

# National Transportation Safety Board

## Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan



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# FY 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan

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## Abbreviations

Table 1: Abbreviations used in this report

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
APP	annual performance plan
AS	Office of Aviation Safety
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
FY	fiscal year
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GA	General Aviation
GPRA Modernization Act	Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010
HS	Office of Highway Safety
IDEA	Integrated Digital Experience Act
MD	Office of the Managing Director
MS	Office of Marine Safety
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
RPH	Office of Railroad, Pipeline, and Hazardous Materials Investigations
SRC	Office of Safety Recommendations and Communications

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## NTSB at a Glance

### About the NTSB

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation—railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. We determine the probable cause of the accidents we investigate and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, we coordinate the resources of the federal government and other organizations to assist victims and their family members who have been impacted by major transportation disasters.

We also conduct safety studies focused on broader safety questions and topic areas. Additionally, we serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

### Mission

Making transportation safer by conducting independent accident investigations, advocating safety improvements, and deciding pilots' and mariners' certification appeals.

### Legislative Mandate

***Maintaining*** our congressionally mandated independence and objectivity;

***Conducting*** objective accident investigations and safety studies;

***Performing*** fair and objective pilot and mariner certification appeals;

***Advocating for*** safety recommendations; and,

***Assisting*** victims of transportation accidents and their families.



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### Core Values

Our core values guide our daily actions, our internal conduct, and our relationships with our stakeholders. They provide the solid foundation upon which our hardest decisions are made. Aligning one's actions with the agency's core values are a fundamental part of being an NTSB employee.

- ❖ **Integrity:** We hold ourselves and each other to the highest ethical standards and are committed to being fair, honest, respectful, inclusive, and objective in our work and in our treatment of others.
  
- ❖ **Transparency:** We encourage openness, collaboration, and feedback to ensure clarity and trust.
  
- ❖ **Independence:** We are impartial and objective.
  
- ❖ **Excellence:** We are thorough, rigorous, and accurate; we continuously seek diverse perspectives in all that we do.



# FY 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan

## About this Plan

The National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB's) Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Annual Performance Plan (APP) outlines our strategies to achieve agency priorities, promote organizational change, and improve agency performance. The FY 2020 APP provides stakeholders—the traveling public, the transportation industry, government agencies, and Congress—with a comprehensive view of our goals and objectives for the fiscal year. In addition, this APP draws a clear line from our mission through performance metrics and targets to our goals, objectives, and key performance indicators. The APP is guided by our new FY 2020–2024 Strategic Plan and complies with the [Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010](#) (GPRA Modernization Act) and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) [Circular A-11, Part 6](#).

This plan includes three new strategic goals: improving processes, improving products, and improving employee engagement, diversity, and inclusion. These goals are designed to improve the agency's operations, from investigative to support offices.

Our strategic goals are the following:

1. **Improving processes:** Evaluating and identifying ways to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our investigative and business processes
2. **Improving products:** Evaluating and identifying ways to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our products
3. **Improving employee engagement, diversity, and inclusion:** Implementing actions to ensure we sustain a culture that is fair, diverse, and provides opportunities for all employees to excel

This plan outlines our strategies to achieve agency priorities, improve efficiency and performance, and maintain relevancy with critical stakeholders.

# FY 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan

## Strategic Performance Management

In accordance with the GPRA Modernization Act [and Circular A-11, Part 6](#), our strategic management process and performance framework starts with our new [FY 2020-2024 Strategic Plan](#). The yearly APP serves as the foundation for establishing long-term priorities and developing performance goals, objectives, and metrics that gauge our success. This strategic management process demonstrates progress toward our performance goals and priorities and will be measured using quarterly reviews and data analysis.

We are optimistic that our results-oriented culture will continue to evolve and promote better governance in the future, leading to further improvements in transportation safety. The figure below depicts our cyclical process map of how we measure success.

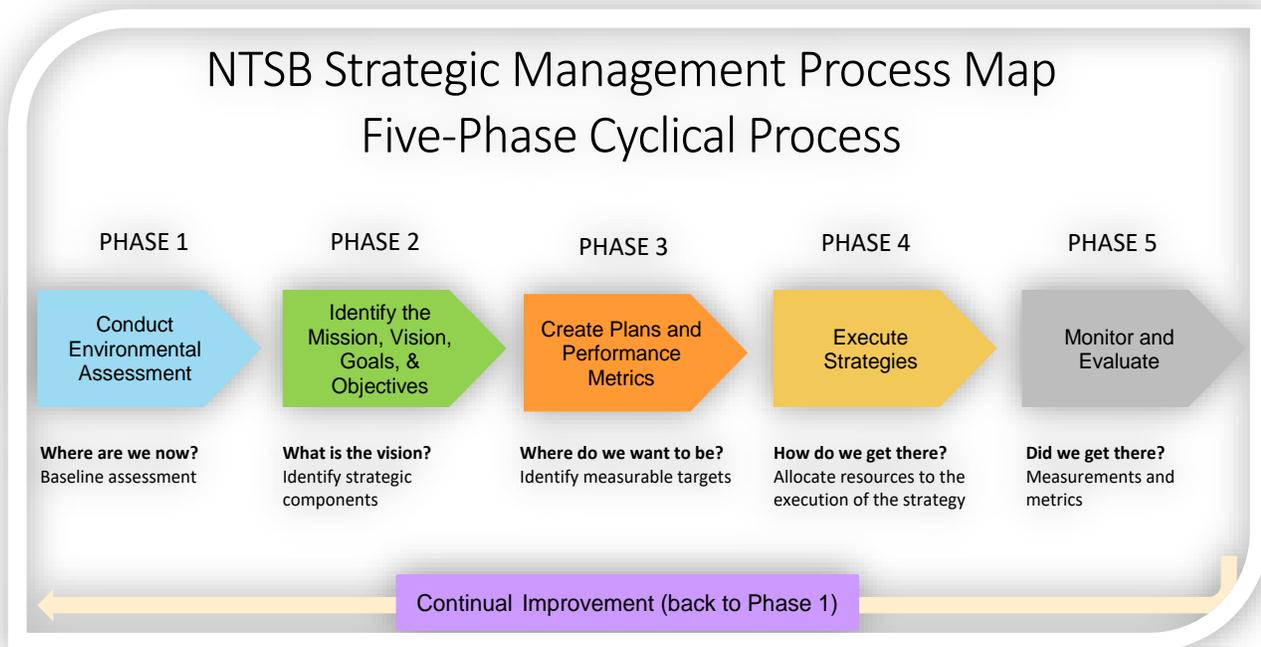


Figure 1: NTSB Strategic Management Process Map

## **FY 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan**

### **Management Review**

We use a quarterly, data-driven, strategic review process. Performance goals and metrics are assigned to a goal leader, who is responsible for tracking the goal's progress, reporting the results, and making operational adjustments. The Office of the Managing Director (MD) coordinates these quarterly reviews, analyzes the data, and reports to senior leadership at various intervals throughout the year.

### **Data Management and Reliability**

Data management and reliability are important to determine performance outcomes. Currently, the data are reviewed and verified by the strategic management program manager and finalized with the managing director. In FY 2017, we implemented a new strategic management communication tool to streamline the performance reporting process: a web portal where each office can enter its data to track performance metrics. This tool validates and verifies the reported metrics, and the process assures that the performance metric data is reasonably reliable.

### **Measuring our Success**

The plan serves as the foundation for establishing long-term and outcome-related priorities and developing performance goals, objectives, and metrics by which we can gauge our success. We've developed a performance-based culture which remains a focus of agency management and staff over the past several fiscal years.

We define our performance goals annually and evaluate our progress toward achieving them through performance metrics. We regularly collect and analyze performance metric data to inform decisions through quarterly reviews with senior leadership and staff. This focus promotes active management and staff engagement across the agency

As we continually improve this process, we will be able to demonstrate more outcome-related performance results and make the best use of the resources entrusted to the agency. We are optimistic that our results-oriented culture will continue to evolve and promote better governance in the future, leading to further improvements in transportation safety.

### **Key Challenges Affecting Achievement of Strategic Goals**

Our ability to achieve our strategic goals may be influenced by the changing balance of industry; other federal, state, and local government activities; national priorities; and resource availability. The following challenges may affect our ability to achieve our goals:

- Recruiting, retaining, and developing highly skilled and diverse staff, particularly when competing against the private sector
- Ensuring that we understand new technologies in all modes of transportation and train and hire accordingly
- Budgetary constraints, including fluctuations in appropriations

## **FY 2020 Annual Strategic Performance Plan**

### **Addressing Goal Achievement Challenges**

We address these challenges through effective long-range planning, open communication, and improved employee engagement. Long-range planning in human capital management and core operations ensures that we are ready to deal with future investigative needs. Effective communication at all levels of the organization improves planning and process. We devote time and resources to thinking strategically, promoting employee engagement, and encouraging staff development. To achieve our long-term vision, we must effectively plan and communicate while maintaining our primary commitment to improving transportation safety. We believe that the initiatives in place will provide the balance necessary for these strategic goals and priorities to be successful.

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### Performance Management and Reporting

Our strategic objectives support and complement our strategic goals. Each strategic objective has performance goals and measurable metrics and targets. Performance metrics use available data to determine if our goals and objectives are met in the proposed time frame. Targets keep us on track toward achievement. We review performance metrics and targets to assess program effectiveness and to consider how risks and opportunities impact achieving our strategic goals and objectives. This assessment allows the agency to adjust and improve performance throughout each year, as well as to re-evaluate the agency’s strategic plan objectives and metrics, if necessary.

Table 2: FY 2020 Performance Metrics at a Glance

<b>Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Performance Metric</b>
Goal 1: Improving Processes	1.1 Improve the timeliness of investigations through data analysis	1.1.1 Study and implement an improved investigation timeliness process
Goal 1: Improving Processes	1.2 Improve the timeliness of agency operations through data analysis	1.2.1 Study and reduce the FOIA responses backlog
Goal 2: Improving Products	2.1 Improve the effectiveness of agency products	2.1.1 Establish a safety actions program to document all safety actions resulting from investigations
Goal 2: Improving Products	2.1 Improve the effectiveness of agency products	2.1.2 Establish agency-wide Board Meeting Criteria
Goal 2: Improving Products	2.1 Improve the effectiveness of agency products	2.1.3 Refresh agency external website to improve search capabilities
Goal 3: Improving Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion	3.1 Improve the engagement of agency staff	3.1.1. Implement an employee intranet site
Goal 3: Improving Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion	3.1 Improve the engagement of agency staff	3.1.2 Improve employee engagement as measured by employee surveys
Goal 3: Improving Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion	3.2 Attract, develop, and retain a high-performing, diverse, and inclusive workforce	3.2.1 Revise the Strategic Human Capital Plan
Goal 3: Improving Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion	3.2 Attract, develop, and retain a high-performing, diverse, and inclusive workforce	3.2.2 Improve diversity and inclusion as measured by employee participation and survey feedback

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### Strategic Goal 1: Improving Processes

Evaluating and redesigning processes—whether investigative or business-related—promotes efficiency and responsiveness. In accordance with the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) and the [Office of Management and Budget’s Memorandum M-19-23](#), we are increasing our use of data to allocate resources and achieve program objectives. Our increased capability in data analytics and access to new sources of data will help us improve our investigative and agency operations. For example, we are already seeing a positive impact on processes with our new multimodal accident database and its robust query tool. In the area of business processes, we continue to make strides in reducing the time to respond to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, a challenge on which we will continue to focus.

#### Strategic Objective 1.1: Improve the timeliness of investigations through data analysis

We aim to improve the efficiency and quality of our accident investigations by applying data-driven tools and structured techniques that improve the investigative process. We will evaluate current investigation processes to determine optimal case distribution; ensure appropriate investigation scope; remove report review bottlenecks; and align remote workforce and human capital management. A data-focused review of general aviation investigations and a new investigative case management system are allowing us to better understand where timeliness can be improved. As we learn from this process, we will apply the lessons learned to other investigative processes across all modal offices.

#### Performance Metric 1.1.1: Study and implement an improved investigation timeliness process

Table 3. Study and implement an improved investigation timeliness process

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
AS, HS, MS, RPH	N/A	N/A	Study and implement an improved investigation timeliness process

#### Strategic Objective 1.2: Improve the timeliness of agency operations through data analysis

We will continue to review our FOIA process. Reviewing and processing FOIA requests in a comprehensive and timely manner reflects our core value of transparency. Other business practices will be added in the future.

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### Performance Metric 1.2.1: Study and reduce FOIA responses backlog

Table 4. Performance Metric: Study and reduce FOIA responses backlog

Office	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
OCIO	N/A	N/A	Establish new responses backlog baseline

## Strategic Goal 2: Improving Products

The investigative and business products we develop are the keystones of our work. They are critical to ensuring our relevancy and are the primary sources by which the transportation industry, government, and the public understand our work. One improvement we recently made in this area was to standardize our investigative reports, bringing consistency to our investigative products across the modes and improving the reader experience

### Strategic Objective 2.1: Improve the effectiveness of agency products

Our primary products to improve transportation safety are our safety recommendations. Recommendations can be issued at any time during an investigation and are carefully tracked within the agency. However, organizations involved in our investigations often implement safety improvements within days of an accident as a result of our initial investigative activities. These implemented safety improvements, as well as other aspects of how we accomplish our safety mandate, are not currently documented in a comprehensive and standardized way. This objective will require us to evaluate current processes and the overall impact of these improvements and will allow us to reach a consensus on what we document. The resulting measures will more accurately reflect the impact of the agency's work.

We will also review one of our most important means of delivering our products: our public Board meetings. Board meetings are an opportunity for the public to see the actual deliberations between the Board and investigative staff regarding a draft accident report or safety study. Board meetings are required under the Government in the Sunshine Act and are critical to our advocacy for safety improvements relative to the accident being examined. The availability of webcasting and the rapid pace of news are causing us to rethink how we select accidents for Board meetings, as well as how the meetings are conducted. Studying the effectiveness of Board meetings as a way to communicate with the public, industry, and lawmakers; to advocate for safety improvements; and to reach those citizens affected by the tragedies we investigate will improve our use of that platform.

To best serve the transportation industry, the public, lawmakers, and those impacted by transportation accidents, we will refresh our external agency website and ensure compliance with

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the [21<sup>st</sup> Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)](#)<sup>1</sup>. This update will improve users' ability to search for and analyze data. The revised website will include a new query tool that allows users access to the full spectrum of public data related to our investigations. The new site will more readily show the breadth of our work on issues such as fatigue, distraction, impairment, and other factors that cross modal lines.

**Performance Metric 2.1.1:** Establish a safety actions program to document all safety actions resulting from investigations

Table 5. Performance Metric: Establish a safety actions program to document all safety actions resulting from investigations

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
AS, HS, MS, RPH	N/A	N/A	Establish program guidelines

**Performance Metric 2.1.2:** Establish agency-wide Board meeting criteria

Table 6. Performance Metric: Establish agency-wide Board meeting criteria

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
Agency (MD Lead)	N/A	N/A	Study and develop Board Meeting criteria

**Performance Metric 2.1.3:** Refresh agency external website to improve search capabilities

Table 7. Performance Metric: Implement agency external website refresh to improve search

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
OCIO & SRC	N/A	N/A	Implemented

## Strategic Goal 3: Improving Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion

Our highly skilled workforce is most effective when its members are motivated, engaged, and trained. Our work is better when we support a culture of diversity, awareness, inclusion, and mutual respect. Strengthening our human capital management program will attract and retain talent, especially in high-demand, high-skill areas. Within our workforce, we will seek to develop

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<sup>1</sup> The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, otherwise known as 21st Century IDEA, was signed into law in December 2018. The Act aims to improve the digital experience for government customers and reinforces existing requirements for federal public websites. [Digital.Gov](#)

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future leaders, foster high levels of employee engagement, and provide continuous learning and development. We will focus on recruiting, retaining, and training staff with the right mix of skills and expertise. Promoting diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect allows every staff member an equal opportunity to contribute and succeed.

### Strategic Objective 3.1: Improve the engagement of agency staff

A new employee intranet site will increase employee engagement and the flow of in-house information to all staff, regardless of their duty station. This new intranet site will allow leadership to increase communication with all staff, and will feature news regarding agency activities, employee-specific information, and cross-agency initiatives.

Employee engagement is key to us meeting our goal of becoming the number one small agency in the federal government.<sup>2</sup> We will gauge our success using various employee surveys (via our intranet site) and the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The FEVS includes questions that measure employee engagement and the relationship an employee has with his or her organization. The Partnership for Public Service recently conducted focus group discussions with NTSB staff to assess employee engagement, and we are implementing a number of actions as a result.

#### Performance Metric 3.1.1: Implement new employee intranet site

Table 8. Performance Metric: Implement new employee intranet site

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
OCIO & SRC	N/A	N/A	Implemented

#### Performance Metric 3.1.2: Improve employee engagement as measured by employee surveys

Table 9. Performance Metric: Improve employee engagement as measured by employee surveys

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
Agency (MD Lead)	N/A	N/A	Baseline

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<sup>2</sup> The [Best Places to Work in Federal Government](#) is administered by the Partnership for Public Service. Currently, we are listed as number 6 in the best places to work [small agency rankings](#).

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### Strategic Objective 3.2: Attract, develop, and retain a high-performing, diverse, and inclusive workforce

Our main asset is our workforce, and we will focus on talent management as well as on promoting diversity, awareness, inclusion, and mutual respect.

Revising our strategic human capital plan will allow us to build and maintain the effective, highly skilled workforce that is critical to the agency's future. The revision will focus largely on improving talent management: recruiting, retaining, and training employees with the right mix of skills and expertise to successfully execute our mission. The revised plan will describe the agency's leadership and workforce needs for the future and present strategies to meet those needs.

A diverse and inclusive workforce is critical to maintaining our high level of technical and business operations. We want every staff member to have an equal opportunity to contribute and succeed. Employee surveys—including the FEVS, which determines a diversity and inclusion index score—will allow us to better understand staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion.

#### Performance Metric 3.2.1: Revise the Strategic Human Capital Plan

Table 10. Performance Metric: Revise the Strategic Human Capital Plan

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
Agency (MD Lead)	N/A	N/A	Plan Completed

#### Performance Metric 3.2.2: Improve diversity and inclusion as measured by employee participation and survey feedback

Table 11. Performance Metric: Improve diversity and inclusion as measured by employee participation and survey feedback

Offices	FY 2018 Result	FY 2019 Result	FY 2020 Target
Agency (EEODI Lead)	N/A	N/A	Baseline