

Explanation of Program Report Card Template¹

The report card template is intended as a simple, flexible tool for programs to report program information to legislators and the general public. The report card template contains only the the most critical information:

- Results statement
- Contribution of the program to the result
- Summary financial information
- Headline measures
- Story behind the baseline for each measure presented
- Actions proposed to do better (or do the least harm if there are cuts)

The report card is meant to capture key elements of the accountability thinking process for a program; it does not document that entire thinking process. Because space is limited, the report card template does not include narrative responses to all of the eight standard accountability questions that the Appropriations Committee may be asking of all programs during the budget hearings and work sessions. However, the report card is meant to be a summary of the thinking process defined by the eight questions; therefore, the report card should be drafted only after the agency has fully answered the eight questions to its own satisfaction.

In this form, the report card is intended to be easy to fill in with a minimum of technical assistance or additional formatting. **Follow the template formatting, including only one measure per column and minimum font size of Arial 10 point.** While the report card information can be placed into more visually striking or graphically pleasing formats, these more elaborate displays are much more difficult to standardize and would require the programs to spend an inordinate amount of time developing the document. Agencies may develop these more elaborate displays on a case-by-case basis as the need arises.

Standard Report Card Elements

Program Name

In the header, list the full name of your program, with the agency name in parentheses.

Quality of Life Result to Which Program Contributes

Provide a brief, plain-language statement of the desired result for the population to which the program makes its major contribution. Say it in a way that the average voter and taxpayer can understand. For example, “All Children Healthy and Ready for School Success at Age 5.” You may include additional result statements as necessary if the program contributes to more than one primary result. (For those agencies that have several related result statements, clearly indicate the particular result statement associated with the program being presented.)

¹ This document and all other resource materials for state agencies are available on the Appropriations Committee’s RBA web page: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/app/rba/>

Program's Contribution to Result

Provide a brief statement of the how the program contributes to the result. Avoid jargon like, "By eliminating the detrimental effects of hypoxia in LI Sound through improving municipal sewage treatment infrastructure as a key component of a comprehensive management strategy...." Instead try: "The Clean Water Fund reduces harmful levels of oxygen in LI Sound by helping municipalities improve their sewage treatment systems."

Funding

List total funding for the program from all sources. List actual program expenditures for SFY 14 and estimated program expenditures for SFY 15. List the amount of total funding that comes from state, federal, and other sources. These three sources must equal total program funding. For each fiscal year, enter values for total funding and each of the three sources even if those values are \$0.

Partners

List the major partners that have a role to play in doing better

Performance Measures

A performance measure is a numerical measure that tells how much service the program is delivering, how well the program is delivering its services, and whether its customers are better off. Select no more 1 how much measure, 1 or 2 how well measures, and 1 or 2 better off measures. Present as much history of the performance for each measure as possible, preferably 3-5 years, and a forecast of where performance is likely to go if the program keeps doing what it has been doing. If you don't have baseline data or better data are needed, what are your plans for collecting the necessary data? Use the Data Development Agenda in the last column to document your plans.

Story Behind the Baseline

The story behind the baseline explains the data in the graph or table, how we got to where we are on a measure, and what the forecast shows. It identifies the causes and forces at work that account for the current performance. It also discusses where there are weaknesses in the data or research and references the Data Development Agenda for making improvements in them. The report card is an abbreviated document and space is limited. Please enter only the information most critical to understanding the baseline here. Do not describe what the chart shows unless clarification is essential. Use the appropriate symbol to indicate where the trend line is going.

Proposed Actions to Turn the Curve

Identify the concrete steps that you propose to take to turn the curve for your program. Be sure to lead with no-cost or low-cost actions, including reallocation of exiting resources. For each action step, include a one-sentence statement of your rationale, explaining why you think this action will help to turn the curve. If the program is facing cuts, instead of turning the curve to improve performance, you should talk about actions to do the least harm.