National Science Foundation
Building a Better Budget Office

Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool
BC SAT

AABPA 2011 Fall Symposium

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Topics

- Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool (BC SAT) Refresher
- NSF Budget Division
  - Capabilities baseline
  - Roadmap to improvement
- Community-Wide Implications

BC SAT Introduction

- Developed by the Budget Line of Business as a self assessment tool to:
  - Assess current strengths / weaknesses
  - Gain understanding of potential best practices
  - Assist planning and budgeting for organizational improvement
- Then: no defined or right way to use tool
- Now: automated MAX BC SAT survey available to conduct assessment

Construct of the BC SAT Tool

Components

BASIC | **STANDARD** | **ADVANCED**

Categories	Components
Budget Processes (page 8)	Strategic and Performance Planning, Budget Policies, Budget Formulation Procedures, Budget Execution Procedures, Internal Agency Relationships, External Relationships
Staff Capacity (page 15)	Staff Education, Staff Experience, Training, Management Support, Communications and Coordination, Staff Morale
Technology (page 22)	Knowledge Management, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Content Authoring, Document Production, Links to External Systems
Budget Products (page 29)	Budget Design Documents, Budget Submissions, Appropriations Support Documents, Performance Documents, Financial/Operating Plans

BC SAT Checklist

Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool Checklist

Budget Processes	Basic	Standard	Advanced
Strategic and Performance Planning			
Budget Guidance			
Budget Formulation Procedures			
Budget Execution Procedures			
Internal Agency Relationships			
External Relationships			
Staff Capacity			
Staff Education			
Staff Experience			
Training			
Management Support			
Communications and Coordination			
Staff Morale			

Technology	Basic	Standard	Advanced
Knowledge Management			
Data Collection			
Data Analysis			
Content Authoring			
Document Production			
Links to External Systems			
Budget Products			
Budget Decision Documents			
Budget Submissions			
Appropriations Support Documents			
Performance Documents			
Financial/Operating/Performance Plans			

Category 1: Budget Processes

Strategic and Performance Planning - Strategic plans define an agency's mission and long-term goals. They are supported by annual plans containing specific performance targets. This category encompasses the degree to which 1) the budget process is driven by the strategic plan; 2) annual budget and financial reports compare actual performance to targets set; and 3) actual data is used in the formulation of the strategic plan.

BASIC

- Little interaction between formulating the budget and the strategic plan
- Performance measures are marginally useful in describing what the Agency is achieving
- Minimal consideration is given to actual performance data in the formulation of the strategic plan

STANDARD

- The budget and the strategic plan are loosely linked
- Performance measures are useful in describing what the Agency is achieving
- Actual data is used in the preparation of the strategic plan

ADVANCED

- The budget flows from the strategic plan.
- Performance measures are clear and quantitative, and describe the relationship between the results the Agency expects to achieve and the resources it is requesting
- Actual data is integral to the preparation of the strategic plan

NSF Use of BC SAT

- NSF "learning organization" culture encourages free exchange and flow of information
- The timing was right to baseline our organizational performance
  - Expanding workload
  - FTE constraints
  - Budget environment uncertainties
  - Push for efficiencies
- BC SAT allowed us to assess and document our performance quickly using an existing tool developed by the federal budget community

NSF BC SAT Survey

- Converted the tool into a survey using a 5-level rating system
- Automated the survey so that results would be readily documented and compiled
  - For ease of implementation at NSF, survey was created in SharePoint
- Administered the survey within the Budget Division, on voluntary and anonymous basis
  - 75% response rate
- Shared and discussed results with entire Budget Division team soon after survey period ended

What we learned

- Our staff was fully engaged, eager and interested in participating in the assessment process
- The tool accurately captured our strengths and weaknesses, and validated our “gut instincts”
  - It met our expectations
- The BC SAT survey is a springboard
  - The results provide a roadmap to improve our operations

Summary of BC SAT Results

- Technology is our weakest link
  - Data collection relies on individual spreadsheets, lots of manual re-entry
  - Data resides in multiple locations and comes from multiple sources, requires lots of time to reconcile differences
- Strengths are staff experience and external relationships
  - Diverse staff background and experience, strong backup support
  - Strong working relationships with OMB and congressional staff

NSF Roadmap for Improvement

Assess Budget Division capabilities

Select areas for improvement

Benchmark against other federal budget offices

Identify/evaluate options/solutions for improvement

Engage our stakeholders

Implement Changes

Re-assess Budget Division capabilities

Guiding Principles for Solutions

- First, do no harm
- Low-cost, low-risk
- Lead to administrative / workload efficiencies and savings
- Best practice in federal budget community
- Accepted by internal and external stakeholders

Community-Wide Implications

- Maximize use of BFELoB tools and services
- Encourage shared learning and improvement between budget offices
- Focus BFELoB attention and resources on most significant government-wide shortcomings