Improvement Team
- How to build and use a responsibility (RACI) matrix from the Performance Improvement Council
- **Best Practices from GAO** on using the GPRA Modernization Act to inform Congressional decision making
- Summary of agency practices around Congressional consultation from a 2011 Performance Improvement Council working group

Play: Identify Strategies

After determining the ultimate desired outcome (the what) and doing the legwork to best understand the ecosystem that the goal exists in (the who), the next step is to figure out how to get there by identifying strategies, choosing the most effective approaches, and mapping out the specifics of what the goal efforts will look like.

Key Questions :

- How will we move the goal from the current state to the targeted state? Under what conditions? Rapid or steady progress? Through existing means or by creating new ways of doing things? By methodically resolving underlying causes or by going directly after the desired end effects?
- What evidence do we have that the strategies will have the desired effect? If we do not have sufficient evidence now, how will we collect it as we go? What is the causal connection between each strategy and each desired result?
- Do resource limitations or the theory of change suggest phasing of strategies? What milestones might we set along the way in order to motivate periodic achievement at key points in the goal period? (see “determine how to measure progress”)
- Are strategies complementary, additive, or synergistic and how might we accelerate progress using them?

Checklist

- ☐ Diagram the goal, including sub goals (as appropriate) and strategies to ensure that work on the goal is aligned to achieve the desired outcome (e.g., logic model or theory of change).
- ☐ Develop a visual representation (chart, table, graphic, etc.) of the key strategies that make up the goal. Consider a logic model or similar structure that shows the relationship from inputs to the outcomes in the goal statement.
- ☐ Begin to document evidence of the problem and the utility of chosen strategies.

Resources:

- [What is this thing called 'Theory of Change'?](#) by Ann-Murray Brown
- [How to create a logic model from the Performance Improvement Council](#)
- [A “logframe” approach](#) to laying out a goal’s key elements
- [In Defense of Logic Models](#) by Ian David Moss
- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s [a href="https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/logic-model-planning-process">approach to logic models with an example](https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/logic-model-planning-process)



PLAY 7

Manage and Deliver Results: Implementation

What is it? Executing plans and processes by actively managing them over time.

What are we aiming for? Navigating political priorities and legacy systems can be challenging, so we use data-driven reviews on an ongoing basis to ensure senior leaders and key partners are engaged in implementation. Regular reviews help us recognize where we are on track and where we need to make adjustments to have impact. We are able to advise senior leaders and managers about how to address performance trends or issues. Our team or organization uses program and performance management tools to ensure consistent, timely delivery across programs and initiatives, within budgetary and legal constraints. There is a transparent governance and decision-making structure which is not overly burdensome, people on the team understand their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of key partners.

Key Questions (Ask yourself “why/why not” or “how” after each):

- In our daily work, do we discuss or think about how to address performance issues?
- Do we manage differently when we see results?
- Do we conduct regular data-driven reviews with senior leaders to discuss how we deliver results? Are reviews used to identify what we should change about our work?
- Do we have clear roles and responsibilities for how we accomplish our mission? Are all of us aware and on the same page about them?

PLAY 8

Share information: Communicating Performance Information

What is it? Sharing information about plans, progress, challenges and results both internally and externally.

What are we aiming for? We have communication tools, such as dashboards, that make it easy to view progress and make decisions. Anyone internal or external to our organization could ask for or provide feedback about how our program, initiative or organization is performing. We build compelling visualizations and informative narrative around our performance data, and that helps us ‘tell our story’ to people who are not experts in our program. We recognize that effective communication can contribute to improved performance by motivating and inspiring staff and partners to play their role.

Key Questions (Ask yourself “why/why not” or “how” after each):

- Are our leaders able to see or learn of our progress easily and regularly?
- Are we able to ask each other for candid feedback about the performance of our program, initiative or organization?
- Do we have a way of providing performance updates to our stakeholders?
- Do we focus on sharing information internally as much as we do externally?
- Are we providing enough information to the right people to be transparent about our progress and impact?

PLAY 9

Drive needed changes: Improvement

What is it? Intentionally creating a positive change in the amount, speed, efficiency or quality of results.

What are we aiming for? Our team is able to apply – or can easily partner with someone in our organization who can apply – improvement techniques to specific delivery, process, or program challenges. Even when our day-to-day work operates well enough, we try to find ways to create better long-term results. When a change is necessary to our success, we can adjust what needs to be adjusted with the support of our leaders and stakeholders. We use experimentation and innovation to test new approaches to program delivery.

Key Questions (Ask yourself “why/why not” or “how” after each):

- Do we have improvement tools or techniques that we can apply when needed?
- Are we collaborating with improvement experts in our organization to tackle complex challenges?
- Do we actually implement improvements? Do we track their impact?
- Are we supported when we need to make necessary changes?

Power Play

Enable and Invest in Culture

Putting your P3 plays into practice not only should build essential capability at your organization, but should also help cultivate performance culture. And when performance becomes part of the “DNA” of a team or organization we also see certain cultural elements welcomed and sustained. We are calling these things, “performance operating principles.” These principles are habits or beliefs that an organization can adopt in order to drive a performance-positive mindset among employees and create a culture that values performance management and improvement.

Checklist

1. More than just compliance

What are we aiming for?

- ☐ Our performance management activities are integrated with other lines of business.
- ☐ Teams working on performance collaborate regularly with business and program managers.
- ☐ Leaders talk about performance management as a way to drive results, not just meet a legal requirement.
- ☐ People at the HQ level and people at the Component level follow the same or very similar performance management processes.
- ☐ We have performance experts that we can ask for advice or assistance.

2. Results-Oriented Candor & Transparency

What are we aiming for?

- ☐ We are encouraged to speak up when we have ideas about what should change.
- ☐ Anyone internal or external to our organization could ask for and/or provide feedback about how a mission area is performing.
- ☐ Anyone internal or external to our organization could easily find performance and organization data.
- ☐ Leaders consistently talk about progress, results, and opportunities to get better.
- ☐ We like to share information with one another.

3. Healthy Attitude Towards Risk

What are we aiming for?

- ☐ We set goals that we know may be a challenge to achieve.
- ☐ We have some flexibility in our plans, assessments, and decision-making to account for possible failures.
- ☐ We talk about how it is "safe to fail."
- ☐ Leaders protect people who take acceptable risks.
- ☐ We have clear guidelines about what is and isn't considered an acceptable risk.

4. Positive Ownership & Accountability for Results

What are we aiming for?

- ☐ Results are included in our job descriptions.
- ☐ Anyone at our organization could identify and explain what they are accountable for.
- ☐ We know how our work connects to mission priorities.
- ☐ We find ways to improve or advance our delivery methods.
- ☐ Leaders take responsibility for achieving performance outcomes.

5. Stakeholder & Customer Oriented

What are we aiming for?

- ☐ We can receive or easily find information about customers.
- ☐ We pay attention to customer satisfaction data.
- ☐ We design our processes to suit various stakeholders or customer groups.
- ☐ Multiple customer/stakeholder perspectives are included in our decision-making process.
- ☐ Leaders talk about the value of customer and stakeholder needs.
- ☐ We see our stakeholders as our partners.
- ☐ We develop reviews, plans, and reports in coordination with multiple internal and external stakeholders.

Rules of P3

The P3 construct is designed to help you gauge where you are and where you need to go in order to drive performance for your mission. It helps you think about your capability strengths, identify gaps and opportunities, and have a discussion about how performance management can help you achieve your goals. It is not a step-wise process or model with a beginning and an end. When using the PIC's P3 Playbook as a team, or just for yourself, keep in mind these two rules:

Not Linear

While these practices may feel linear to where you sit in the organization, all of these performance activities are interrelated and interdependent. For example, you may decide to set measures first and then prioritize your goal activities. You may first invest in analytical capabilities which will inform your planning and evaluation. You may begin with a performance improvement, which impacts your implementation and data activities. Anyone and any organization can start with what they have, and leverage these capability strengths to direct, initiate or incorporate other aspects of P3.

There isn't "one right way"

How you run, develop, and invest in your P3 plays is totally flexible and up to the culture and skills of your team. Different organizations or teams will have varying degrees of activity in each, with none considered "more successful" than another. For example, we know that there are some organizations that do "data stuff" really well. Those data-oriented organizations can achieve performance results as strong as those organizations that do "goal setting and prioritization" really well. It just depends on how an organization invests in building its performance capabilities. However, to be most effective in achieving and managing the "right" results for your mission, each element of the P3 construct should exist in tandem at your organization, program, or initiative team.

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