Performance-Based Programming

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Performance-Based Programming is the use of strategies and priorities to guide the allocation of resources to projects that are selected to achieve goals, objectives, and targets. Performance-Based Programming establishes clear linkages between investments made and expected outputs and outcomes.

What it Takes

A performance-based approach to programming is focused on project outcomes and how projects can drive progress towards goals, objectives, and performance targets. In this data-driven decision structure, there are a number of key factors that should be incorporated:

- Influencing factors,
- Internal collaboration,
- External stakeholder involvement, and
- Resource constraints

Influencing factors such as how the political context will affect what projects are programmed.

Internal collaboration across performance areas are critical; silo-based programming and budgeting should be challenged.

External stakeholder involvement is needed to reaffirm the commitment to agency goals, objectives, and performance targets.

Funding and resource constraints should be considered from the outset by understanding all possibilities for applying different funding sources to particular types of projects. It is also important to consider other resource constraints that could limit use of funding.

Implementation Steps

Performance-Based Programming is broken down into two complementary subcomponents:

- **Programming Within Performance Areas**: The allocation and prioritization processes within a performance area, such as safety, infrastructure, mobility, etc.
- **Programming Across Performance Areas:** The allocation and prioritization processes across performance area, such as safety, infrastructure, mobility, etc.
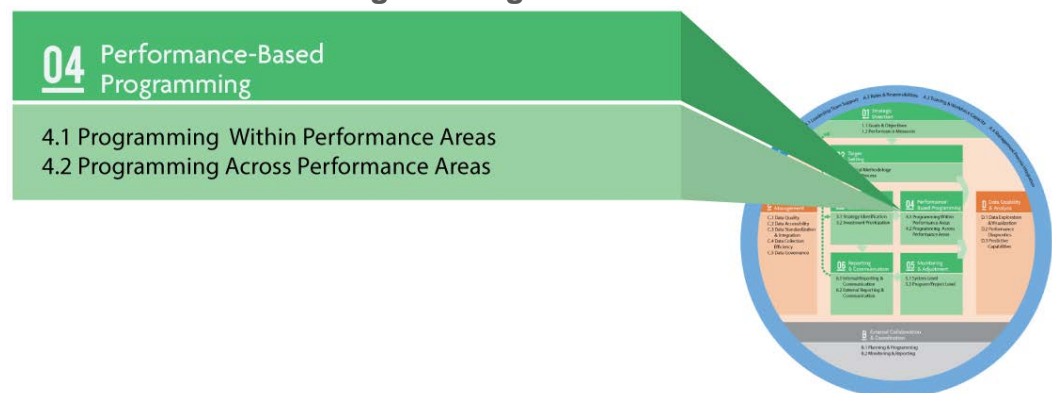
Each subcomponent has its own set of implementation steps.

Within Performance Areas	Across Performance Areas
4.1.1 Clarify roles of internal staff and external stakeholders	4.2.1 Identify and assign internal roles and responsibilities
4.1.2 Develop project selection criteria	4.2.2 Clarify purpose of cross area prioritization
4.1.3 Establish a formal input process to gather performance-based project information	4.2.3 Develop a methodology that reflects agency priorities and external stakeholder interests
4.1.4 Document the process	4.2.4 Document the process

Making the Connection

Performance-Based Programming (Component 04) applies the priorities established in agency plans during the Performance-Based Planning process (Component 03) to allocate resources to particular projects that will contribute to goals and objectives determined in the Strategic Direction (Component 01) and targets established in Component 02. Future allocation is affected by the Monitoring and Adjustment (Component 05) of the impact projects had on performance outcomes.

Performance-Based Programming and the TPM Framework

For more information on performance-based programming and the other components of the TPM Framework visit: **www.tpmtools.org**

Case Study: Implementation Step 4.1.4

Documenting the programming process: ARC

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) provides an illustration of documenting the programming process in this figure on project selection from their PLAN 2040 Regional Transportation Plan.
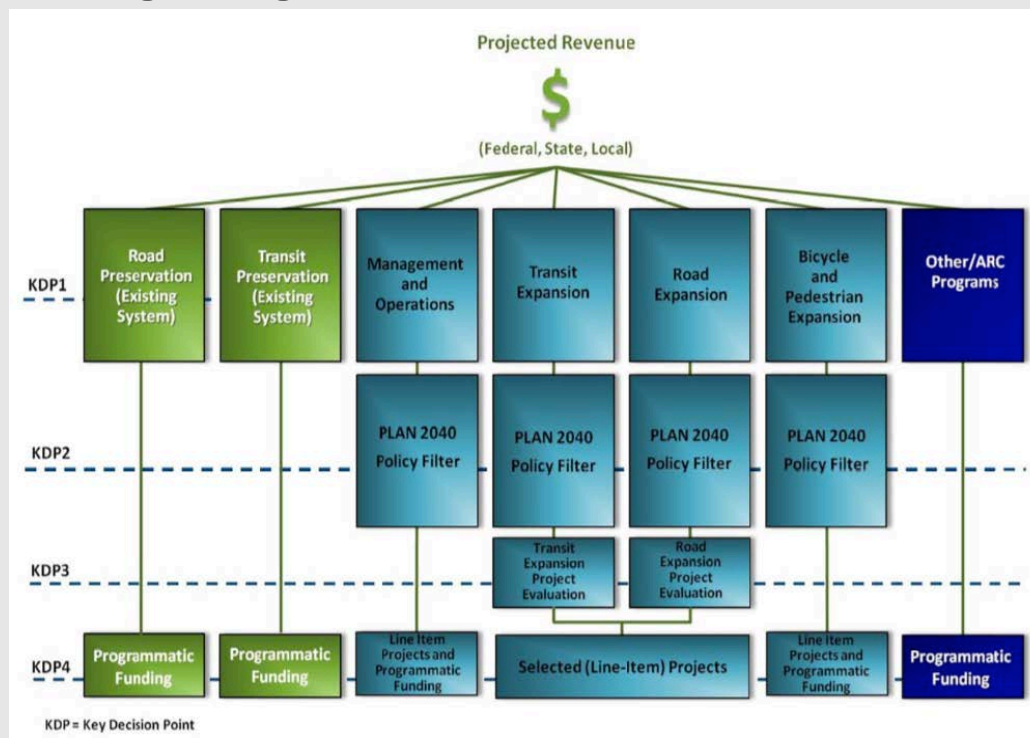
This figure illustrates where and how funding is allocated. It provides a quick reference to key decision points (KDP) where input is needed to shape project selection.

It also can be a sort of menu, showing the many areas in need to funding that must be balanced. The first row represents the general program area and colors indicate performance areas, with system preservation in green, congestion/mobility in blue, and other in dark blue. Projects are then divided into the appropriate plans and programs with increasing detail, leading to KDP 4 where the program is finalized for each project type.

For more, visit the Plan 2040 site at http://www.atlantaregional.com/transportation/regional-transportation-plan/rtp-chapters-and-appendices.

ARC Programming Process

Source: Atlanta Regional Council. (2014). Atlanta Regional Transportation Plan. Atlanta, GA.

Perspectives

"This is not a mechanical process – scores influence decisions but do not dictate them. If the project has a high score, an agency is not forced to fund it. However, if a project has a low score and an agency wants to fund it, than the sponsor needs to come up with a solid justification."

— *Ron Achelpohl, Mid-America Regional Council*

"It may seem that using universal programming criteria could put certain projects at a disadvantage. However, working in conjunction with our MPO, we found it was a useful tool. By applying universal programming criteria, we have been able to more effectively demonstrate a project's need and benefit to the region."

— *Zoe Robertson, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority*

"It should be noted: the ability of transportation agencies to implement a fully flexible, discretionary approach to resource allocation varies across the country due to unique institutional, organization, and political situations."

— *NCHRP Report 806, Cross-Asset Resource Allocation*

Connect Online to Learn More

Visit the TPM Toolbox online to learn more about performance-based programming and to take your own TPM Capability Maturity Self-Assessment: **www.tpmtools.org**