



# National Science Foundation Building a Better Budget Office

## Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool BC SAT

AABPA 2011 Fall Symposium  
November 16, 2011





# Topics

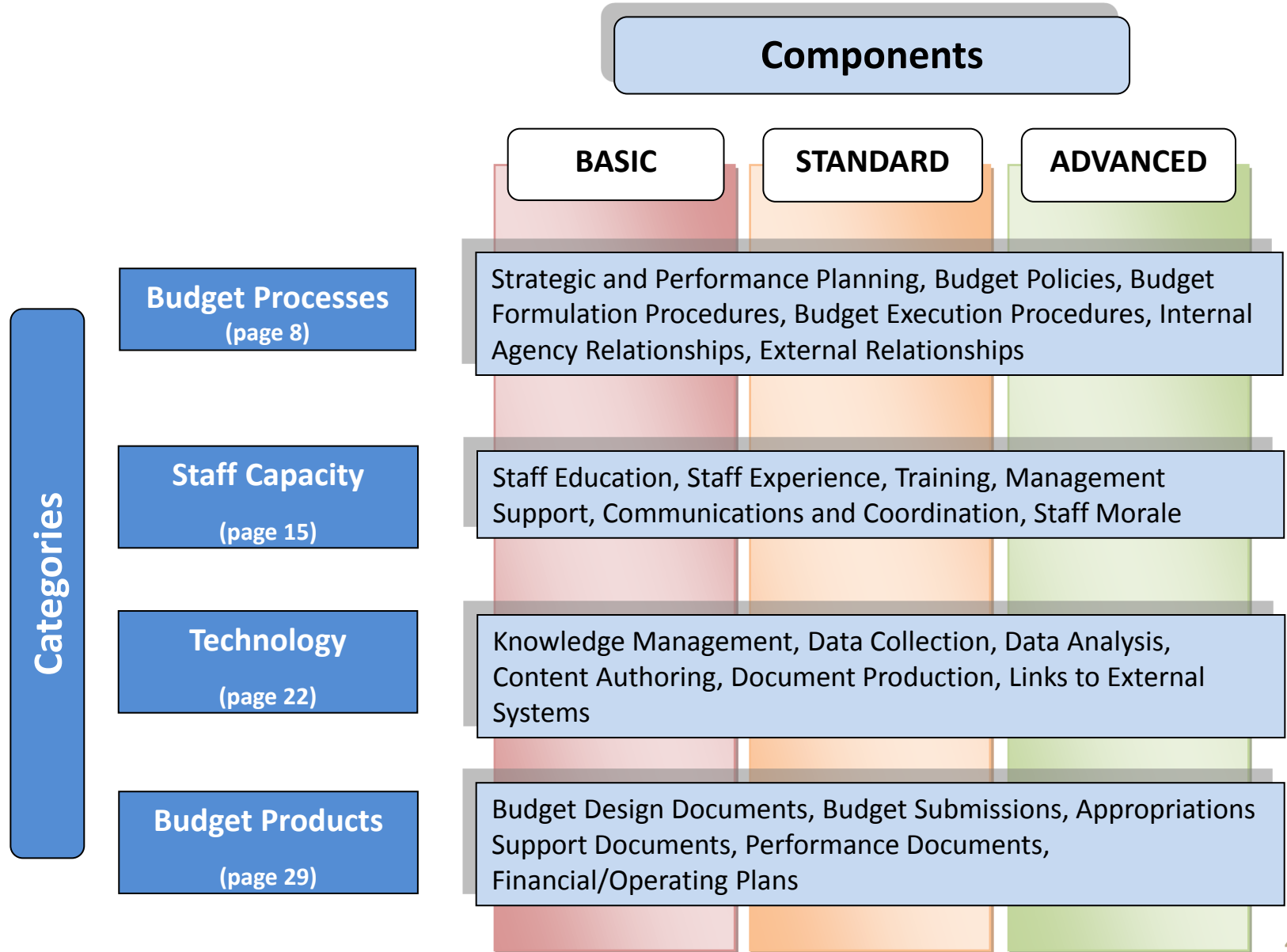
- Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool (BC SAT) Refresher
- NSF Budget Division
  - Capabilities baseline
  - Roadmap to improvement
- Community-Wide Implications



# 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





# BC SAT Checklist

Budgeting Capability Self-Assessment Tool Checklist											
			Basic	Standard	Advanced				Basic	Standard	Advanced
<b>Budget Processes</b>						<b>Technology</b>					
Strategic and Performance Planning						Knowledge Management					
Budget Guidance						Data Collection					
Budget Formulation Procedures						Data Analysis					
Budget Execution Procedures						Content Authoring					
Internal Agency Relationships						Document Production					
External Relationships						Links to External Systems					
<b>Staff Capacity</b>						<b>Budget Products</b>					
Staff Education						Budget Decision Documents					
Staff Experience						Budget Submissions					
Training						Appropriations Support Documents					
Management Support						Performance Documents					
Communications and Coordination						Financial/Operating/Performance Plans					
Staff Morale											



## 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

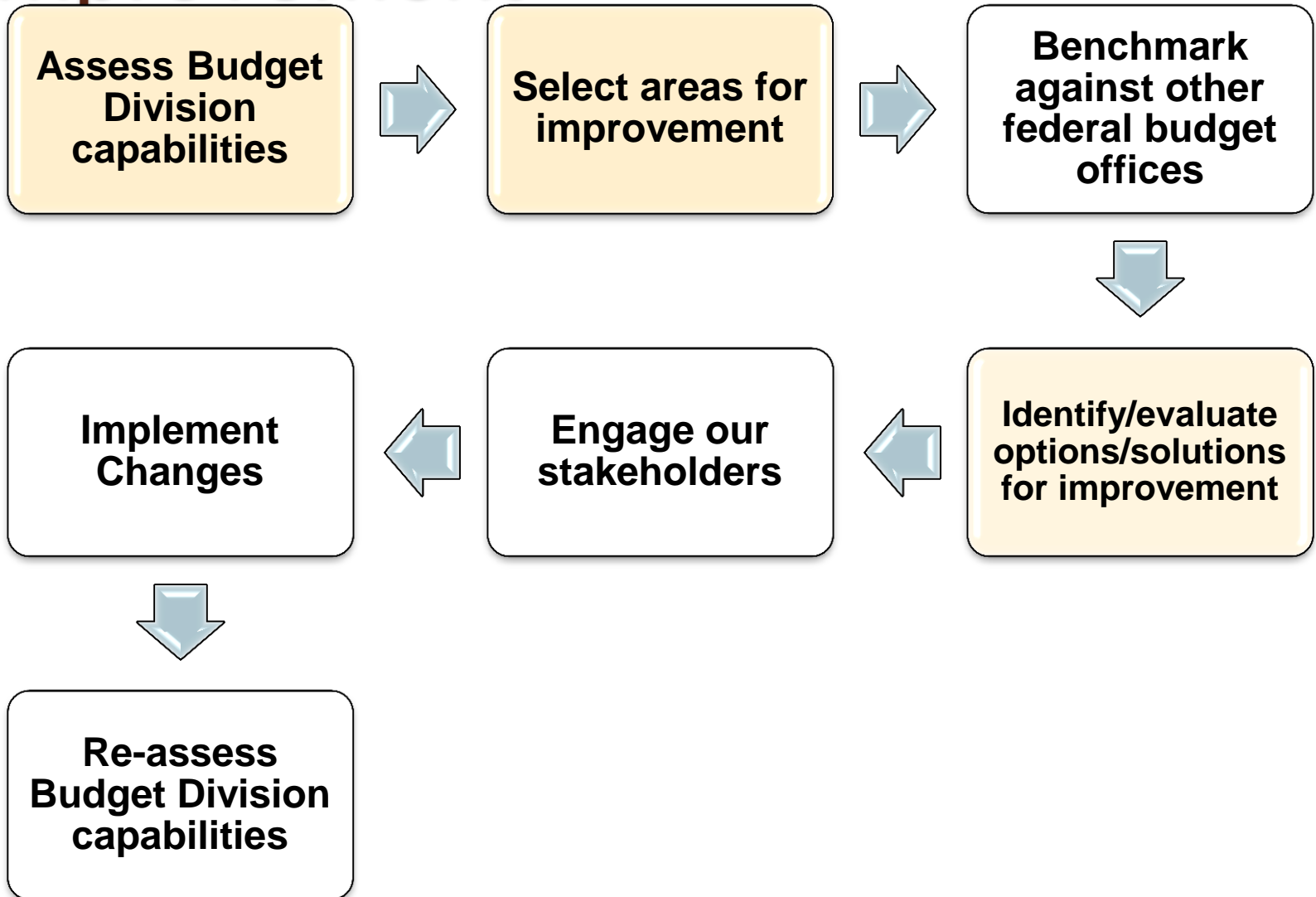


# Summary of BC SAT Results

- 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





# 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