

*The Political Officer
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

This year, the department is introducing important changes in the business planning process with a view to making business plans more strategic and having them better reflect how the department operates. The practices of other institutions suggest further evolution is possible:

- At CIDA, the departmental Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) provides for both functional and geographic business lines, with vice presidents in charge of business planning for each major geographic region (Africa/Mideast, Asia, Americas).
- In the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Senior Executive Service (senior management group) establishes biennial priority objectives for the department, and approves the objectives proposed by the divisions (bureaux) and by the missions. Managers and staff at all levels are accountable for the achievement of objectives, through individual performance contracts on which are based their annual appraisals and performance bonuses.
- While all DFAT missions are “whole-of-government tasked”, missions are to be categorized according to size and resource complement. Smaller missions are being mandated to provide a more limited range of services and thereby afforded a measure of protection from tasking which would compromise the pursuit of their objectives.
- Within DFAIT, some branches have been developing “country plans” in the form of brief two-page documents identifying priorities to guide headquarters and mission activities.
- In Germany, the foreign ministry has launched an initiative to develop a better appreciation of the overall workload of the ministry, how it is distributed among various tasks and activities, and how it relates to established priorities. The initiative involves determining the costs of performing certain services in order to identify potential economies, to explore the scope for alternative delivery systems (OGD or private sector), and to ensure reimbursement of the costs of services to other government departments.
- In the UK, Foreign Office annual reports are beginning to quantify outputs.

PROPOSAL: The department should revise its Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) to better reflect the reality of a department with both functional and geographic bureaux and a significant proportion of its resources at missions abroad. The PRAS should allow for the presentation of a more rounded picture of how the department is serving Canadian interests in various regions of the world.

PROPOSAL: All missions should be required to prepare annual plans.