



THE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL
**PERFORMANCE PRINCIPLES
& PRACTICES PLAYBOOK**
P3





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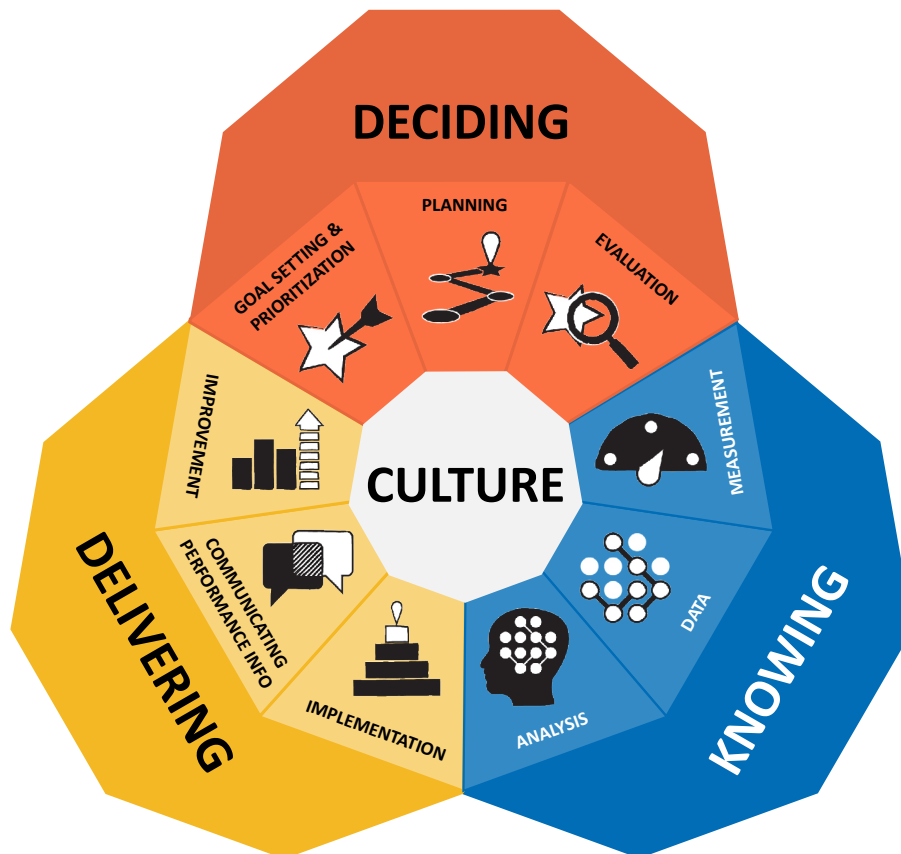
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INTRODUCTION

Several years after the passage of the GPRA Modernization Act, the Performance Improvement Council (PIC) staff set out to define the foundational aspects of performance management in government. Drawing on insights from a diverse cohort of federal agencies, the PIC team sketched out a vision for what it takes to not only achieve mission results, but to actively manage ambitious and sometimes governmentwide goals. The team went back into our archive of interviews, summits, and working groups to reflect what we've repeatedly heard from professionals who have given their careers to understanding, improving, and driving their agency's performance.

The PIC team developed the Performance Principles & Practices construct, or P3, to go beyond the legal requirements and capture the capabilities and spirit of performance management and improvement. We've turned P3 into a playbook for anyone to use when implementing programs, initiatives, and missions. Each play includes an action statement ("What is it?"), a description of what success looks like ("What are we aiming for?"), and key questions to ask. P3 can help your organization plan and achieve your most time-sensitive goals, deliver high-quality results, and build the capabilities your agency needs to evolve.



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GUIDELINES FOR 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 capabilities and 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 for yourself, keep in mind these two guidelines:

NOT LINEAR

All of these performance activities are interrelated and interdependent. For example, you may decide to collect data from measures first and then prioritize your goal activities. You may start with an upfront investment in analytical capabilities that will then 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 capabilities and strengths to direct, initiate, and incorporate other aspects of P3.

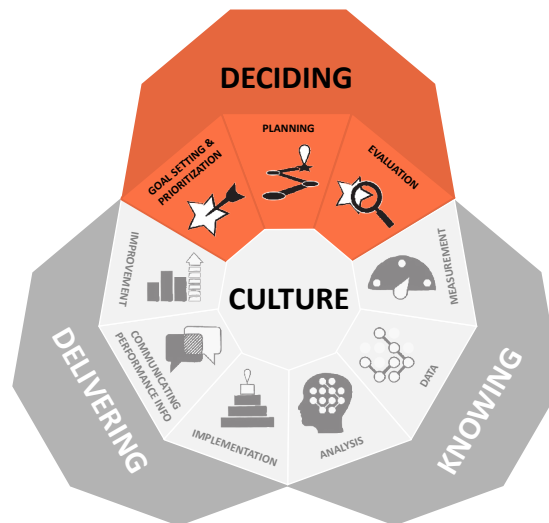
NO "ONE RIGHT WAY"

How you run, develop, and invest in your P3 plays is flexible and depends on 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. 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 within your organization, program, or initiative team.

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DECIDING PHASE



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DECIDING - GOAL SETTING & PRIORITIZATION

What is it?

Committing to a limited number of actions and results in order to focus efforts and resources for maximum impact.

Play: Make Specific Commitments

What are we aiming for?

While our priorities may fluctuate and shift over time, our program and organization have a clear and steady purpose. This is articulated in clear goals that speak to the mission outcomes we are here to achieve. We can reprioritize when needed, but this is something we avoid doing frequently. Generally, people on our team are able to explain what they do and how it relates to our overall priorities. Regardless of our level in an organization and our structure, we are all headed in the same direction.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we have clear goals we are trying to achieve?
- Are the goals too few or too many to remember?
- Can we easily show how we are achieving our goals?
- Are senior leaders helping us focus on and enforce our priorities?

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DECIDING - PLANNING

What is it?

Establishing well-developed plans that govern actions and decisions.

Play: Determine a Path Forward

What are we aiming for?

Our plans guide decision making, both at strategic and operational levels. Our plans are living documents we refer to and update on a regular basis. The planning processes we use include multiple stakeholders and consider the needs of our key customers, both internal and external. We have a standard way of identifying and planning for risks, and our plans take into account timeline and resource constraints. When we develop plans, we ensure they align with our overall mission and organizational vision.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we have plans that we consult, update regularly, and use to guide our decisions?
- Are multiple perspectives and stakeholders included in our planning process?
- Do we have a process to identify and plan for risk?
- Are the plans we work with aligned? Do they avoid contradictions and conflicts?

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DECIDING - EVALUATION

What is it?

Studying program results to inform policy or programmatic decisions.

Play: Assess Success

What are we aiming for?

To find out whether our programs are achieving their intended outcomes, we periodically step back and go beyond routine performance measurement to gather rigorous evidence to help us answer that question. We use the best available evidence, such as impact evaluations, to systematically and credibly assess program effectiveness, make hard choices, and learn what works for whom under what circumstances. We use those insights to inform our strategies, plans, and measures. Where high-quality evidence is lacking for important policy and program implementation areas, we seek to develop it.

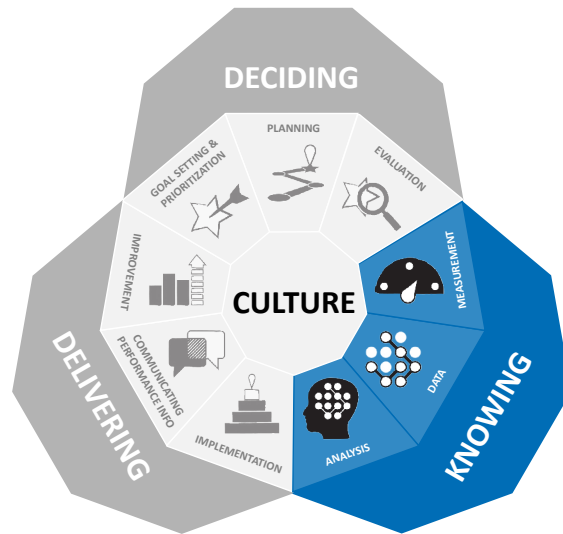
What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we take the time to intentionally assess our success in achieving our goals?
- Do we use the most rigorous methods available to us to assess program outcomes?
- Are we able to make judgments about our impact with the information available to us?
- Do we adjust or change what we are doing based on the results of our assessments?

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KNOWING PHASE



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KNOWING - MEASUREMENT

What is it?

Establishing a shared vision of what needs to be measured at various stages of a program.

Play: Understand What to Track

What are we aiming for?

We are able to capture both program outputs and outcomes, even if it requires using multiple sources of information. Our definitions of “success” reflect multiple stakeholder perspectives. The measures we choose and any targets we set are meaningful: they make sense to people on our team and are logically linked to our goals. The measures we choose may capture the activity of many different contributions, but we are able to understand the specific contribution we have made towards reaching our goal.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we consult people external to our organization or team when determining what to measure and what targets to set?
- Are the definitions of success we use reflective of multiple stakeholder perspectives?
- Would the majority of us agree we are tracking the “right” things?
- Are we using measures that will capture meaningful outcomes rather than low hanging fruit?

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KNOWING - DATA

What is it?

Collecting qualitative and quantitative data using consistent methods to ensure information is valid and accessible.

Play: Capture Reliable Information

What are we aiming for?

We can readily access and collect the data we need to understand how our program is doing. We gather data using well-documented and consistent processes, and we have a system in place to ensure our collected information is accurate and valid. The data we collect is of high quality and can be used by ourselves and others for decision making.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we have access to the data we need?
- Do we document our data collection processes and make sure they are consistent across time, geographic locations, and individuals?
- Do we have a way to verify that the information we collect is true and complete to the extent feasible?
- Do we and other people use our information to make decisions?

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KNOWING - ANALYSIS

What is it?

Synthesizing and reviewing data to identify performance questions, trends, anomalies, and issues.

Play: Generate Insights

What are we aiming for?

We connect relevant data to identify trends, performance issues, and progress made. There are people within our organization who have the skills to analyze data to deepen our understanding, answer key questions, and inform decision making. We regularly use customer feedback data to create greater awareness and understanding about our performance.

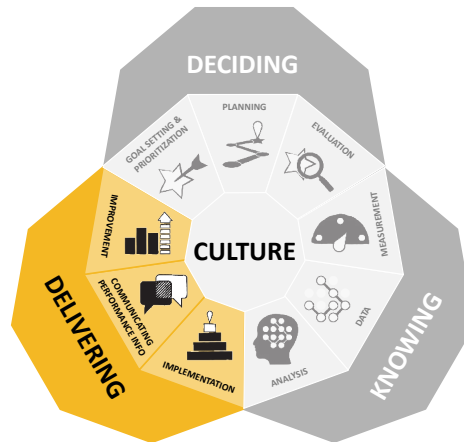
What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Are we able to identify trends that give us insights on how we perform, including specific issues that need to be addressed?
- Do we have the skills needed to understand the information we have available to us?
- Are there standards or processes we use to make sense of data?
- Do we benchmark against our past performance, other comparable groups, and across geographic regions to understand how well we are doing?

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DELIVERING PHASE



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DELIVERING - IMPLEMENTATION

What is it?

Executing plans and processes by actively managing them over time.

Play: Manage and Deliver Results

What are we aiming for?

Our team or organization uses program and performance management tools to ensure consistent, timely delivery across programs and initiatives, within budgetary and legal constraints. We hold 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, and allow us to advise senior leaders and managers about how to address performance issues. There is a transparent governance and decision-making structure that allows team members to understand their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of key partners.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- In our daily work, do we discuss or think about how to address performance issues?
- 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 we all aware and on the same page about them?

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DELIVERING - COMMUNICATING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

What is it?

Sharing plans, progress, challenges, and results both internally and externally.

Play: Share Information

What are we aiming for?

We have user-friendly communication tools, such as dashboards, that make it easy to view progress and make decisions. Anyone internal or external to our organization could easily find performance data. We build compelling visualizations and informative narratives around our performance data that help 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 fulfill their roles.

What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Are our leaders able to see and understand our progress easily and regularly?
- 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?

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DELIVERING - IMPROVEMENT

What is it?

Intentionally creating a positive change in the amount, efficiency, or quality of results.

Play: Drive Needed Changes

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, and 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.

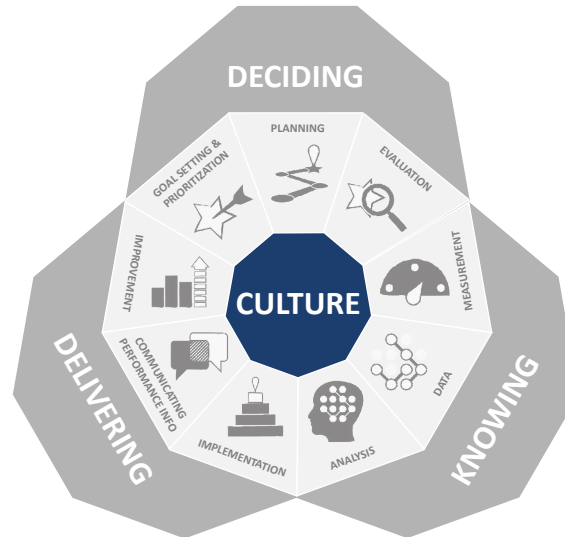
What questions should we ask? (Ask “why/why not” or “how” after each)

- Do we have improvement tools and techniques that we can apply when needed?
- Do we use innovative approaches to tackle complex challenges?
- Do we actually implement proposed improvements? Do we track their impact?
- Are we supported when we need to make necessary changes?

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POWER PLAY: ENABLE AND INVEST IN CULTURE



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Putting your P3 plays into practice should not only build essential capabilities at your organization, but should also help cultivate a performance culture. When performance becomes part of the DNA of a team or organization, we also see certain cultural elements welcomed and sustained. These elements, which we refer to as performance operating 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.

Principle: More Than Compliance

What are we aiming for?

Our performance 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 to meet a legal requirement. People at all levels of the organization follow the same or very similar performance management processes. We have performance experts who we can ask for advice and assistance.

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Principle: 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 program or mission area is performing. Leaders consistently talk about progress, results, and opportunities to get better. We like to share information with one another.

Principle: Healthy Attitude Towards Risk

What are we aiming for?

We set goals 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.

Principle: Positive Ownership & Accountability for Results

What are we aiming for?

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

Principle: Stakeholder & Customer Oriented

What are we aiming for?

We can receive and easily find information about customers. We pay attention to customer satisfaction data. We design our processes to suit various stakeholders and customer groups. Multiple customer and 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.

Principle: Diverse & Collaborative Teams

What are we aiming for?

We include a variety of people from multiple professions, offices, and backgrounds in our decision making. Our core team encourages and respects divergent viewpoints and engages in healthy debate. All teams have shared goals and share fully in successes and failures. We actively build relationships with new partners and continually invest in relationships with current partners. We have a clear understanding of the ecosystem we influence and are influenced by.

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