



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
COMMITTEE

Government Accountability Committee
January 2015 Report

Introduction

In the past year, the Government Accountability Committee (GAC) has continued to focus on how results-based accountability (RBA) can be used as a tool to assist Vermont State government to develop a culture of performance accountability across State government in order to be more accountable to Vermonters. Generally speaking, RBA involves setting high-level outcomes, collecting data, and then analyzing that data to gauge how well the State is performing. RBA helps our government operate more effectively and in a manner that demonstrates to taxpayers how their money is being spent to achieve desired outcomes.

Pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 970(g), this report sets forth GAC's activities and recommendations to the General Assembly. This report will detail the following issues:

1. RBA's current use in State government.

Recommendation: The General Assembly and the Executive Branch should continue to use RBA as it has been established in 2014 Acts and Resolves No. 186 (an act relating to reporting on population-level outcomes and indicators

and on program-level performance measures) and in the Vantage Performance Budget (formerly named the Performance Measure Pilot Program)¹.

2. Using performance accountability and RBA terminology consistently.

Recommendation: The General Assembly should enact legislation that will be introduced by GAC members in both chambers. This legislation would amend Vermont laws in order to use performance accountability and RBA terminology consistently throughout the law.

3. RBA Training in the Legislative Branch.

Recommendation: All legislators should participate in RBA training during the 2015 legislative session in order to learn how RBA can be used in the legislative process and to foster performance accountability. Employees in the Executive Branch who interact with the General Assembly should also participate in this training to the extent possible because RBA requires a collaborative approach between the two Branches.

1. RBA's Current Use in State Government

Using RBA, the State's performance is evaluated at two different levels: population-level (meaning, Vermonters as a whole, or certain overall populations of Vermonters, such as Vermont youth) and program-level (meaning, individual programs).

The General Assembly, as the Legislative Branch, sets the policy for the State. By the laws it enacts, it sets the course for the population-level, and funds programs that support the population-level outcomes. The Executive Branch implements legislative policy by administering the programs that contribute to population-level outcomes.

¹ See **Attachment A** for a list of programs participating in the Vantage Performance Budget

The General Assembly created a requirement to use RBA to evaluate how well the State is performing at the population- and program-levels when it enacted 2014 Acts and Resolves No. 186 (an act relating to reporting on population-level outcomes and indicators and on program-level performance measures).² In the act, the General Assembly codified in statute eight main population-level quality of life outcomes, which are broad goals for Vermont's population, such as "Vermonters are healthy." It also established initial population-level indicators (and a process to revise those indicators) for each outcome. Indicators reflect data that will be collected, and they relate to outcomes. For example, "number of adults who are homeless" is an indicator for the outcome that "Vermonters are healthy."

The act then requires the Executive Branch's Chief Performance Officer to report annually to the General Assembly on the State's progress in reaching the population-level outcomes by providing data for the indicators. Over time, the General Assembly will be able to analyze the data for those indicators to determine whether its policies are successful in working toward the outcomes.

Similarly, the act requires the Chief Performance Officer to report annually on the Vantage Performance Budget. In the Vantage Performance Budget, the Executive Branch analyzes the results of participating programs using performance measure data. The Vantage Performance Budget, and similar performance analysis requirements for Executive Branch programs set forth in statute, are a way for the Executive Branch to evaluate whether its programs are improving the lives of the Vermonters it serves.

The act also requires the Chief Performance Officer to designate an employee in each agency of State government to be a performance accountability liaison to the

² <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/DOCS/2014/ACTS/ACT186.PDF>

General Assembly. These liaisons — or “PALs” — are responsible for responding to any requests for performance information requested by the General Assembly, and they should help serve as a link for the two branches of State government to collaborate on performance accountability across State government.

The GAC recommends that this foundation for performance accountability and RBA continue in State government. The act sets the State on a course to analyze how well it is performing so that it can be more effective in the future.

2. Using RBA Terminology Consistently

The GAC stresses the importance of using performance accountability and RBA terminology consistently so that we are all speaking the same language. In RBA, “outcomes” and “indicators” are reserved for the population-level, and “goals,” “results,” and “performance measures” are reserved for the program-level. Moreover, “targets” might be established as goals for certain time frames, and State government might compare its performance to standards elsewhere, such as on a national or industry level, and these standards are “benchmarks.”

Right now, Vermont laws that include performance analysis requirements are not always using these terms consistently. GAC members from each chamber will introduce legislation during the 2015 session that makes amendments to these laws for the purpose of promoting the use of consistent performance accountability and RBA terms. The General Assembly should enact this legislation because speaking the same language will make it easier for performance accountability and RBA to become embedded in the operation of our State government.

3. Training in the Legislative Branch

Finally, the GAC strongly recommends that the General Assembly embrace performance accountability and RBA at the legislative level. As the branch of government that sets the policy for the State, it is imperative that the General Assembly evaluate whether its decisions are having a positive impact on Vermont. This is the essence of government effectiveness and accountability.

RBA can be condensed into three main program questions: 1) How much did we do? 2) How well did we do it? 3) Is anyone better off? Data provided by the Executive Branch will support answers to these questions and can help the General Assembly determine whether current policy should change in order make a more positive impact.

Some GAC members have already been trained on how to use RBA, and there are community partners that also understand the mechanics of RBA. The GAC recommends that to embed RBA further in the legislative process, legislators and others already trained in RBA should help train other legislators on how to use this tool.

To do so, the GAC has worked to plan RBA training as follows:

- Wednesday, January 14th at 2:30 p.m. in Room 11: House and Senate Committees on Appropriations will jointly be trained on RBA using the Vantage Performance Budget.
- Friday, January 16th at 2:30 p.m. in the House Chamber: House “Caucus of the Whole” will obtain RBA 101 training.
- Wednesday, January 21st at 4:45 p.m.: House committee chairs will obtain executive-level RBA training.

Additionally, a Senate “Caucus of the Whole” RBA 101 training is being planned, as well as House and Senate joint committee training on applied RBA, which shall be led by trained facilitators.

The GAC further suggests that employees in the Executive Branch that come before the committees of jurisdiction — especially the PALs — should also attend the joint committee training to the extent possible, because the Legislative Branch will expect the Executive Branch to be able to answer the three RBA questions for programs.

And finally, once committee members are trained, committees should start to use RBA in practice. The GAC recommends that committees start with the budgets of the programs participating in the Vantage Performance Budget that are within the committees’ jurisdiction. These programs will already have data in the form of performance measures, and the committees — with their subject-matter knowledge — will be able to make more informed recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in their decision making for the budget.

The GAC looks forward to this RBA training and how it will assist the Legislative and Executive Branches.

Attachment A

Programs Participating in the Vantage Performance Budget	
Department	Program/Activity Area
Administration - Agency Secretary's Office	State Workers' Compensation Insurance
Administration - BGS	Federal Surplus Property
Administration – DII	Availability/Uptime of Critical Systems
Administration – Finance & Management	Internal Controls Self-Assessment Program
Administration - Human Resources	1) Classification Review; 2) State Employee Wellness Program
Administration – Libraries	Resource Sharing: Interlibrary Loan Program
Administration – Tax	1) Current Use; 2) refund fraud program, and 3) Top 100 compliance program
Agriculture	1) Food safety and consumer protection; 2) Working Lands (Agriculture Development)
Attorney General	Court diversion
Commerce & Community Development	Tourism and marketing
Education	1) Adult education and literacy; 2) Tobacco Litigation (youth)
Financial Regulations	Insurance
Green Mt. Care Board	Health Care Costs
Human Services - Children & Families	General assistance
Human Services - Corrections	Correctional Services
Human Services - Dept. of Vermont Health Access	Vermont Chronic Care Initiative
Human Services - Disabilities & Independent Living	TBI home and community based waiver
Human Services - Health	ADAP
Human Services - Mental Health	Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital
Judiciary	Dispute Resolution
Labor	Apprenticeship Program
Liquor Control	Enforcement and licensing
Natural Resources - Environmental Conservation	Vermont Ecycles Program
Natural Resources - Fish & Wildlife	Support & Field Services
Natural Resources - Forests, Parks and Recreation	State parks
Public Safety	Cannabis Registry
Public Service Board	Public Good Requests
Public Service Dept.	Consumer Impact

Transportation - Motor Vehicles	Motor Vehicles Customer Service
Transportation - Vtrans	1) Town highway bridges; 2) Paving Program; 3) Interstate Highway Bridge; 4) Safety & Traffic Operations; 5) Public Transit; 6) Rail Program.
Treasurer	Unclaimed property