

# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

# Transportation Strategic Planning

## **Audit Report**

Report Number NL-AR-16-001

May 20, 2016

# VISION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MISSION



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

## **Highlights**

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network.

DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected savings through FY 2015 of million, or percent of the overall \$1 billion goal.

However, it only realized million of those savings.

#### **Background**

In response to declining mail volume, the U.S. Postal Service is challenged with rightsizing its transportation network and adjusting its , while reducing costs and maintaining delivery service. In fiscal year (FY) 2011, the Postal Service established 36 Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency (DRIVE) initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE aims to bring revenue in line with expenses through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives.

The strategy for rightsizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, Ground Transportation. This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017. In FY 2015, annual network transportation costs of about billion were the Postal Service's largest operating expense after compensation and benefits.

During our audit we did a comparative analysis of strategic planning best practices used by 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards. We found that effective strategies include contingency planning.

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its network.

#### What the OIG Found

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network. DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected savings through FY 2015 of million, or percent of the overall \$1 billion goal. However, it only realized million of those savings.

Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight Transportation process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of million. In FY 2015, six roadmaps and two more process roadmaps did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall of million.

Finally, in Quarter 1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional savings shortfall of million.

The surface transportation manager said that an contributed to



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

the savings shortfall. We are reviewing transportation costs in relation to service standard changes in a separate audit and may review the Postal Service's progress on transportation savings programs in the future.

In addition, we found the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings. Contingency planning helps management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

#### What the OIG Recommended

We recommended the vice president, Network Operations, update the 1.13 section of DRIVE 1 - Optimize Network Operations to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in FYs 2016 and 2017.

### **Transmittal Letter**



May 20, 2016

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** ROBERT CINTRON

VICE PRESIDENT, NETWORK OPERATIONS

E-Signed by Michael Thompsor RIFY authenticity with eSign Deskto

FROM: Michael L. Thompson

**Deputy Assistant Inspector General** 

for Mission Operations

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Transportation Strategic Planning

(Report Number NL-AR-16-001)

This report presents the results of our review of Transportation Strategic Planning (Project Number 15XG041NO000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Margaret B. McDavid, acting director, Transportation, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

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## **Finding**

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its transportation network.

#### Introduction

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Service's transportation strategic planning (Project Number 15XG041NO000). Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its transportation network. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.

In response to declining mail volume, the Postal Service is challenged to right size its transportation network and adjust its while reducing costs and maintaining service. In fiscal year (FY) 2011, the Postal Service established 36 Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency (DRIVE) initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE initiatives aim to bring revenue in line with expenses by FY 2016 through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each strategic initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives. The strategy for right sizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, Ground Transportation. This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

#### Summary

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network. DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected a savings through FY 2015 of million, or percent of the \$1 billion goal. However, it only realized savings of million, which is just percent of the savings goal.

Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight Transportation process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of \$80 million. Further, in FY 2015, there are eight roadmaps that did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall of \$104 million.

In Quarter (Q) 1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional shortfall of

transportation costs in

programs contributed to the savings shortfall. We are reviewing transportation costs in relation to service standard changes in a separate audit and may review the Postal Service's progress on transportation savings programs in the future. In addition, the transportation optimization strategy did not have contingency plans to re-evaluate program process roadmaps that did not yield projected savings.

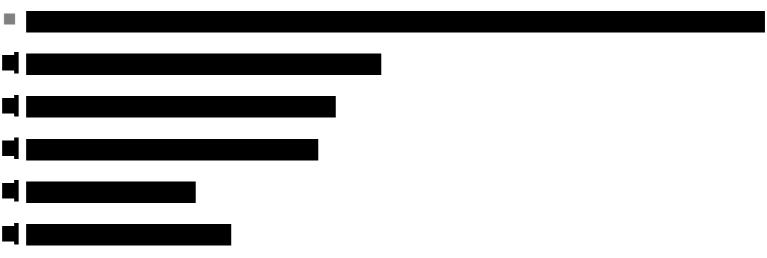
Our research on the strategic planning best practices used by 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards showed that effective strategies include contingency planning. This helps management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

#### **Transportation Strategy**

The surface transportation manager indicated that an

The Postal Service's DRIVE Initiative 1.13 — which is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017 — could be more effective. Since implementing the initiative, the Postal Service has not met projected cost savings. Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of million. The six process roadmaps are:

In FY 2015, of 10 process
roadmaps, six process roadmaps
and two additional process
roadmaps did not meet projected
cost savings, resulting in a
savings shortfall of million.



Further, in FY 2015, of 10 process roadmaps, six process roadmaps and two additional process roadmaps

did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall of million.

The process roadmaps that comprise DRIVE Initiative 1.13, described in more detail below, are loaded into an enterprise-wide, web-based tracking tool that provides quarterly major milestones with results (see Figure 1 for projected and actual savings in FY 2014 and Figure 2 for projected and actual savings in FY 2015).

Figure 1. DRIVE 1.13 FY 2014 Roadmaps<sup>1</sup>

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®		\$1 Billion FY14 Quarterly Metrics Snapshot			
PROJECTS	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$85,308 Actual: \$0	\$85,308 Actual: \$0	\$85,308 Actual: \$0	\$255,924 Actual: \$0
	\$6,000,000 Actual: \$1,495,269	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$1,533,873	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$3,775,837	\$27,873,320 Actual: \$3,694,502	\$33,873,320 Actual: \$10,499,481
	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$6,248,977	\$11,250,000 Actual: \$9,936,772	\$11,250,000 Actual: \$11,086,568	\$13,968,354 Actual: \$8,115,943	\$45,218,654 Actual: \$35,388,260
	\$2,500,000 Actual: \$0	\$7,600,000 Actual: \$81,160	\$15,200,000 Actual: \$110,902	\$15,275,979 Actual: \$333,324	\$40,575,979 Actual: \$525,386
	\$2,500,000 Actual: \$310,242	\$3,150,000 Actual: \$566,137	\$3,211,581 Actual: \$1,019,059	\$3,250,000 Actual: \$1,350,570	\$12,111,581 Actual: \$3,246,008
	\$3,500,000 Actual: \$729,043	\$4,500,000 Actual: \$1,756,042	\$4,500,000 Actual: \$3,825,682	\$5,054,391 Actual: \$13,314,180	\$17,554,391 Actual: \$19,624,947
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$500,000 Actual: \$678,253	\$5000,000 Actual: \$678,253
	\$5,146 Actual: \$3,932	\$5,146 Actual: \$0	\$16,199 Actual: \$0	\$16,199 Actual: \$0	\$42,690 Actual: \$3,932
TOTAL	\$23,255,146 Actual: \$8,787,463	\$26,590,454 Actual: \$13,873,984	\$34,263,088 Actual: \$19,818,048	\$66,023,851 Actual: \$27,486,772	\$150,132,539 Actual: \$69,966,267

Source: Postal Service.

<sup>1</sup> This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

Figure 2. DRIVE 1.13 FY 2015 Roadmaps<sup>2</sup>

UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE®

## **\$1 Billion FY15 Quarterly Metrics Snapshot**

ROADMAP	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
	\$10,000 Actual: \$57,100	\$10,000 Actual: \$(33,654)	\$10,000 Actual: \$18	\$276,340 Actual: \$(60,855)	\$306,340 Actual: \$(37,391)
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$4,000,000 Actual: \$759,126	\$6,000,000 Actual: \$759,126	\$7,062,384 Actual: \$759,126	\$17,062,384 Actual: \$2,277,378
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$5,119,315 Actual: \$519,226	\$5,119,315 Actual: \$3,488,873	\$6,823,754 Actual: \$6,184,811	\$17,062,384 Actual: \$10,192,910
	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$2,210,851	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$1,891,208	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$100,551	\$23,863,568 Actual: \$0	\$29,863,568 Actual: \$4,202,610
	\$7,000,000 Actual: \$12,729,162	\$7,000,000 Actual: \$7,518,758	\$8,000,000 Actual: \$9,054,233	\$8,145,869 Actual: \$8,973,415	\$30,145,869 Actual: \$38,275,568
	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$(17,316)	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,048,141	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,197,377	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,760,219	\$35,000,000 Actual: \$9,988,421
	\$1,000,000 Actual: \$1,248,731	\$1,000,000 Actual: \$171,135	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$838,955	\$2,202,835 Actual: \$583,336	\$6,202,835 Actual: \$2,842,157
	\$4,500,000 Actual: \$698,684	\$4,500,000 Actual: 2,116,490	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$1,093,663	\$33,674,521 Actual: \$1,081,077	\$42,674,521 Actual: \$4,989,914
	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$1,342,603	\$0 Actual: \$0	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$29,752	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$704,331	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$2,058,686
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$750,000 Actual: \$0	\$750,000 Actual: \$0
TOTAL	\$23,260,000 Actual: \$18,251,815	\$32,379,315 Actual: \$15,990,430	\$31,879,315 Actual: \$18,562,548	\$91,549,271 Actual: \$21,985,459	\$179,067,901 Actual: \$74,790,252

Source: Postal Service.

<sup>2</sup> This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

An increase

contributed
to the savings shortfall.

The surface transportation manager said that an increase contributed to the savings shortfall. In addition, the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings. As a result, in FYs 2014 and 2015, the Postal Service had a total savings shortfall of million. Finally, in Q1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional savings shortfall of million.

We did a comparative analysis of strategic planning best practices used by 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards. The organizations had some differences, but we found they shared similar practices and all stressed the need to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the initiatives in place and continually assess processes to identify performance gaps that need improvement. Finally, we found that effective strategies include contingency planning to help management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals (see Table 1 for a list of the organizations from which we gathered best practices information).

**Table 1: Best Practices Resources** 

International Posts	Corporations	Advisory Boards
Canada Post	DHL	Authenticity Consulting, LLC
Deutsche Post AG	FedEx	Center for Applied Research
La Poste	Hexaware Technologies	Corporate Executive Board
Royal Mail plc	Houston Chronicle	Executive Consultancy Service
Universal Postal Union	United Parcel Service	
	The World Bank	

Source: Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis.

### Recommendation

We recommend management
update the 1.13 section
of DRIVE to include an
achievable projected
transportation cost reduction
goal and contingency planning
to mitigate unexpected events
in FYs 2016 and 2017.

We recommend the vice president, Network Operations:

1. Update the 1.13 section of Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency Initiative 1 (Optimize Network Operations) to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

#### **Management's Comments**

Management disagreed with the finding and recommendation.

Regarding the finding, management stated that by not acknowledging the change in mail mix shape and the significant impact of shape and costs, the report oversimplifies the challenge as simply one of responding to a decline in overall volume. Management stated that their underlying concern is the OIG's failure to acknowledge and consider that the goals set up in the DRIVE process are aggressive stretch goals. Management also stated that, although they did not meet the overall \$1 billion DRIVE goals by million for FYs 2014 and 2015, they met the internal, more realistic budget targets, which would seem to be a more appropriate benchmark for analysis. Further, management requested that the OIG give serious consideration to not publishing this report because it falls short of offering any constructive information or guidance.

Regarding the recommendation, management stated that they use DRIVE as a tool to push the organization as quickly as possible to achieve strategic goals. If management made the DRIVE process less aggressive, the Postal Service would become more conservative and not pursue some of the more complex, risky — but higher return — initiatives.

See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

#### **Evaluation of Management's Comments**

The OIG considers management's comments unresponsive to the finding and the recommendation in the report.

Regarding management's disagreement with our finding, during our audit, the surface transportation manager indicated that an increase amount and an amount of the savings shortfall. However, the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings.

Regarding not publishing the report due to its lack of constructive information or guidance, the audit included an analysis of strategic planning best practices. These practices stress the need to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the initiatives in place and continually assess processes to identify performance gaps that need improvement. We also found that effective strategies include contingency planning to help management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

Regarding the recommendation and management's concern about the failure to acknowledge and consider that the DRIVE goals are aggressive stretch goals, our analysis indicated that DRIVE is a tool for bringing revenue in line with expenses through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. The absence of realistic goals increases the risk that the Postal Service will not meet its performance goals.

We view the disagreement on the recommendation as unresolved but do not plan to pursue it through the formal audit resolution process. We consider the recommendation closed with the issuance of this report.

# **Appendices**

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# **Appendix A: Additional Information**

#### **Background**

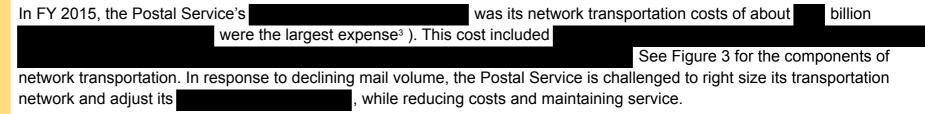
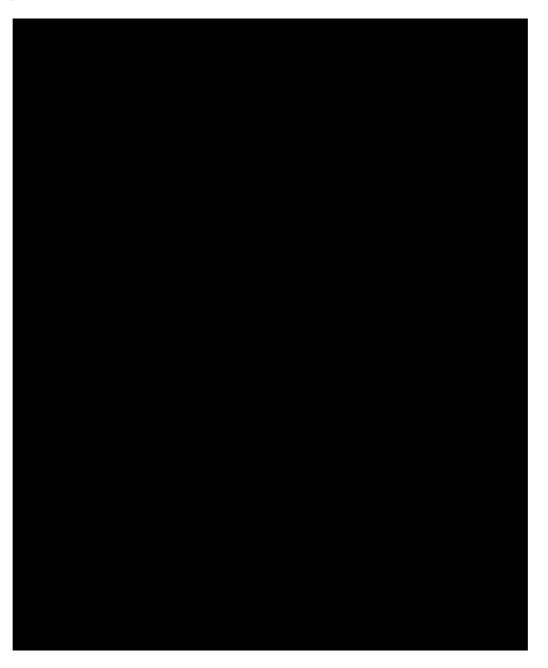


Figure 3: Transportation Components of Network Operations



Source: OIG analysis.

was second at billion, 2015 Report on Annual 10-K, U.S. Postal Service.

In FY 2011, the Postal Service established 36 DRIVE initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE initiatives aim to bring revenue in line with expenses by FY 2016 through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each strategic initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives.

The strategy for right sizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, which is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion beginning from FY 2014 through FY 2017. The initiative was composed of eight to ten process roadmaps linking major milestones with results (see Figure 4 for the DRIVE structure).

PMG Each of the 24 DRIVE Leaders Initiatives has an ELT sponsor and is led by an Initiative Lead Each Initiative is composed of "Roadmaps", which are Initiatives detailed plans linking major milestones with results Each Roadmap has a Roadmaps Roadmap Owner and a Roadmap Team Roadmap teams are multidisciplinary and cross-Teams functional, and include invited individuals throughout the Postal Service

**Figure 4: DRIVE Structure** 

Source: Postal Service analysis.

#### Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its transportation network. Specifically, we assessed Network Operations' strategy to determine if it had a comprehensive plan linked to the Postal Service's overall strategic and business goals to optimize transportation. The scope for this audit was FYs 2014 and 2015 and Q1, FY 2016, DRIVE 1.13 - \$1 Billion Ground Transportation Initiative roadmaps and measured goals.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed procedures and criteria related to establishing DRIVE initiatives.
- Interviewed the vice president, Network Operations, to obtain information regarding Network Operations' current and planned initiatives and to understand how the initiatives are prioritized or associated to provide an overall strategy to meet long-term goals.
- Interviewed the Postal Service's strategic planning director to determine how Network Operations' strategic planning contributes to the Postal Service's overall strategic plan.
- Interviewed the manager, Surface Transportation, to discuss the objective of DRIVE Initiative 1.13.
- Obtained and reviewed FYs 2014 and 2015 and Q1, FY 2016, roadmap metrics to determine if projected goals were met.4
- Reviewed, compared, and analyzed the strategic planning information of 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards to identify best practices.
- Reviewed, compared, and analyzed 15 trade and industry organization articles and reports to identify industry initiatives and best practices that may apply to the Postal Service.
- Discussed strategic planning best practices with external stakeholders.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2015 through May 2016, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on April 14, 2016, and included their comments where appropriate.

We did not assess the reliability of any computer-generated data for the purposes of this report.

#### **Prior Audit Coverage**

The OIG did not identify any prior audits or reviews related to the objective of this audit.

<sup>4</sup> We plan to review and evaluate each roadmap detailed process in future separate reviews to help facilitate Postal Service development of plans to mitigate unexpected events and ensure project goals are achieved.

# **Appendix B: Management's Comments**

LINDA M. MALONE VICE PRESIDENT, NETWORK OPERATIONS



May 11, 2016

LORI LAU DILLARD DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Transportation Strategic Planning (Report Number NO-AT-16-Draft)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with the opportunity to review and comment on the subject draft report.

Management has several issues with the report as written. If postal management is to be subjected to criticism for its response to mail volume trends, it seems only fair that the criticism reflect the muti-faceted nature of those trends. The initial "Background" paragraph states that:

In response to declining mail volume, the Postal Service is challenged with rightsizing it transportation network and adjusting its while reducing costs and maintaining delivery service.

While First-Class Mail letter and flat volume (in pieces) has declined, overall cubic volume of mail has increased because of the concurrent growth in packages. By not acknowledging this change in mail mix shape and the significant impact of shape and costs, the report oversimplifies the challenge as simply one of responding to a decline in overall volume. The entire effort under the \$1 Billion strategy for the Delivering Results, Innovation, Value and Efficiency (DRIVE) initiative is indeed to reduce costs while maintaining service but it is being done by reducing and better planning underutilized assets as both the size and the nature of the mailstream change.

A second underlying concern with the audit is its failure to acknowledge and consider that the goals set up in the DRIVE process -- which it criticizes management for not achieving -- are aggressive stretch goals. DRIVE is utilized by management to maximize the organization's pursuit of its strategic goals by intentionally setting very high objectives to achieve. As a process, DRIVE is meant to push the organization farther and faster toward improvement than if more modest, easier-to-achieve targets were established. For example, the Postal Service planned as part of its FY15 budget cycle to save million as part of the overall \$1 billion DRIVE initiative. In fact, we saved million in costs, exceeding the goal by

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW WASHINGTON, DC 2026D-7100 202-268-4305 FAI: 202-268-3331 www.usps.com DRIVE goals, it is very unlikely that all of the million in savings in FY15 would have been achieved. Although, we did not meet the overall \$1 billion DRIVE goals by for FY14 and FY15, we met our internal more realistic budget targets, which would seem to be a more appropriate benchmark for analysis.

If the OIG's approach to auditing is to evaluate management on the basis of whether its stretch goals have been achieved, such an approach could counterproductively influence managers to establish lower cost savings goals to avoid future similar criticism. Such a result would be unfortunate, as it would lead to less aggressive pursuit of savings and leave savings opportunities on the table.

Although the audit faults management for not achieving its overall cost savings goal and recommends the establishment of contingencies, the audit does not constructively identify any potential savings opportunities that were not already specified by management.

By any objective standard, the report falls short of offering any constructive information or guidance. Accordingly, we respectfully urge that serious consideration be given to not publishing the report at all.

#### Recommendation 1:

We recommend the Vice President, Network Operations:

 Update the 1.13 section of Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency Initiative 1 (Optimize Network Operations) to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

#### Management Response/Action Plan:

Management disagrees with this recommendation. DRIVE is used as a tool to push the organization as quickly as possible to achieve our strategic goals. The budget process allows for a mechanism for providing more achievable goals. If we change the DRIVE process to become less aggressive we will certainly become more conservative and not pursue some of the more complex, riskier but higher return initiatives.

Target Implementation Date:

N/A

Responsible Manager:

N/A

Linda M. Malone



Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms.
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1735 North Lynn Street Arlington, VA 22209-2020 (703) 248-2100