



NEWS

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ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN STATE GOVERNMENT FALLING SHORT

TALLAHASSEE — A comprehensive system to assess the quality, accountability and performance of Florida government is still missing, 14 years after Florida voters demanded it in a constitutional amendment. That's the finding of Florida TaxWatch, in a special report that also recommends the legislature require all state agencies to develop and implement quality management programs.

"The legislature should require each state agency to prepare an annual report card on the extent to which it met its objectives the previous year and what measurable value it brought to the taxpaying citizens of Florida," said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of the private, non-partisan state government watchdog group.

A November 1992 constitutional amendment approved by 83% of voters required government agencies to implement quality management and accountability programs, to be determined by future legislation. The 1994 Legislature passed the Government Performance and Accountability Act that focused on performance measurement and accountability. But the TaxWatch report notes the legislation did not require state agencies to create quality management programs to encompass those performance measures and provide accountable results.

The report comes at a time when legislative leaders in the Florida House of Representatives are proposing new accountability rules requiring state agencies, every eight years, to prove their value and convince the legislature that they should continue to exist.

"You measure what you treasure, and we're not doing it enough," said Dave Davis, TaxWatch senior research analyst and the report's author.

Of the more than two dozen state departments and agencies, the report found that only two, Revenue and Transportation, have mature, agency-wide, continuous quality improvement programs based on performance and accountability principles. Three others (Children and Families, Health, and the Agency for Workforce Innovation) have mature initiatives in selected institutions or work units.

Davis notes that quality improvement is central to the successful operation of many private and public organizations. Doing so means evaluating policies and streamlining programs and work processes to meet the agency's mission, while meeting and exceeding customer requirements and cutting costs, "which in turn will boost taxpayer confidence in government and state employee job satisfaction," says Davis.

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In addition to requiring an annual report card from each state agency, Florida TaxWatch recommends the legislature consider amending existing statutes, to phase in budgeting by business process, rather than by organizational unit, using the Department of Revenue as a pilot agency. The report also recommends that continuous quality improvement be included in each agency's strategic plan.

Each year, Florida TaxWatch, the Florida Council of 100, and the state of Florida recognize and reward state employees who come up with innovative cost saving measures within their departments. This year, the Prudential Financial - Davis Productivity Awards, chaired by Lt. Governor Toni Jennings, are presenting 566 awards to state employees and workgroups for their achievements in saving money and boosting taxpayer value. Those achievements over the 18 years of the program's existence, have created \$5.3 billion in savings for Florida's taxpayers.

In addition to the individual and team achievements, the awards program develops a list of adaptable achievements, whose replication in other state agencies would save the state and taxpayers additional millions of dollars annually. More than 300 adaptable achievements are summarized on the Prudential Financial - Davis Productivity Awards website, www.floridataxwatch.org/dpa.

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MEDIA AVAILABILITY: Florida TaxWatch President Dominic M. Calabro and Florida TaxWatch Senior Research Analyst Dave Davis, author of the report, are available today to answer questions. Please contact Harvey Bennett at the number above to arrange an interview.

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Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 26 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Our mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida Government. On the web at www.floridataxwatch.org