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After years of reviews, no results 1 in 5 programs still can't prove value.

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Almost one in five federal programs are unable to demonstrate results, six years after the Office of Management and Budget began pressing program managers to measure them.

"There's no excuse after this long period of time for not having a clear definition of success," said Robert Shea, the Office of Management and Budget's associate director for management. Shea oversees the OMB program that measures the results and performance of federal programs.

"On the whole, I would say that if programs year after year cannot demonstrate results, then those monies ought to be invested in programs that get results," he said.

Indeed, many programs that could not demonstrate their effectiveness to OMB were among the 103 programs targeted for

RESULTS NOT DEMONSTRATED

The Education Department tops the list of agencies having the most programs not able to demonstrate results:



Agency	Programs assessed	Percent of programs not demonstrating results
Education	92	50%
Homeland Security	64	32
Veterans Affairs	10	30
Health and Human Services	112	23
Housing and Urban Development	34	23

SOURCE: Office of Management and Budget

GRAPHIC BY BRYAN SMITH

termination in President Bush's 2009 proposed budget.

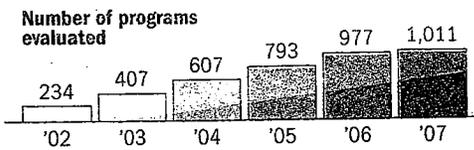
Not every federal program has been assessed for six years. Of the 234 programs that were assessed for the first time in 2002,

half could not demonstrate results. About 55 percent of those have since developed metrics to allow them to measure their effectiveness. Most of the 192 programs

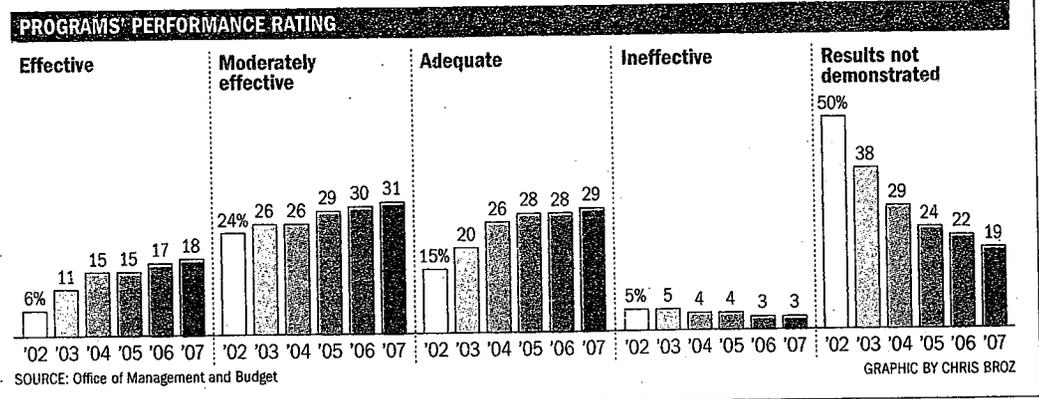
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GETTING RESULTS

Programs increasingly are demonstrating results and being rated effective:



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Reviews

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now deemed by OMB as unable to demonstrate results were assessed within the last three years.

However, dozens of those programs that first failed to demonstrate results in 2002 and 2003 — 47 in all — still haven't improved, often because the programs are extremely broad in scope.

"A lot of those programs do things that are very hard to measure," Shea acknowledged. "Many of them have some constraints about how they can target their funding that limit their ability to improve their performance."

The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program in the Housing and Urban Development Department, a frequent target for Bush administration cuts, is one example. It provides flexible local grants for a variety of projects: renovating housing, improving utilities and spurring economic development, among others.

A tighter set of constraints might make it easier to measure results — but many argue they would defeat the purpose of the program.

"These have been pillars that have held up the social safety net for years and years," said Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C., chairman of the House Budget Committee. "They give maximum flexibility to communities ... you're not prescribing from Washington the right solution for a locality."

"By definition, those programs are very broad. Cities and counties and states can do a lot of things with this money," agreed John Cox, HUD's chief financial officer. "So it presents a challenge: What do you do to measure that?"

Another example is the Appalachian Regional Commission, a grant program that aims to spur economic development, said Adam Hughes, fiscal policy director at

OMB Watch, a nonprofit watchdog group that reviews OMB policies.

"When Congress established the commission, it was supposed to duplicate the efforts of other programs, to pull them together and plug the gaps," Hughes said. "But [OMB] marks it down because it's not unique."

OMB measures a program's effectiveness using the Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART. The tool is a questionnaire that reveals how well a program is focused and managed to accomplish specific results and mission priorities.

OMB says it uses the PART scores when considering possible budget cuts. Some of the programs being proposed for elimination this year — such as Community Oriented Policing Services and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program — could not demonstrate results. Both issue state and local grants, and both lose points under PART for lacking clear goals and quantifiable results.

OMB says PART helps identify programs that could be better run from outside the federal government — either at the state or local level, or by private companies.

"Good intentions alone are not enough to justify the continuation of a program that isn't working or is no longer a priority," said OMB Director Jim Nussle, "particularly when there are tight budgets and we have to make choices."

But legislators and outside observers remain skeptical of those choices. The administration has proposed other cuts, such as eliminating low-income weatherization assistance, which scored "moderately effective," and Agriculture's resource conservation program, which scored "adequate."

And many of the lowest PART scores were given to programs at HUD and the Education Department, both frequent targets of Bush administration cuts.

"These are subjective decisions

made on programs that were largely created for political reasons to begin with," said budget expert Stan Collender, a managing director at Qorvis Communications. "The assessments must be based largely on subjective data and thoughts."

Congress often disregards the PART ratings in order to preserve politically popular programs. CDBG issues grants to 1,200 communities across the country each year, earning it strong bipartisan support. Congress reversed the Bush cuts in 2008, and will likely do the same this year.

The same goes for HUD's HOPE VI public housing grants. The president proposed eliminating the program in 2008; PART ranked it ineffective, and criticized it for long delays and high costs. Congress gave the popular program \$100 million.

"Those particular programs do a lot of good, and they've been tested over the years," Spratt said. "They've also been pared back considerably — they're not that liberal anymore. And they've proved their worth over time."

Criticisms aside, OMB hopes the PART assessments will continue into the next administration. The office is also reassessing many agencies — programs can request to have their PART scores updated, and some scores are now five or six years old and need refreshing.

"We're in the process of taking a fresh look at our completed assessments to make sure they're up to snuff," Shea said. "I don't anticipate that'll result in a lot of downgrades, but it may highlight some areas that are deficient right now. We'll just have to see."

But the program's future in the next administration is uncertain.

"It can't be housed at OMB, a political office," said Hughes. "Certain program offices at OMB have historical biases against certain programs. And if they're in charge of reviewing whether programs get results, of course it'll be subjective."