

THE COMMERCE MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Commerce promotes job creation, economic growth, sustainable development, and improved living standards for all Americans, by working in partnership with business, universities, communities, and workers to:

1. Build for the future and promote U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace, by strengthening and safeguarding the nation's economic infrastructure;
2. Keep America competitive with cutting-edge science and technology and an unrivaled information base; and,
3. Provide effective management and stewardship of our nation's resources and assets to ensure sustainable economic opportunities.

The Commerce Mission Statement, containing our three Strategic Themes, provides the vehicle for understanding Commerce's aims, how they interlock, and how they are to be implemented through our programs. Working collectively, the bureaus of the Department (including the Office of the Secretary) developed it, with the intent that it serve as both a statement of Departmental philosophy and as the guiding force behind the Department's programs.

The importance that this Mission Statement and these Strategic Themes have for the Nation is amplified by the vision they pursue for America's communities, businesses, and families. Commerce is the smallest cabinet agency, yet our presence is felt, and our contributions are found, in every state.

The Commerce Department touches Americans, daily, in many ways — we make possible the weather reports that all of us hear every morning; we facilitate the technology that all of us use in the workplace and in the home each day; we support the development, gathering, and transmitting of information essential to competitive business; we make possible the diversity of companies and goods found in America's (and the world's) marketplace; we support environmental and economic health for the communities in which Americans live.

The Department of Commerce has a clear and powerful vision for itself, for its role in the Federal government, and for its roles supporting the American people, now and in the future. We confront the intersection of trade promotion, civilian technology, economic development, sustainable development, and economic analysis, and we want to provide leadership in these areas for the Nation. As a Department, we aspire to provide programs and services which serve our country's business, communities, and families, as initiated and supported by the President and the Congress. We are dedicated to making those programs and services as effective as possible and to be delivered in cost-effective ways. We seek to function in

close concert with other agencies having complementary responsibilities, so that collectively, our impact can be accurate and powerful. We seek to meet the needs of our customers quickly and efficiently, with the programs, information, and services they require and deserve.

As a permanent part of the Federal government, but serving an Administration and Congress that can vary with election results, we seek to serve the unchanging needs of the Nation, according to the priorities of the President and the Congress. We are able to do this effectively by functioning in accordance with the legislation that undergirds our programs and by working closely with the President and the committees in Congress which have program and financial oversight for our programs.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE COMMERCE STRATEGIC PLAN

On behalf of the Department of Commerce, this document:

- responds to the requirement in the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) that agencies prepare a Strategic Plan;
- enunciates a Mission Statement, Strategic Themes, and goals and objectives for our programs, which are unlikely to change on a year-to-year basis;
- serves as the ongoing strategic framework within which Commerce bureaus can: develop and present specific performance measures for their goals and objectives; link with related agencies and programs, and; link to annual planning and budgeting activities;
- successfully integrates into a single plan all of the activities of the Department of Commerce, and;
- provides a flexible document which will serve as the forum for ongoing discussions with OMB, Congress, and stakeholder groups.

This Plan describes Commerce's experiences with strategic planning and the creative process we followed in developing the Plan. This description is useful in gathering an understanding of the Commerce perspective of the GPRA strategic planning process, and thus helps establish a context for reviewing the Commerce Strategic Plan itself.

GPRA REQUIREMENTS

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, P.L. 103-62, was enacted with a 4-year implementation lead time. (Starting with the FY 1999 budget, agencies are to have strategic plans and performance measures in place.) During this 4-year period, agencies had the opportunity to pilot test the strategic planning and performance measure concepts underlying the Act. Commerce prepared actively for the Act's full implementation, and four Commerce bureaus participated in two of the 70+ government-wide GPRA pilot tests. (OMB judged NOAA's pilot as one of the 10 best.)

In the Spring of 1996, Commerce created a draft Strategic Plan in accordance with OMB guidance, which: described our framework and process for developing a strategic plan; specified our Mission Statement and three underlying Strategic Themes; and provided a discussion of specific goals and objectives which will be followed under each Theme. Within the Department, work continued on the Plan through successive

drafts which built on that initial version — goals/objectives omitted from the original draft were included and existing ones were refined, and additional sections were added on several topics (the economic contributions of programs under each goal; their legislative bases; their international aspects; current trends and challenges influencing them; and the partnerships which help make them effective).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMERCE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Department of Commerce's Strategic Plan consists of two Parts. Part One, "The Commerce Department and Its Strategic Plan", describes the ways in which the Plan was developed, provides the policy framework upon which the Plan is based, and responds to some of the overall narrative requirements of GPRA. Part One contains Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 1 describes the process followed by the Department of Commerce in developing this Plan, and contains key information about linkages to annual activities, and program evaluation.

Chapter 2 presents the policy framework within which our Mission Statement and Strategic Themes were formulated. No organization of Commerce's size can succeed in its collective mission unless it has an overriding philosophy and sense of how it must manage itself. In many ways, the messages contained in this Chapter of the Plan are fully as important as those contained in the three Strategic Theme Chapters of the Plan.

Part Two of the Plan, "Commerce's Goals, Strategies, and Objectives", contains the specific goals, strategies, and objectives which describe the ways in which Commerce programs seek to attain their missions.

In Chapter 3, the importance of the three Strategic Themes is discussed, focusing on the content of each Theme, and addressing the ways in which they are interrelated. In addition, this Chapter provides an index which shows the linkages between the three Themes and the bureau goals.

Chapters 4-6 comprise the heart of the Plan. They discuss the three Strategic Themes, using a common starting point — the Commerce Mission Statement — and then describe the goals, strategies, objectives, and specific programs which support that theme. (Illustrative performance measures which can serve as indicators of progress in reaching the goals and objectives are also provided. The full range of performance measures will appear in the FY 1999 budget request.) These chapters also address other critical topics which give important background information on each Theme, as shown in the Plan's Table of Contents.

The Appendix includes the authorities — legislative references, Executive Orders, and regulatory citations

— which mandate and support the programs conducted by Commerce bureaus contained in this Plan. This Appendix provides an additional dimension of information which is essential to a full grasping of the concepts underlying the Commerce Strategic Plan.

THE COMMERCE STRATEGIC PLAN IS MORE THAN “JUST A PLAN”

In preparing this Strategic Plan and implementing GPRA, the Department of Commerce has made a specific effort to create a process and produce a document which starts with the sound concepts underlying the Act, but then adds greater richness. We have consciously focused on developing a plan which successfully and clearly integrates all of Commerce’s major activities, so that staff across the Department — as well as our stakeholders and the agencies with which we partner — will have no doubt about where they fit into the plan. We have consciously avoided developing a plan which was written from a “public relations” perspective, containing only general goals and objectives. For two main reasons, we want to produce and implement a plan that really works, and that serves as a true roadmap into the goals and objectives pursued by our bureaus and programs.

First, as the staff of the Department of Commerce, we are proud of our accomplishments on behalf of the American people and, using GPRA’s acronym in another way — “Good Programs Really Advertise” — we want to communicate about what we do in ways that will be clear and measurable. Second, we believe that the true benefit of GPRA will come through the combined synergy of programs across the Federal government which can share resources in pursuit of a common mission, and we believe that being specific about our Strategic Themes and comprehensive about our program goals and objectives will provide a strong framework for those interagency linkages.

