



Fiscal Year 2024 Agency Performance Plan and Report



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Overview

The Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (Permitting Council) is a Federal agency charged with improving the transparency, predictability, and outcomes of the Federal environmental review and authorization process for “covered” infrastructure projects. The Permitting Council was established in 2015 by Title 41 of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST-41), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4370m *et seq.* The Permitting Council is comprised of the Permitting Council Executive Director, who serves as the Council Chair; thirteen Council members who represent Federal permitting agencies (including deputy secretary-level designees of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Army, Commerce, Interior, Energy, Transportation, Defense, Homeland Security, and Housing and Urban Development, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chairs of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation); the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ); and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Permitting Council was made a permanent Federal agency through enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58). The Permitting Council established its first Strategic Plan for the years 2022-2026.

The Permitting Council is a collaborative body whose members collectively are charged with implementing FAST-41, improving interagency coordination of the Federal environmental review and authorization of FAST-41 covered infrastructure projects, administering, implementing, and enforcing FAST-41, and acting as a Federal center for permitting excellence. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is led by the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff. To accompany implementation of its Strategic Plan, the Permitting Council has developed the FY 2024 Agency Performance Report, in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRA), to connect daily agency operations to strategic goals. The Act was first enacted in 1993 and subsequently updated in 2010.

This FY 2024 Performance Report documents progress towards the Permitting Council’s Strategic Plan through defined performance indicators to monitor and assess achievement of agency goals and objectives. Each indicator aligns to a

strategic objective, providing a means for determining fulfillment of each objective and, ultimately, strategic goal. The Performance Report identifies goal leaders responsible for driving goal and objective activities and sets an approach and cadence for the consistent and quality measurement of indicators. The Performance Report is updated on an annual basis, providing annual reporting on performance indicators and strategic progress.

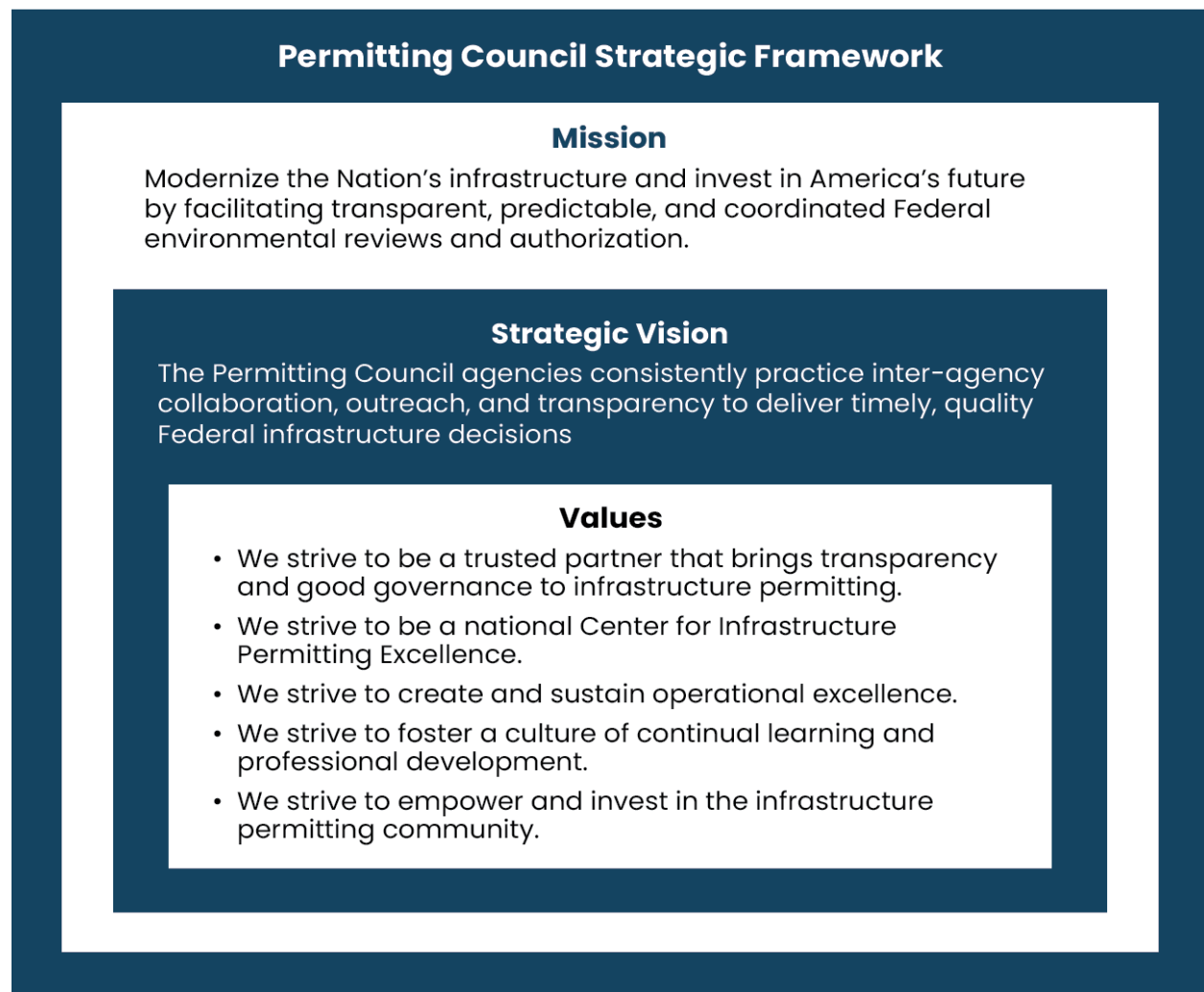
As a nascent permanent agency with a small full-time staff, the Permitting Council is still and establishing internal administrative and operational policies, procedures, and processes. This Performance Report captures the work done thus far to achieve the agency's goals and objectives as the agency works to refine its measures and targets.





Strategic Plan Summary

The Permitting Council's strategic plan sets forth the agency's strategic framework comprising the mission statement, strategic vision, and organizational values. The agency's strategic goals and objectives drive the Permitting Council's efforts towards accomplishing the strategic framework.



The Permitting Council's Strategic Plan articulates the agency's approach to achieving its mission and broader strategic framework. The agency has four strategic goals with supporting strategic objectives. Performance measures and targets were developed to track and assess progress toward the agency's strategic goals and objectives.

Goal 1: Standardize organizational policies and procedures.

Objective 1: Refine Standard Operating Procedures.

Objective 2: Disseminate policies and procedures and train employees.

Objective 3: Establish cadence to enable and nurture continual business process improvement.

Goal 2: Grow and diversify personnel skills, capacity, and experience.

Objective 1: Recruit and hire diverse staff and capabilities to meet increased infrastructure permitting demands.

Objective 2: Facilitate growth opportunities to retain talent.

Goal 3: Advance implementation of FAST-41.

Objective 1: Establish and implement updated FAST-41 guidance.

Objective 2: Develop tools and templates to aid in FAST-41 implementation.

Objective 3: Update the Permitting Dashboard to ensure transparency and alignment with FAST-41.

Objective 4: Formalize and offer Permitting Council services.

Goal 4: Conduct outreach to expand participation in the FAST-41 program.

Objective 1: Refine website to solidify web presence.

Objective 2: Establish and foster new relationships across Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Private Sectors.



Performance Indicators and Results

The Executive Director and staff from across the agency worked together to develop the performance measures. Each indicator and associated target was developed to specifically measure the achievement of each strategic objective and ultimately strategic goal. Measures are assessed at least annually. Meeting these measures and their targets drives implementation of the Permitting Council’s strategic plan.

The Permitting Council strives towards steady improvements of its targets each year. If any targets are achieved prior to the end of the strategic plan, the Permitting Council will continue to maintain performance levels. The table below lists the FY 2024 performance measures. The Permitting Council Executive Director and staff addressed the growing maturity of the Agency through improved measures and targets for FY 2025. Those improvements and targets have been addressed in a separate table at the end of this report and will be reported on in the FY 2025 Performance Report. The Permitting Council is working towards developing and implementing a new strategic plan beginning in FY 2026 and anticipates new goals and objectives with associated metrics aimed towards to provide accountability, transparency and predictability in the permitting process for project sponsors and the general public.

#	MEASURE	MEASURE RATIONALE	FY 2024 TARGET	FY 2024 ACTUAL
Goal 1: Standardize organizational policies and procedures.				
Objective 1: Refine Standard Operating Procedures.				
1.1	Percentage of Process Library developed.	The Permitting Council develops a process library which identifies all needed organizational processes to ensure compliance. These policies and procedures are then prioritized and developed, working towards a comprehensive process library.	30%	44%

Objective 2: Disseminate policies and procedures and train employees.				
1.2	Percentage of new policies and procedures briefed to agency employees.	The Permitting Council develops necessary policies and procedures. This documentation is only useful when staff are aware and trained on policies and procedures for consistent implementation and compliance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Staff are trained through formal training, meetings, and dissemination of documents and work instructions.	100%	86%
Objective 3: Establish cadence to enable and nurture continual business process improvement.				
1.3	Number of executed business process improvements per quarter.	The Permitting Council works to continually improve its processes and procedures to create efficiencies in executing its mission. Such improvements include process automation, streamlined reviews, and collaboration tools/software.	4	4
Goal 2: Grow and diversify personnel skills, capacity, and experience.				
Objective 1: Recruit and hire diverse staff and capabilities to meet increased infrastructure permitting demands.				
2.1	Percentage of full-time equivalents (FTEs) hired and onboarded.	The Permitting Council leverages staff to execute its mission. The agency's ability to effectively hire and retain diverse staff supports its ability to achieve the needs of the organization.	75%	66%
Objective 2: Facilitate growth opportunities to retain talent.				
2.2	Percentage of employees leveraging individual professional development opportunities.	Professional development contributes to organizational capabilities and staff retention. Development includes agency-wide training, individual development plans, growth activities/responsibilities, training courses, and certifications.	75%	81%

2.3	Number of professional development opportunities offered to agency employees.	The Permitting Council advocates for growth opportunities to support its mission and its staff, ensuring ample opportunities for development in various formats. Development opportunities may be lunch and learns, third-party training, and facilitated course offerings.	16	12
2.4	Employee Retention Rate of Permanent Career Staff	The Permitting Council fosters an environment that promotes employee development and satisfaction through retained employees.	85%	100%
Goal 3: Advance implementation of FAST-41.				
Objective 1: Establish and implement updated FAST-41 guidance				
3.1	Number of guidance, procedures, memos, and trainings to support FAST-41 implementation.	The Permitting Council provides detailed guidance to aid Departments and Agencies in implementing FAST-41. The agency promotes this guidance through its Federal outreach and engagement efforts such as the Chief Environmental Review and Permitting Officer (CERPO) working group. The Permitting Council may supplement its guidance through the issuance of additional guidance documents or Executive Director memos.	30	32
Objective 2: Develop tools and templates to aid in FAST-41 implementation.				
3.2	Number of tools and templates developed.	The Permitting Council develops tools and templates for agencies and stakeholders to leverage throughout the permitting process, helping agencies to more efficiently implement FAST-41. As a unique collaborator across the Federal Government on infrastructure permitting, the Permitting Council can provide valuable insights and aids for FAST-41 implementation. In working with agencies, the Permitting Council identifies common challenges and/or lessons learned to inform best practices and additional tools and templates.	5	17

Objective 3: Update the Permitting Dashboard to ensure transparency and alignment with FAST-41.				
3.3	Number of Permitting Dashboard updates or refinements deployed.	To ensure the Permitting Dashboard is maximizing covered project transparency and aligns with the FAST-41 statute, the Permitting Council monitors user experience and feedback from agencies, project sponsors and other stakeholders. Updates and refinements to the Dashboard are developed and implemented based on the feedback to further enhance user experience, transparency and compliance.	50	84
3.4	No more than 25% of active FAST-41 covered projects on the Permitting Dashboard with permitting timetables extended by 60 days.	The Permitting Council and its members share a responsibility to incentivize agencies to work together and ensure accuracy and timeliness of project timetables and to coordinate their efforts for project success.	<25%	47%
Objective 4: Formalize and offer Permitting Council services.				
3.5	Number of services provided to support FAST-41 implementation.	The Permitting Council is designed to advance FAST-41 implementation and improve the permitting processes through a variety of services to distinct audiences. The Permitting Council services support the infrastructure permitting community.	10	14
Goal 4: Conduct outreach to expand participation in the FAST-41 program.				
Objective 1: Refine website to solidify web presence.				
4.1	Average number of unique viewers on the Permitting Council website.	Tracking website impressions informs the Permitting Council if outreach and communications efforts are generating traction and engagement on our website, which houses information, tools, resources, and the Dashboard. A dedicated website will direct stakeholders to resources for infrastructure permitting information and will help solidify the Permitting Council's role as a value-added partner within the permitting infrastructure community.	575	850

Objective 2: Establish and foster new relationships across Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Private Sectors.				
4.2	Number of collaborations established or maintained with other organizations.	Collaborations demonstrate the Permitting Council's growth in meaningful engagement on FAST-41, which supports more awareness and participation in FAST-41. The Permitting Council engages in relationships to support the agency's mission such as interagency agreements and tribal engagements.	20	24
4.3	Number of outreach events with agency participation.	The Permitting Council conducts outreach across all aspects of the permitting community to raise awareness of and participation in the FAST-41 program. Outreach includes Federal, state, local, and tribal entities, as well as outreach by topics such as sectors.	40	53
4.4	Number of projects added to the Permitting Dashboard.	The Permitting Council aims to grow awareness and participation in FAST-41. A component of successful outreach and relationship building is seen when projects leverage the FAST-41 process and publish the permitting timetables on the Permitting Dashboard.	10	5



Performance Summary

This fiscal year, the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff worked to implement the strategic plan, which focused on standing up programs, processes, and critical organizational infrastructure. The Permitting Council prioritized performance metrics and adjusting programs to best carry out the agency's strategic plan.

Achieving performance goals requires full agency commitment. The Permitting Council's Executive Director leads the implementation of the strategic plan and the related performance goals through the Permitting Council agency staff and, as necessary, with the assistance of the Permitting Council members. The Permitting Council Executive Director works to implement the performance goals, and delegates responsibility for aspects of execution. The Permitting Council Executive Director maintains a lean organizational structure that enables close collaboration across the agency to meet performance goals. Each performance goal has a designated lead with supporting agency resources.

Additionally, with an agency mission driven by collaborative relationships, many of the Permitting Council's strategic goals require extensive interagency coordination. Permitting Council members support the agency's strategic and performance goals in various ways which can include identifying and promoting permitting best practices, and seeking opportunities to provide cross-cutting improvements in the environmental review, permitting, and authorization process.

The sections below detail the agency's performance in achieving each of its goals, as well as any challenges and strategies to support enhanced performance.



Goal 1: Standardize organizational policies and procedures.

Goal Leader: Director of Operations

The Permitting Council made significant progress towards a full suite of necessary policies and procedures required for a federal agency. The Permitting Council is nearing completion of foundational policies and accompanying procedures. Most notably, the Permitting Council exceeded its goal of developing internal procedures that ensure consistency and compliance. However, the Permitting Council did not meet its goal of disseminating and briefing employees on new policies and procedures. The Permitting Council missed its target by one policy which was finalized and not yet briefed to staff during FY 2024.

Significant policy developments for FY 2024 include the full suite of an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program. While the Permitting Council receives EEO services via the General Services Administration (GSA), it was critical for the Permitting Council to outline its policies and internal procedures for EEO matters. Part of these EEO policies and procedures included reasonable accommodation. The Permitting Council briefed and provided these materials across the agency to ensure awareness and understanding of resources and processes.

Also, as described in Goal 2, the Permitting Council obtained the capability to post its own job announcements, providing a more efficient and expedited staffing process. To ensure a fair and equitable approach to managing staffing, the Permitting Council developed a Merit Promotion Plan. This provides the framework for the Permitting Council to adhere to merit system principles and provide an open and bias-free approach for hiring decisions. This effort was accompanied with a staffing roadmap to educate and guide staff in the process and requirements.

While the Permitting Council prioritized these foundational policies and procedures, internal advancements were also made towards efficiencies and process improvements. As a growing agency, the Permitting Council understands the need to adapt organizational processes. As such, the Permitting Council established operational budgets for the key functional teams within the agency. This approach advanced organizational maturity, placing greater accountability on supervisors and leadership to manage budgets for operational activities. The Permitting Council provided detailed training and a real-time tracker for leadership to manage team budgets directly and thus avoided the delay and burden associated with convening meetings to discuss each budgetary decision point. Additionally, the Permitting Council continues to leverage technology to create efficiencies in processes. During FY 2024, the Permitting Council automated portions of a labor-intensive financial process requiring multiple approvers and processors. This automation reduces the burden on staff and helps reduce financial errors that can take more time to correct.

Challenges

Still in a growing phase, the Permitting Council faces challenges in managing administrative and operational requirements with the need to establish and refine internal policies and procedures. The agency's hiring efforts in FY 2024 provided increased capacity for achieving Goal 1. The Permitting Council still anticipates managing multiple priorities as it works to become fully staffed. The Permitting Council will continue to prioritize mandatory policies and procedures in FY 2025.

Goal 2: Grow and diversify personnel skills, capacity, and experience.

Goal Leader: Director of Operations

The Permitting Council hired and onboarded a total of 6 personnel during FY 2024. While this did not meet the target goal, the Permitting Council made significant progress towards achieving full capacity. These hired positions filled critical needs and functions for the Permitting Council as detailed below.

- **Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs:** With a steady increase of attention on permitting reform, this position brings critical engagement points with Congress, as well as enhanced state engagement in advancing FAST-41 adoption.
- **Director of Public Engagement:** In support of strategic goals to grow the FAST-41 portfolio, this resource helps identify opportunities to communicate and educate about FAST-41, resulting in greater participation and adoption of permitting best practices.
- **Infrastructure Project Advisor:** As the FAST-41 portfolio grows, seeing a significant increase in FY 2024, the need for advisors to help shepherd and assist projects in achieving timely reviews and authorizations also grows.
- **Director of Permitting Policy and Planning:** The Permitting Council acts as a center for permitting excellence, and this role shapes the agency's initiatives and activities of the Permitting Council in identifying, disseminating, and advancing permitting best practices. It also ensures the Permitting Council meets statutory reporting requirements related to FAST-41 implementation.
- **Environmental Review Improvement Fund (ERIF) Assistance Program Manager:** The Permitting Council received \$350 million in appropriations into its Environmental Review Improvement Fund (ERIF) with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. To responsibly manage the influx of appropriations, the Permitting Council stood up the ERIF Assistance Program which supports timely reviews of

FAST-41 projects and advances the agency's role as a center for permitting excellence. This resource leads the oversight and management of the ERIF Assistance Program to ensure the goals and objectives of funding are met.

- ▶ **Human Resource Officer:** In advancing Goal 2 specifically, the Permitting Council recognized the need for a dedicated resource to handle staffing and other employment-related issues. As such, this resource is a critical hire for FY 2024 in enabling ultimate achievement of the Permitting Council's staffing goals.

The Permitting Council exceeded its goal for staff retention, retaining all employees throughout the fiscal year. The challenges and opportunities of a new and growing agency may not always be a fit for employees, yet the Permitting Council demonstrated its commitment to staff, as evidenced by its 100% retention. The Permitting Council recognizes that as the agency nears full capacity, the internal programs and support to agencies need to evolve as well.

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council established its first ever annual training program to enable more training opportunities and staff-wide employee support offerings. The Permitting Council delivered or facilitated training to over 80% of current employees in FY2024. This almost doubles the number of employees participating in activities to support their own development compared to FY 2023. While staff seized more opportunities for training, the Permitting Council did not meet its target in providing training opportunities to staff. The Permitting Council provided more consistent and planned agency-wide training opportunities demonstrating improvement from FY 2023. Training opportunities offered included employee wellness, soft skills, and technical training. Human Resource staff also increased communication to supervisors to educate them on available training budgets. As such, we saw some teams elect for team-specific training.

Challenges

The Permitting Council continued to experience delays in developing and advertising job announcements. This challenge stems from the Permitting Council's inability to post its own job vacancies. Within two months of onboarding an HR Officer during FY 2024, the Permitting Council was able to quickly secure its access to USA Staffing. This capability saves the agency thousands of dollars and weeks of time, enabling a dramatically quicker recruitment timeline.

Goal 3: Advance implementation of FAST-41.

Goal Leaders: Director of Infrastructure Project Management and Director of Permitting, Planning, and Policy

The Permitting Council continued to work hard this fiscal year and met 4 out of 5 identified Goal 3 metrics. In addition to working daily with project sponsors and agencies, the Permitting Council leveraged tools such as targeted agency training sessions, releasing reports such as the Best Practices Report, providing Federal agencies updated guidance documents, offering project sponsors engagement sessions directly with the Permitting Council during “Office Hours with the Executive Director”, providing weekly Tribal Office Hours under the Tribal Assistance Program, and holding project convening meetings, if required. Convening meetings are facilitated by the Permitting Council staff to bring together project sponsors and agencies when FAST-41 covered projects are stalled or otherwise encounter process and schedule challenges, including when the project schedule is being updated through the Executive Director Determination process of formally shifting milestone dates. Convening meetings provide open forum discussions to overcome permitting obstacles and develop a plan to finalize permitting processes.

FAST-41 coverage entitles project sponsors to a comprehensive, integrated Federal permitting timetable that is publicly posted on the Permitting Dashboard. This Dashboard identifies all Federal environmental reviews and authorizations needed to begin construction and commence operations of the project. FAST-41 requires that agencies collaboratively establish and maintain these permitting timetables and consult with the project sponsor on any proposed permitting timetable changes. Permitting timetables may only be modified in compliance with FAST-41’s consultation and public disclosure requirements to ensure accountability.

There are 19 FAST-41 covered project sectors: Renewable energy production, conventional energy production, electricity transmission, surface transportation, aviation, ports and waterways, water resource projects, broadband, pipelines, manufacturing, mining (added by Permitting Council vote), carbon capture, energy storage, semiconductors, artificial intelligence and machine learning, high-performance computing and advanced computer hardware and software, quantum information science and technology, data storage and data management, and cybersecurity.



In FY 2024 Permitting Council staff focused on several aspects of advancing the implementation of FAST-41, including the following:

- Finalized and published FAST-41 Performance Schedules (FPS) for 6 FAST-41 sectors and subsectors;
 - Electricity Transmission
 - Interstate Natural Gas Pipelines
 - Solar
 - Non-Federal Hydropower – Licenses
 - Wind – Other than Federal Offshore
 - Nuclear Power Plant – Combined (Construction and Operating) License
- Initiated development of a FPS for the broadband sector in partnership with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration;
- Issued an Executive Director Policy Memo providing guidance to agencies with respect to requesting Executive Director authorization for modifications of the permitting timetable by greater than 30 days for FAST-41 covered projects;
- Continued implementation of the Data Management Guide (DMG), which provides a standard operating procedure for agencies to implement the FAST-41 requirements related to establishing, maintaining, modifying, and completing FAST-41 covered project permitting timetables, and maintaining related required information on the Permitting Dashboard;
- Held monthly dashboard administrator meetings that incorporated targeted trainings for Permitting Council member agencies on the updated DMG and associated refinements to the Permitting Dashboard;
- Conducted targeted, agency-specific FAST-41 trainings;
- Developed and published the Recommended Best Practices for Fiscal Year 2024;
- Developed and published Quarterly Agency Performance Reports to Congress.
- Assisted the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair in issuing and implementing the Biden-Harris Permitting Action Plan;
- Initiated development of 2 Executive Director Policy Memos providing guidance to agencies with respect to Coordinated Project Plan development and early engagement kickoff meetings for newly covered projects.

As described above, the Permitting Council finalized a total of 6 FPSs by identifying the common environmental reviews and authorizations for each sector and subsector, analyzing data from the Permitting Dashboard and other project sources, and engaging with agencies in a deep dive of their processes and feedback ensuring robust, well-informed performance schedules. The performance schedules are designed to represent idealized baseline schedules for FAST-41 projects in the applicable sector or subsector as they were developed using data from existing FAST-41 projects along with information provided by agencies or specified in agency regulations and guidance. Further, they are a quantitative tool that can be used as a starting point to develop timely and realistic project-specific coordinated project plans and permitting timetables. The Permitting Council staff will continue to collaborate with FAST-41 member agencies to synthesize historical project data, as well as agency regulations, policies, and processes to capture and refine projected permitting timelines by sector and subsector, with a goal of issuing additional sector-specific schedules in FY 2025.

The Permitting Council remains focused on maximizing cross-agency engagement, and improving coordination and communication among Federal agencies involved with infrastructure permitting. During FY 2024, the Permitting Council conducted a total of twelve regularly scheduled meetings and focused workshops attended by agency Chief Environmental Review and Permitting Officers (CERPOs) and their support staff. The Permitting Council also held a total of 8 agency-targeted Permitting Dashboard trainings for FAST-41 practitioners.

Throughout FY 2024, and in cooperation with the Department of Transportation (DOT), which manages the Permitting Dashboard, the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff deployed more than 80 updates and refinements to the Permitting Dashboard functionality. The updates and refinements improved useability for Federal agency staff because they:



- Enhanced how the Dashboard communicates the requirements regarding the nonconformance process and reporting deadlines to agencies, thus improving agency compliance with FAST-41 nonconformance requirements¹; Clarified upcoming and passed deadlines for initial explanations and monthly status reports;
- Made it easier for reporting agencies to find nonconformance instances for which they are responsible;
- Added clarification to the Dashboard about what information should be included in an initial explanation versus what information should be included in a monthly status report;
- Clarified the process for instances when the Permitting Council rejects a report, and when the reporting agency is responsible to resubmit a report.

The Permitting Council also advanced FAST-41 implementation and helped improve the permitting processes through a variety of services to distinct audiences. These services support the infrastructure permitting community. In FY 2024 the agency assisted Federal agencies in improving their permitting processes by providing direct technical support, issue elevation and resolution services, and other solutions to address permitting challenges such as training, best practices implementation.. Below are some examples of these services:

- The Permitting Council launched a learning platform during the FY to support Federal agency staff and drive permitting excellence designed to provide agencies represented on the Permitting Council with off-the-shelf training to aid in knowledge-based sharing and capacity building to enable more timely and efficient permitting reviews and authorizations. This platform offers federal agencies access to quality training to help address skills gaps and advance best practices across the permitting community.

¹ §4370m-2(c)(2)(F).

- The Permitting Council is required to issue annual recommendations on best practices for improving the Federal permitting process for FAST-41 covered projects.² For FY 2024, the Permitting Council issued best practices under a subset of the 10 categories identified in its statute. Issuing best practices under only selected categories will allow agencies to focus their efforts and to collect meaningful implementation data and information that can be shared as a resource across the Federal permitting agency staff to improve the Federal permitting process for covered projects. The best practices for FY 2024 are intended to be actionable and measurable, by each permitting agency participating in FAST-41, which will assist the Permitting Council in assessing impacts of best practices across the Federal agencies and moving toward a set of meaningful, transformative, and evidence-based best practices that will drive improvements that lead to timely and efficient environmental reviews and authorizations. The 3 Best Practice recommendations for FY 2024 are:
 - Tracking and reporting environmental and community outcomes
 - Tracking and reporting the status of reviews and permitting
 - Establishing and implementing issues elevation procedures
- The Permitting Council expects to see results stemming from agency implementation of Best Practices issued in FY 2025.

During FY 2024, the Permitting Council continued implementing the ERIF Assistance Program reaching an approved nearly \$214 million to advance FAST-41 projects and permitting excellence activities across multiple Federal permitting agencies. ERIF Assistance funding addresses permitting capacity to meet the recent influx of infrastructure permitting needs and leverages technology to enhance and improve permitting processes.

The ERIF assistance program provided 13 agencies over \$170 million in funding targeted towards capacity building to facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of FAST-41 project reviews and to support long-term

- **Creating Permitting Process Efficiencies:** Many agencies are leveraging ERIF Assistance funds to improve their processes to gain efficiencies in the timeliness of environmental review and authorizations. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed and launched the Broadband Communications Uses e-application system, which more effectively tracks and accelerates the intake process for permit applications and integrates other Federal equities related to broadband. Similarly, the FWS formed a dedicated team to develop

² 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-1(c)(2)(B).

programmatic Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultations and is using tools to quickly determine the necessary level of consultation for a project. In conjunction with its Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) web application, FWS has developed “determination keys” that are logically structured sets of questions to assist in determining whether a proposed project qualifies for an existing ESA section 7 consultation. This tool allows FWS to more quickly and efficiently provide automated concurrence letters.

- Integrating FAST-41 into Processes: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) used ERIF Assistance resources to assess internal permitting processes and identify areas to integrate FAST-41 best practices and processes into their internal procedures.
- Creating Permitting Transparency: As a component of FAST-41, transparency is integral to timely and efficient permitting. Using ERIF Assistance funds, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) launched the Permitting and Environmental Information Application and training video, a publicly available tool that enables the user to identify Federal and State permit requirements, identify rights of ways and tribal lands, and screen for environmentally sensitive resources. The Application was accessed by 2,587 users in the first 10 days of launch.

Also in FY 2024, the Permitting Council assessed and identified additional opportunities to assist and improve the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of the Federal permitting process. On October 24, 2023, at the Environmental Permitting Technology and Data Summit, the Executive Director announced the Permitting Council’s intent to fund work aimed at leveraging technology and tools to bring innovation and efficiencies into the Federal permitting process. In total, the Executive Director approved over \$43 million to 14 projects across 12 Federal agencies for the development of IT solutions. These investments will advance transparency and accountability, interoperability, efficiencies, and more timely infrastructure permitting reviews. Investments include:

In support of effective reviews for offshore wind (OSW) projects, ERIF Assistance funding supported efforts of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to finalize and publish rules that govern



the incidental taking of marine mammals for multiple OSW. Similarly, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) led a series of national meetings to develop a compensatory mitigation strategy and guidance for offshore wind energy development in the U.S.

- ▶ Department of Interior (DOI) Public Comment Analysis Tool: Uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve the solicitation of and response to public comments on all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews at DOI bureaus and potentially other Federal agencies. This solution will save time and labor on one of the most intensive portions of the NEPA review process.
- ▶ NTIA Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) Tracking: Integrates environmental screening and permitting tracking into their application process for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) grants and by guiding applicants through initial questions, will determine if they qualify for categorical exclusions. Integrating environmental screening earlier in the application process will improve applicant understanding of environmental review and will speed processing of categorical exclusions. Implementation of this technology will save NTIA significant time by replacing manual processing and tracking.
- ▶ Department of Energy PermitAI: Pilot the use of AI to augment the abilities of staff in preparing environmental documents and conducting permitting reviews across five other Federal agencies. This has the potential to provide significant benefits to review and permitting across the Federal permitting community, including providing better information faster for improved decision making, improving the efficiency of Federal permitting experts for drafting and research tasks, and allowing staff to spend more time and resources focused on complex issues, engaging communities, and helping project proponents plan better projects.

The Permitting Council missed the Goal 3 metric of “No more than 25% of active FAST-41 covered projects on the Permitting Dashboard with permitting timetables extended by 60 days”. Most (60%) of the projects that required extensions greater than 60 days were OSW projects. The agencies are taking the lessons learned during the process and implementing them for future use. The agencies and project sponsors are working together and continuing to improve efficiency with the environmental review processes for all project sectors. For example, BOEM developed a Notice of Intent (NOI) checklist. The NOI checklist is an example of a new tool that is critical for Construction Operation Plan (COP) development and review, which is a key step to begin a successful NEPA process. The NOI checklist should reduce schedule “resets” for future projects.

During the FY, the Permitting Council identified several overarching factors for permitting timetable extensions. These factors included:

- ▶ changes made to the project scope after the scoping process was complete;

- insufficient application / consultation package data;
- Interagency and project sponsor disagreement regarding processes, data and regulatory interpretations;
- extended time for agencies and project sponsors to coordinate and negotiate with Tribes due to sensitivities;
- Limited number of specialized staff to review complex data and reports.

The Permitting Council continues to review data captured through the Dashboard to identify factors where performance could be improved by permitting agencies and project sponsors.

In FY 2025, the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff will continue to advance implementation of FAST-41 by working to address the factors attributed to permitting timetable extensions. In FY 2025, the Permitting Council will proceed with providing additional updates to the DMG, updating and refining the Permitting Dashboard, issuing Recommended Best Practices for Fiscal Year 2025 and FAST-41 Performance Schedules for additional sectors, providing training opportunities to agencies, and working with the OMB Director and CEQ Chair, to issue new FAST-41 agency implementation guidance.

Challenges

The Permitting Council and Federal agencies faced challenges in implementing FAST-41. Primary challenges include: limited quality project management skillsets; the continued refinement, updating, and changing of policies; and the lack of integration of adaptive project management into agency processes.

Additionally, until the Permitting Council became a permanent agency, there was little incentive for member agencies to invest resources in fully integrating the FAST-41 requirements into their existing environmental review and authorization processes. Following the enactment of the IIJA, the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff have been proactively assisting Federal agencies to more fully integrate FAST-41 into their existing processes through training tools development and developing a Coordinated Project Plan (CCP) tool to streamline the CPP drafting process. The Permitting Council also provided agency assistance through drafting and releasing the FY 2024 Recommended Best Practices, developing quarterly and annual reports, releasing 4 agency performance reports to inform agencies of their past performance and identify areas of improvement, and coordinating updates and refinements to the Permitting Dashboard throughout the year

The Permitting Council Executive Director and staff continue to use root cause analysis and the development of innovative countermeasures to overcome challenges not only within the Permitting Council, but across the entire federal family.

Goal 4: Conduct outreach to expand participation in the FAST-41 program.

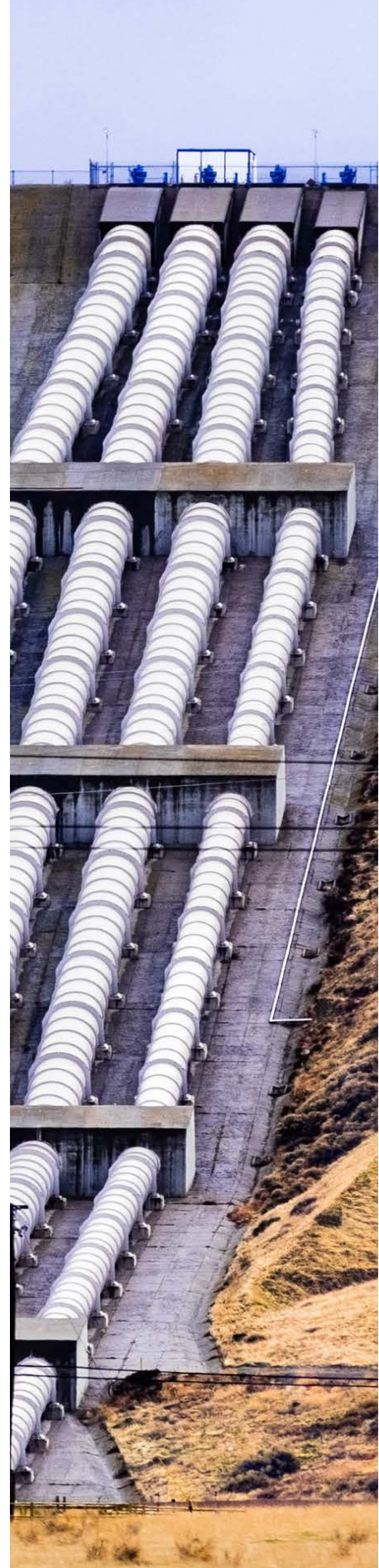
Goal Leader: Director of Public Engagement

In FY 2024 the Permitting Council increased communications and outreach activities to connect with the Permitting community in a meaningful way. These activities are particularly important because FAST-41 is an opt-in process, and communicating the value of FAST-41 to potential project sponsors is essential to growing the portfolio and increasing adoption of permitting best practices. The Permitting Council surpassed its goal of 40 outreach events and participated in 53 events. Outreach efforts in FY 2024 include participation in conferences, working groups, interviews, and other speaking engagements that provide opportunities to establish and foster relationships across Federal agencies, state, local, and Tribal governments, and private industry.

Some examples of events and conferences that permitting council staff attended include:

- Economic event with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Sector-specific conferences focused on renewable energy, transmission, hydrogen, energy storage, and broadband
- Events with the National Mining Association
- National and Western Governors Associations Meetings
- Events at Universities
- FAST-41 Project Groundbreakings

In FY 2024 the Permitting Council continued to focus its outreach on connecting with potential project sponsors, including Tribal communities, and underrepresented sectors in the project portfolio. Through effective communication and outreach the Permitting



Council continued to build relationships and educate potential project sponsors about the benefits of FAST-41 and how to engage with the Permitting Council to receive permitting assistance.

Notably, the Permitting Council launched a new brand in FY 2024 to reintroduce the agency to the public and reemphasize the contributions that the Permitting Council leads in making permitting transparent, predictable and accountable. The new brand includes a new logo, informational video, seal, tagline, and shortened the agency name to the Permitting Council. The updated brand is the new face of the agency and has helped articulate our value to stakeholders, including the launch of an informational video to educate the public on the goals, services, and impact of the Permitting Council. The new brand and video helped increase awareness and understanding of the Permitting Council role and generated interest in FAST-41 throughout the public sector, which will lead to expanding the portfolio and increasing the number of projects that will benefit from the FAST-41 program in the future. Looking ahead, the updated brand will continue to be used for years to come and is a foundational piece of the Permitting Council's outreach and messaging materials. The new brand has also been integrated into the new agency website that was launched in FY 2025.

In FY 2024 the Permitting Council increased its outreach to Congressional Members and staff to expand awareness and understanding of the activities the Permitting Council is engaged in to implement FAST-41 and efforts to serve as the permitting center for excellence. The Permitting Council also responded to numerous requests for technical assistance on permitting-related legislation. The agency prioritized outreach to Congressional members where current projects are located, but extended education and communication efforts broadly, for example, by providing briefings responsive to requests pursuant to the Permitting Council's Annual Report to Congress and overview briefings of the agency's portfolio to committee and personal office staff. The Executive Director also testified before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee at the request of the Chair regarding the Permitting Council's work and goals for the agency.

Through the consistent and focused efforts of the Executive Director, staff, and the Permitting Council members, the Permitting Council increased its portfolio by 16 percent adding 5 new projects from across the country to the Federal Permitting Dashboard. This accomplishment signals an increasing awareness of the value of FAST-41 "covered project" status, including the benefits of transparency, predictability, accountability, and coordination in the Federal environmental review and authorization process. These benefits come from developing and actively managing public-facing project permitting timetables and managing them according to FAST-41's timetable management requirements.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Permitting Council focuses on timely environmental review decisions regardless of the outcome of the decisions. As a result, in FY 2024 the Permitting Council shepherded the completion of seven FAST-41 covered projects with subsequent groundbreaking for construction occurring on some of the projects.

Although adding 5 projects to the Permitting Dashboard reflected solid growth, it fell short of the stretch goal of 10 new projects set at the start of the year. However, the Permitting Council conducted outreach with many Tribal governments and potential project sponsors, representing multiple sectors during FY2024. As a result of that outreach, a total of 8 new projects, 2 of which are Tribal sponsored, have already been posted to the dashboard in the first quarter of FY2025, and many other new FAST-41 covered projects are anticipated.

The Permitting Council spent significant time in FY 2024 developing an official agency website, which launched in early FY 2025. The new website is an online office for the Permitting Council and offers a wealth of resources including a description of how the agency can assist projects through FAST-41, information on ERIF investments, news and updates, as well as a section on permitting excellence with best practices related to permitting. The website integrated the new brand and was user focused to allow easy navigation for our primary audiences and the public. With the launch of the Permitting Council website in FY 2025 the Permitting Council continued advancing the conversation on permitting efficiencies and excellence.

Outreach and communications efforts in FY 2025 will build on those in previous fiscal years. In October 2024, the Permitting Council held a first-of-its-kind convening of current and potential project sponsors at an in-person Infrastructure Developers Summit. The event was well-received and increased awareness of Permitting Council initiatives and assistance that are available to project sponsors and fostered relationships across Federal agencies, state, local, and Tribal governments, and private industry. With the execution of the Infrastructure Developers Summit, the Executive Director further reinforced the Permitting Council's role as a convenor to bring various perspectives together and educate the public on FAST-41 and effective permitting practices. Following the event, infrastructure developers had a better understanding of FAST-41 and the value that it brings to project sponsors. It is our hope that the event will increase participation of FAST-41 for qualified infrastructure projects.

The Permitting Council plans to participate in several relevant conferences and information sharing forums in FY 2025 to help understand the challenges in Federal permitting, as well as educate and inform the permitting community about FAST-41. Additionally, these conference and outreach events provide an opportunity for the Permitting Council to conduct focused workshops for more informal engagement with FAST-41 practitioners, project sponsors, and project review specialists.

Challenges:

In FY 2024, the Permitting Council remained constrained by a website that is operated and maintained by the Department of Transportation. The Permitting Council has implemented a more robust, agency-specific web presence in FY 2025 to create an independent identity. We anticipate increased outreach and engagement represented by greater web presence, collaboration, and ultimately FAST-41 projects.





Performance Data Accuracy and Reliability

The Permitting Council measures each indicator annually and ensures the accuracy and reliability of the data within the Agency Performance Plan. The Permitting Council Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director oversee data collection and ensure compliance with GPRA.

- **Data Collection:** Data collection is overseen by the Deputy Executive Director with all data collectors affirming the accuracy of the data. Data validation is done by the Deputy Executive Director. Any issues in reliability results in pulling the data calculations again to ensure accuracy.
- **Data Sources:** Data collected is from official sources and records of the Permitting Council. Data may be extrapolated from larger data sets to support data collection for agency performance. All data for the agency performance report is then reviewed, aggregated, and maintained. As a small agency, the Permitting Council maintains its own records and systems and also leverages systems and data managed by other Federal agencies. Specifically, the Permitting Dashboard is maintained by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Permitting Council coordinates with DOT to ensure data integrity, reviewing and validating data almost weekly with DOT. Additionally, personnel data is maintained on systems owned and operated by GSA. This information is also reviewed routinely to ensure accuracy. The agency coordinates with these external partners to gather necessary data that informs the agency's performance. Some data may be collected from internal, non-public sources.
- **Data Limitations:** Data managed by the Permitting Council Executive Director and staff are subject to potential errors based on extrapolation, individual observation, or inaccurate execution of data collection. Data provided by Permitting Council member agencies, such as information posted to the Permitting Dashboard, are limited based on the veracity of the inputs. Additionally, as a small Federal agency, the Deputy Executive Director is able to oversee all data collection to promote data integrity.

The table below details the data sources used to derive the baseline for each performance measure.

#	MEASURE	DATA SOURCE(S)
1.1	Percentage of Process Library developed.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
1.2	Percentage of new policies and procedures briefed to agency employees.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
1.3	Number of executed business process improvements.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
2.1	Percentage of full-time equivalents (FTEs) hired and onboarded.	HRLinks, managed by GSA
2.2	Percentage of employees leveraging individual professional development opportunities.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
2.3	Number of professional development opportunities offered to agency employees.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
2.4	Employee Retention Rate of Permanent Career Staff	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
3.1	Number of guidance, procedures, memos, and training to support FAST-41 implementation.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
3.2	Number of tools and templates developed.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
3.3	Number of Permitting Dashboard updates or refinements deployed.	Permitting Dashboard, managed by DOT
3.4	No more than 25% of active FAST-41 covered projects on the Permitting Dashboard with permitting timetables extended by 60 days.	Permitting Dashboard, managed by DOT
3.5	Number of services provided to support FAST-41 implementation.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System
4.1	Number of unique monthly viewers on the Permitting Council website.	https://www.permitting.gov , maintained by DOT
4.2	Number of collaborations established or maintained with other organizations.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System, Permitting Council Executive Director and staff financial management system, maintained by GSA
4.3	Number of outreach events with agency participation.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System



FY 2024 and FY 2025 Performance Plan

As a new agency, the Permitting Council continually refines and develops its activities and initiatives. With this growth and maturity stems the need to evolve the associated performance measures and targets to best align and evaluate the agency’s work against its statute and strategic goals. Learning from the Permitting Council’s first performance report, measures and targets for FY 2025 have been refined. The table below provides a comprehensive list of measures and targets for FY 2025.

During FY 2025, the Permitting Council is slated to begin development of its new strategic plan and associated performance measures effective for FY 2026. The Permitting Council will internally review previous reports and develop new metrics for the Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Performance Plan that will best reflect the areas where the Council has impact and influence in the permitting process and assisting agencies/project sponsors. The objective is to show the impacts the Permitting Council continues to have in reaching out to permitting agencies and stakeholders and continued progress in streamlining the permitting process.

#	Status	Measure	Description	Data Source	FY 2024 Target
Goal 1: Standardize organizational policies and procedures.					
Objective 1: Refine Standard Operating Procedures.					
1.1	Revised	Percentage of Process Library developed.	The Permitting Council develops a process library which identifies all needed organizational processes to ensure compliance with applicable Federal agency requirements. These policies and procedures are then prioritized and developed, working towards a comprehensive process library.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	45%

Objective 2: Disseminate policies and procedures and train employees.

1.2	No Change	Percentage of new policies and procedures briefed to agency employees.	The Permitting Council develops necessary policies and procedures. This documentation is only useful when staff are aware and trained on policies and procedures for consistent implementation and compliance with Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Staff are trained through formal training, meetings, and dissemination of documents and work instructions.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	100%
1.3	Revised	Number of executed business process improvements per quarter.	The Permitting Council works to continually improve its processes and procedures to create efficiencies in executing its mission. Such improvements include process automation, streamlined reviews, and collaboration tools/software.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	4

Goal 2: Grow and diversify personnel skills, capacity, and experience.**Objective 1: Recruit and hire diverse staff and capabilities to meet increased infrastructure permitting demands.**

2.1	Revised	Percentage of full-time equivalents (FTEs) hired and onboarded.	The Permitting Council leverages staff to execute its mission. The agency's ability to effectively hire and retain diverse staff supports its ability to achieve the needs of the organization.	HRLinks, managed by GSA	85%
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Objective 2: Facilitate growth opportunities to retain talent.

2.2	Revised	Percentage of employees leveraging individual professional development opportunities.	Professional development contributes to organizational capabilities and staff retention. Development includes agency-wide training, individual development plans, growth activities/responsibilities, training courses, and certifications.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	80%
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2.3	No Change	Number of development and training opportunities offered to Permitting Council member agencies.	The Permitting Council advocates for growth opportunities to support its mission and its staff, ensuring ample opportunities for development in various formats. Development opportunities may be lunch and learns, third-party training, and facilitated course offerings.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	16
2.4	No Change	Employee Retention Rate of permanent, career staff	The Permitting Council fosters an environment that promotes employee development and satisfaction through retained employees.	Permitting Council HR system (HR Links) and eOPF	85%
Goal 3: Advance implementation of FAST-41.					
Objective 1: Establish and implement updated FAST-41 guidance.					
3.1	No Change	Number of guidance, procedures, memos, and trainings to support FAST-41 implementation.	The Permitting Council provides detailed guidance to aid Departments and Agencies in implementing FAST-41. The agency promotes this guidance through its Federal outreach and engagement efforts. The Permitting Council will work with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair and Office of Budget and Management (OMB) Director to update FAST-41 guidance to include recent statutory provisions. The Permitting Council Executive Director	Permitting Council MAX.gov and Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	30

Objective 2: Develop tools and templates to aid in FAST-41 implementation.

3.2	No Change	Number of tools and templates developed.	The Permitting Council develops tools and templates for agencies and stakeholders to leverage throughout the permitting process, helping agencies to more efficiently implement FAST-41 and complete environmental reviews and authorizations for FAST-41 projects. As a unique collaborator across the Federal Government on infrastructure permitting, the Permitting Council can provide valuable insights and aids for FAST-41 implementation. In working with agencies, the Permitting Council identifies common challenges and/or lessons learned to inform best practices and additional tools and templates.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	5
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Objective 3: Update the Permitting Dashboard to ensure transparency and alignment with FAST-41.

3.3	No Change	Number of Permitting Dashboard updates or refinements deployed.	To ensure the Permitting Dashboard is maximizing covered project transparency and aligns with the FAST-41 statute, the Permitting Council monitors user experience and feedback from agencies, project sponsors and other stakeholders. Updates and refinements to the dashboard are developed and implemented based on the feedback to further enhance user experience, transparency and compliance.	Permitting Dashboard, managed by DOT	50
3.4	No Change	No more than 25% of active FAST-41 covered projects on the Permitting Dashboard with permitting timetables extended by 60 days.	The Permitting Council Members have a shared responsibility to incentivize agencies to ensure accuracy and timeliness of project timetables and to coordinate their efforts for successful timetable management.	Permitting Dashboard, managed by DOT	25%

Objective 4: Formalize and offer Permitting Council services.

3.5	No Change	Number of services provided to support FAST-41 implementation .	The Permitting Council is designed to advance FAST-41 implementation and improve the permitting processes through a variety of services to distinct audiences. The Permitting Council services support the infrastructure permitting community.	Permitting Council MAX.gov and Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	10
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Goal 4: Conduct outreach to expand participation in the FAST-41 program.**Objective 1: Refine website to solidify web presence.**

4.1	Revised	Average number of unique viewers on the Permitting Council website.	Tracking website impressions informs the Permitting Council if outreach and communications efforts are generating traction and engagement on our website, which houses information, tools, resources, and the Dashboard. A dedicated website will direct stakeholders to resources for infrastructure permitting information and will help the Permitting Council fulfill its role as a value-added partner within the permitting infrastructure community.	https://www.permitting.gov , maintained by DOT	600
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Objective 2: Establish and foster new relationships across Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Private Sectors.

4.2	No Change	Number of collaborations established or maintained with other organizations.	Collaborations demonstrate the Permitting Council's growth in meaningful engagement on FAST-41 which supports more awareness and participation in FAST-41. The Permitting Council engages in relationships to support the agency's mission such as interagency agreements and tribal engagements.	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System, Permitting Council Executive Director and staff financial management system, maintained by GSA	20
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4.3	Revised	Number of outreach events with agency participation.	The Permitting Council conducts outreach across all aspects of the permitting community to raise awareness of and participation in the FAST-41 program. Outreach includes Federal, state, local, and tribal entities, as well as outreach by topics such as sectors	Permitting Council Executive Director and staff Internal Record Management System	45
4.4	No Change	Number of projects added to the Permitting Dashboard	The Permitting Council aims to grow awareness and participation in FAST-41. A component of successful outreach and relationship building is seen when potential project sponsors engagements lead to submission of an application for FAST-41 coverage.	Permitting Dashboard	10