



Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration

Program Management
Analysis Issue Summary
Report

February 2018



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I. Executive Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (FWS) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program (WSFR) has a critical role in building partnerships to benefit fish and wildlife while supporting related fish and wildlife-based recreational opportunities across the country. Effectively administering the Pittman-Robertson (PR) Wildlife Restoration (WR) Act, Dingell-Johnson (DJ) Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Act, and State Wildlife Grant (SWG) programs is an important part of this mission. This report focuses on the Service’s role in administering these three key programs, but recognizes the importance of the FWS/State partnership in fully executing trustee responsibilities for the PR and DJ funds. The report enumerates some of the reasons why these responsibilities have become more complex over time, and ultimately points toward the need to develop a shared vision to reach a desired future state.

The basis for this re-examination of administrative functions dates back to the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000, which significantly adjusted WSFR’s funding model after decades of calculating administrative budgets for the PR and DJ programs as a percentage of program funds. The Act prescribed administrative funding caps for Fiscal Years (FY) 2001-2003 and indicated that, each year thereafter, administrative funding would be “the preceding fiscal year’s allocation plus an increase based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).”¹ The “straight line” CPI adjustment approach to funding administrative activities assumes an environment in which the demands on administrators remain consistent: it enables the program to continue operating as it did in 2003. However, WSFR’s activities and the challenges associated with responsible administration of the WR-SFR and SWG programs have changed significantly since 2000.

In FY15, WSFR developed a five-year budget projection, which is updated annually. The current projection indicates that WSFR must make significant changes to avoid administrative expenditures exceeding available funds by FY20. However, dramatic increases in grant volumes in the WR program, the addition of fiscal activities to rigorous biology-based monitoring, increased scrutiny on historical and environmental compliance, and evolving policy and technology requirements, among other stressors, have impeded efforts to chart a sustainable course to “do more with less.”

WSFR Program Executive Leadership launched the Program Management Analysis (PMA) in 2016 to identify how WSFR could adjust its approach to WR-SFR / SWG program administration while continuing to provide high-quality service to its customers. WSFR convened the PMA Analysis Team, comprised of WSFR employees and contractor support, to complete the effort. The Analysis Team issued a Program Report in January 2018 summarizing its work with WSFR Regional and Headquarters leadership and staff, State partners, and industry partners to define current activities, challenges, and opportunities in the WR-SFR / SWG environment. The report enumerated core functions and constraints that define the current state; WSFR’s vision for the future of the program; and areas for improvement to close the distance between the two operating realities. This Issue Summary Report highlights the aspects of the Analysis Team’s work and next steps in WSFR’s change journey that may interest external parties, including State and industry partners.

During PMA interviews and working sessions, WSFR staff and leadership across the Regions and Headquarters indicated that they want to work toward a program that embodies the five characteristics listed in [Table 1](#).

Key Characteristics of WSFR’s Desired Future State
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A clearly defined national program identity• Strong relationships based on a high degree of trust• Seamless internal coordination• Effective, engaged, and supported WSFR staff• A high degree of transparency into how and how well administrative resources are used

Table 1. Key Characteristics of the Desired Future State

¹ Implementation of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000 and Projected Spending Report, FWS, August 2001.



Coordination, collaboration, and transparency unite these characteristics: WSFR must work as one program, across geographical boundaries and functional areas, to identify and implement changes to achieve this future state. WSFR also hopes to work with external stakeholders to define a shared vision for the future of WSFR program administration and then take meaningful next steps to attain that vision. This report includes a summary of observations on the current state of the WSFR program, characteristics of the desired future state defined during the PMA, and areas of focus that will support WSFR in progressing toward this future state. The selected area of focus covered in this Issue Summary Report are listed below in **Table 2**.

While the PMA focused on WR-SFR / SWG program administration, benefits of successful change initiatives within the areas for improvement will not be limited to these “in scope” grant programs. Achieving the desired future state will improve how WSFR works as a team and with external stakeholders across its broader portfolio of functions and funding.




Area of Focus	 Action	 Benefit	 Linked Characteristics of Desired Future State
Workforce	Identify and track key workload metrics	To support defensible budgets and informed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships based on trust • Seamless internal coordination • Transparency into priorities and spending
	Explore flexible staffing approaches	To enable program agility and effective use of available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective/engaged/supported staff • Transparency into priorities and spending
Process	Explore opportunities to improve knowledge sharing	To support increased efficiency and standardization where feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless internal coordination • Effective/engaged/supported staff
	Improve approach to gathering and using data	To support robust reporting and communications functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined national program identity • Strong relationships based on trust • Transparency into priorities and spending
	Focus on defining and delivering strategic external communications	To promote program value and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined national program identity • Strong relationships based on trust

Table 2. Selected PMA Areas of Focus

The wide-angle view of the current state and stakeholders’ perspectives on potential improvements obtained through the PMA laid the groundwork for change. The next step for WSFR is to gather perspectives from its external partners and refine a shared vision that will establish a consistent set of expectations for program administration as it progresses toward a desired future state. The WSFR leadership team is committed to continuing to build on the PMA and looks forward to discussing this report and next steps at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2018.



II. Current State

The WSFR program is responsible for working through partnerships to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. In this role, WSFR provided oversight and administrative support for nearly \$350 million in SFR grants, \$780 million in WR grants, and \$53 million in SWG grants in FY17. WSFR Regional and Headquarters staff administer these grants in a complex regulatory environment with a high bar for responsible stewardship. Allocating WR-SFR / SWG funding is a zero sum exercise: every dollar spent on administrative costs at the federal or state level is a dollar not available to fund conservation.

During the PMA, State and Regional customers generally commended WSFR staff for being responsible stewards of WR-SFR / SWG funds. As depicted in the WSFR program complexities timeline that follows, Regional and Headquarters staff have overcome significant changes to roles and workloads to maintain this reputation for effective oversight. However, WSFR has identified that it cannot continue delivering status quo service levels past FY20 with existing funding and processes. A shared understanding of the current state is foundational to identifying ways that the organization can change to achieve its desired future state. This section of the report highlights observations from the Analysis Team’s interviews, research, and work sessions on the following aspects of the current state of the WSFR program:

- A. Program Complexities;
- B. Organizational Structure;
- C. Core Functions; and
- D. Customer Feedback on Core Functions and Service Levels.

A. Program Complexities

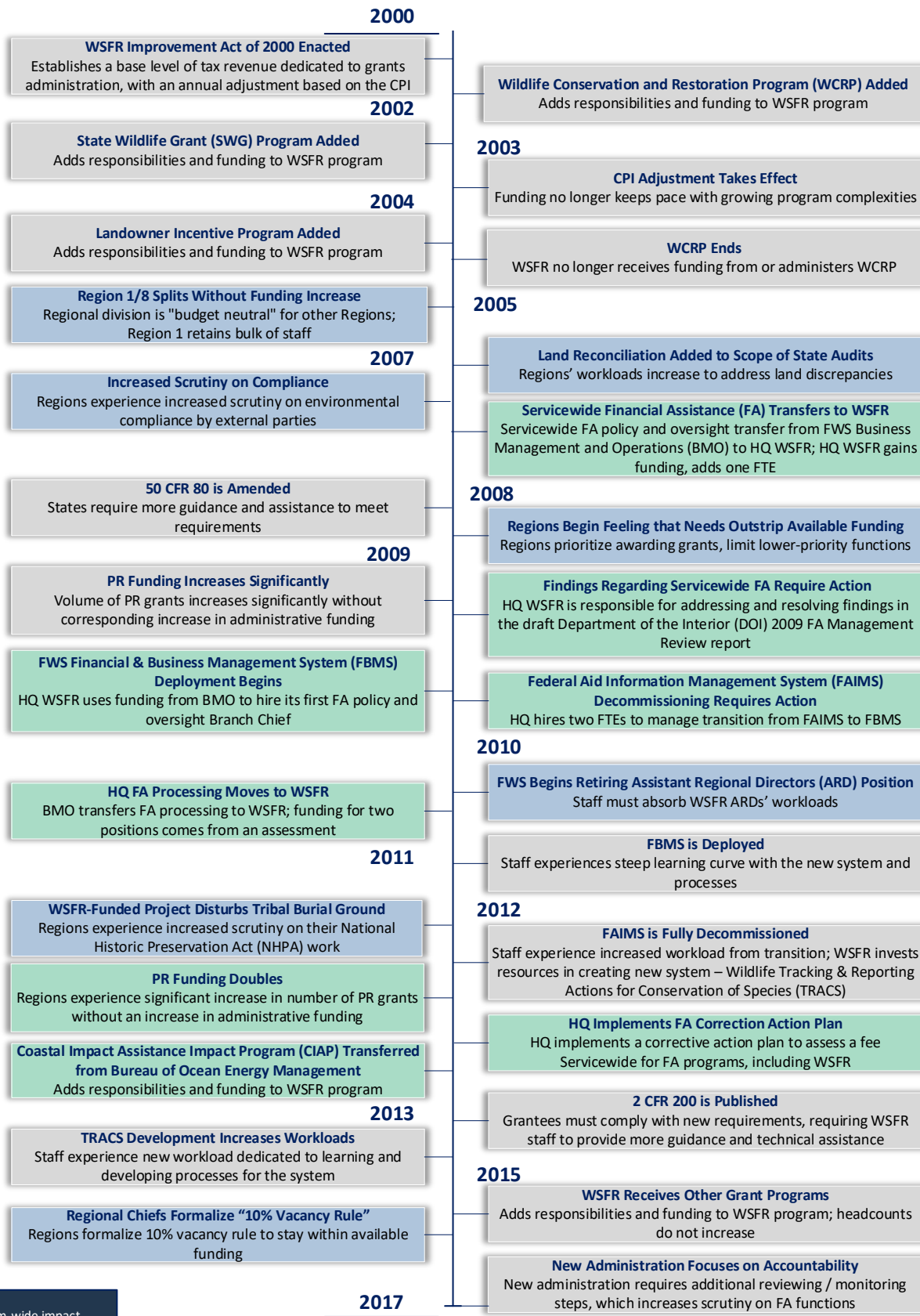
Understanding the WSFR team’s current structure and job duties requires a backdrop of events that have shaped the organization’s approach to grant administration and oversight. The legacy of WSFR’s grant programs is extensive; the PR and DJ Acts date back to 1937 and 1950, respectively, and a multitude of projects have been successfully completed under each program. While it is important to recognize the impact that “three generations of conservation partnership”² have had on WSFR in terms of relationships and lessons learned, for the purpose of the PMA, the focus is on the changes to WR-SFR / SWG functions and workloads since the passage of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000. This isolates the drivers that Congress may not have anticipated when shifting the administrative funding model to the “prior year allocation plus CPI” approach.

The following page provides a timeline of events impacting WR-SFR / SWG activities and workloads. These events were identified by WSFR Regional and Headquarters Chiefs during PMA interviews and working sessions, and validated by their teams. The timeline provides a sense of the pressure mounting on WSFR grant program administrators over time, which has necessitated a re-examination of how administrative functions are completed and funded. The events, viewed holistically, illustrate the key drivers in increasing complexity and workloads listed in **Table 3**.

Key Drivers in Increasing Complexity and Workloads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant increases in grant volumes without corresponding increases in administrative funding• Increased focus on fiscal-based activities associated with grant management• Increased workloads associated with Government-wide reform of financial assistance laws and regulations• Challenges and learning curves associated with changes to technology and reporting responsibilities

Table 3. Key Drivers in Increasing Complexity and Workloads

² *Celebrating the Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program: 75 Years of Conservation & Partnership Success*, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2012.



Key
 Gray – Program-wide impact
 Blue – Primarily Regional impact
 Green – Primarily HQ impact

Figure 1. WSFR Program Complexities Timeline



B. Organizational Structure

Before discussing how or how well an organization operates, it is important to understand how it is structured. At a high level, the WSFR organization breaks down into the units depicted in **Figure 2** below.

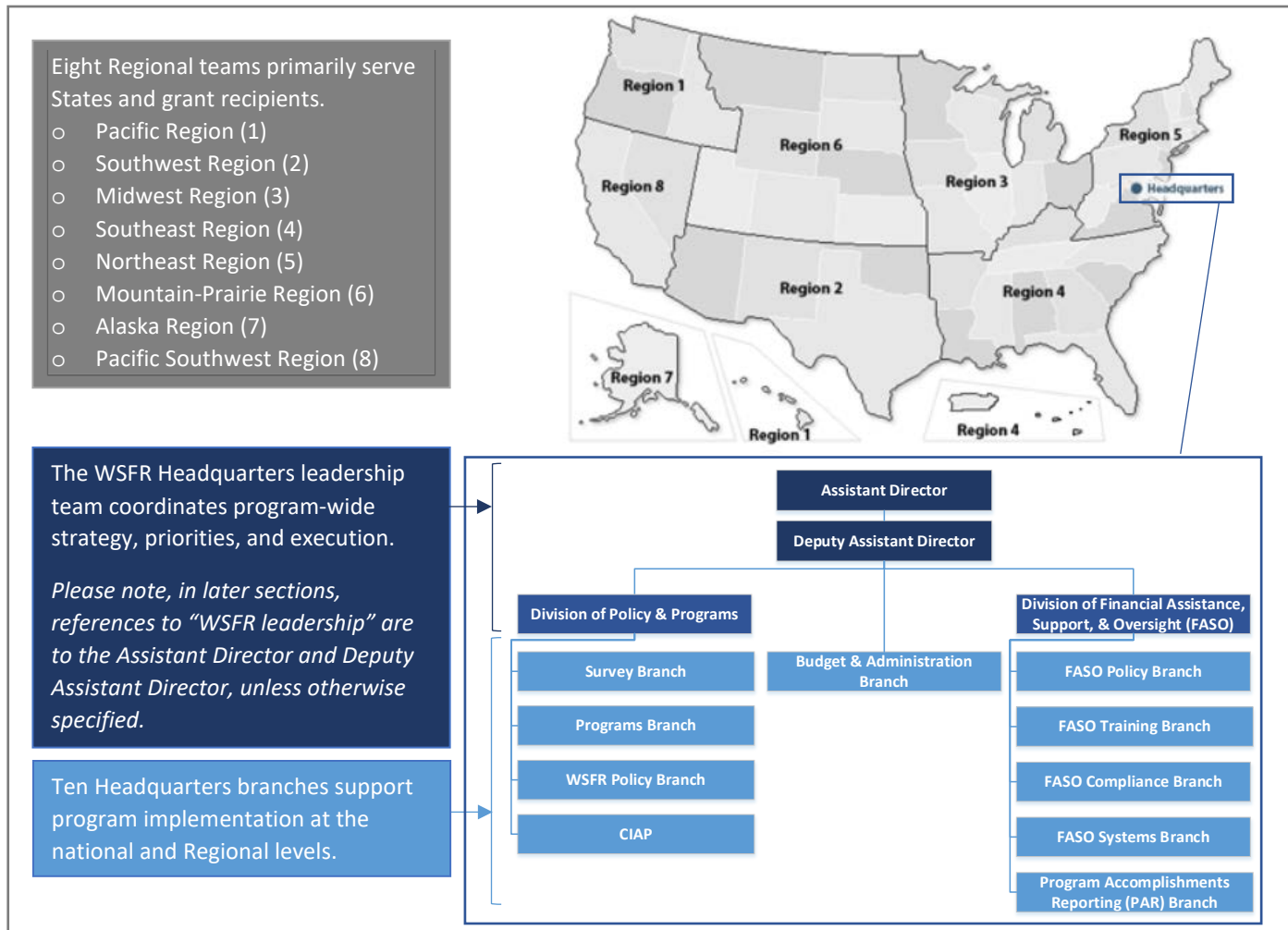


Figure 2. WSFR Organizational Units

For the purpose of the PMA, the focus was on the level of support each Region or Headquarters branch receives annually for WR-SFR / SWG administration and how it delivers in scope functions. **Table 4** lists how many FTEs were supported by WR-SFR / SWG administrative funds in FY17, to help contextualize the scope. The number of in scope FTEs does not equate to the number of people supporting the WR-SFR / SWG activities, but the level at which in scope activities were funded in FY17. The FTEs were calculated based on hours charged to the WR-SFR and SWG program codes in FBMS.

WSFR Organizational Unit	In Scope WR-SFR FTEs	In Scope SWG FTEs
Region 1	7.78	1.36
Region 2	8.41	1.22
Region 3	12.48	2.38
Region 4	13.53	2.06



WSFR Organizational Unit	In Scope WR-SFR FTEs	In Scope SWG FTEs
Region 5	11.95	2.29
Region 6	11.76	1.57
Region 7	4.87	0.79
Region 8	3.36	1.37
Survey Branch	0.00	1.55
Policy Branch	2.55	0.28
Coastal Impact Assistance Program	0.00	0.00
Programs Branch	3.99	0.96
PAR Branch	1.84	0.15
Budget & Administration Branch	4.63	0.59
FASO Policy Branch	0.00	0.00
FASO Training Branch	3.88	0.40
FASO Compliance Branch	1.86	0.05
FASO Systems Branch	0.00	0.00
Headquarters Leadership	3.38	0.72
TOTAL	96.27	17.77

Table 4. WR-SFR and SWG FTEs in FY17

There are currently 22 vacancies across the WSFR program. However, this “top line” figure does not reflect all long-term vacancies associated with administrative funding limitations. Currently, Headquarters and the Regions maintain a 10% vacancy rate, allocating available funding among 90% of their listed positions. This “standard vacancy rate” is necessary because the CPI increase has not kept pace with actual costs and, without changes to how functions are delivered or funded, it will not be possible to maintain current headcounts and service levels.

C. Core Functions

In order to identify areas of opportunity across the program, the PMA focused on functions consistently performed by WSFR staff as part of regular job duties. Transitioning to viewing an organization by functions, rather than positions, requires enumerating these functions and organizing them in a meaningful way to support discussion and evaluation. For WSFR, this is no small feat: during the PMA, the Analysis Team and WSFR stakeholders identified **109 core functions**. For the purpose of the PMA, these are defined as functions regularly performed by WSFR Regional and / or Headquarters staff in support of the WR-SFR / SWG programs. The functions are documented in the *Register of WSFR Core Functions* included in **Appendix B**. This register is an output from the PMA working sessions, and intended as a starting point for WSFR to use when identifying and planning future change initiatives.

The Analysis Team’s approach to developing the register of core functions included conducting interviews with each Regional and Headquarters unit to gather input on job activities, and facilitating working sessions with Regional and Headquarters Chiefs to validate how job activities were distilled into core functions. Each core function is assigned to a primary **accountable group**. Where teams collaborate to deliver a function, other participating units are noted.

As part of documenting the core functions, the Analysis Team identified five overarching **functional areas**, or areas of program delivery, aligned with WSFR’s “cycle of success.” These functional areas enable WSFR to take a program-wide view of core functions, uniting previously disparate sets of Regional and Headquarters functions under an established



framework familiar to WSFR staff and external stakeholders. The five functional areas, aligned with the “cycle of success,” are depicted in *Figure 3*.

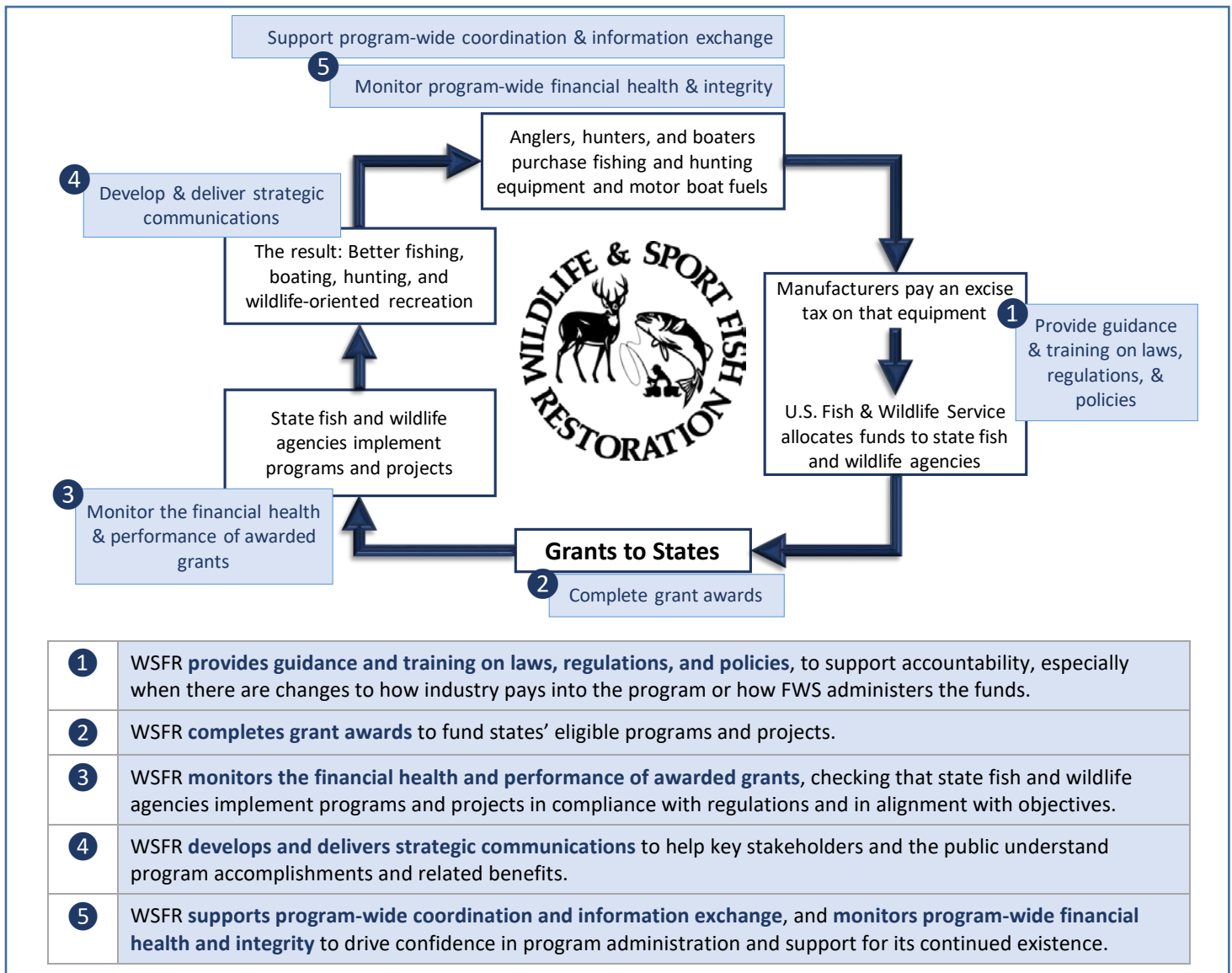


Figure 3. WSFR Functional Areas Aligned with “Cycle of Success”

Each of the core functions was also assigned to one of the three following **categories**:

- **Compliance** (mandatory activities required by law or regulation);
- **Support** (discretionary services provided to states and other partners); or
- **Value** (discretionary activities to promote the long-term health and viability of the program).

The Analysis Team established the categories primarily to provide context during customer interviews. There is relatively little flexibility to eliminate or decrease service levels of compliance functions because doing so would expose WSFR to reputational risk or adverse actions associated with non-compliance. WSFR has more flexibility to adjust its approach to support and value functions, so the Analysis Team focused on gathering customers’ feedback on the relative importance of the functions in these two discretionary categories.



To this end, the Analysis Team met with State and industry customers during the Regional analysis. During the Headquarters analysis, the Analysis Team met with Regional stakeholders as customers or beneficiaries of Headquarters support. These conversations focused on obtaining feedback on the relative importance of core functions to the customer groups. The PMA customer interviews were a first step in engaging WSFR’s customers on the idea of prioritization and trade-offs among WSFR functions. Each group participated in a briefing on current functions and challenges, followed by a facilitated discussion about the relative importance assigned to the functions by the customers.

During the ranking discussions, the Analysis Team asked the customer groups to indicate where they need **service levels** to remain consistent or increase (i.e., decreasing service levels would negatively impact program outcomes), and where they would be able to accept lower service levels. The exercise required customers to select among competing priorities to encourage conversation about what types of functions and what levels of service they desire, require, and expect. Key takeaways from these customer sessions are in section **D. Customer Feedback on Core Functions and Service Levels**.

As a result of the PMA, WSFR has a validated list of **109 core functions**, each aligned to a **functional area**, assigned to an **accountable group**, tied to a **category**, and linked to customer feedback on acceptable **service levels**. **Table 5** breaks down the core functions by these attributes; the complete *Register of WSFR Core Functions* is available in **Appendix B**.

Functional Area	# of Core Functions	Primary Accountable Group		Category			Acceptable Service Level		
		Regions	HQ Branch	Compliance	Support	Value	Same or Higher	Lower Acceptable	No Consensus ³
1. Provide Guidance & Training on Laws, Regulations, & Policies	15	6	9	2	11	2	9	4	2
2. Complete Grant Awards	15	13	2	9	6	0	9	0	6
3. Monitor Financial Health & Performance of Funded Grants	14	10	4	11	3	0	6	3	5
4. Develop & Deliver Strategic Communications	16	9	7	1	4	11	3	5	8
5a. Support Program-wide Coordination & Information Exchange	20	5	15	2	3	15	9	7	4
5b. Monitor Program-wide Financial Health & Integrity	29	9	20	21	7	1	16	3	10
TOTAL	109	52	57	46	34	29	52	22	35

Table 5. Summary of Core Functions

D. Customer Feedback on Core Functions and Service Levels

As introduced in the previous section, the Analysis Team collected customer feedback on service levels by conducting eleven group sessions with State and industry partners during the Regional analysis, and two group sessions attended by seven WSFR Regional Chiefs during the Headquarters analysis. The State and industry partners discussed the desired service levels for groups of core functions in the topic areas of administering grants, monitoring grants, providing ongoing support to States, and “other” value-add WSFR activities. In contrast, the Regional customers interviewed during the Headquarters analysis, as internal customers, wanted a more detailed view of Headquarters functions and the opportunity to weigh in on their experience with these services. During these customer interviews, the Analysis

³ The list of core functions was iterated throughout the PMA. Some functions had not yet been identified during the customer feedback sessions; these are listed as “No Consensus,” as are functions where customers did not agree on an acceptable service level.



Team walked Regional customers or their delegates through each Headquarters core function to discuss whether the service level should remain the same or if a lower service level would be acceptable.

In all of the sessions, the customers were required to select among competing priorities. The assumption for the exercise was that funding could no longer support all current functions at current service levels, and the customers were required to identify areas where lower service levels would be least disruptive. Many State customers indicated that all core functions are valuable to them, and that they would consider lower levels of service in some areas only if WSFR could not fully fund all current activities at current levels. Several State customers suggested reallocating funds from Headquarters to Regions as an alternative to decreasing Regional service levels. One State representative noted that it was “impossible” to select among functions without insight into how much funding WSFR expends on each function.

Though the level of detail in presenting core functions was tailored to each audience, the approach was similar enough to identify three key takeaways in customer feedback on service levels.

1. There is broad customer consensus that timely grant processing is the highest priority. As the Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group explained: “Timely processing of grants (including completion of federal requirements for compliance documentation – e.g., Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)) enables States to quickly deliver conservation actions on-the-ground to benefit fish and wildlife species and their habitats as well as hunters, anglers, shooters, and other contributors to the trust fund. Delays in grant processing prevent States from consistently and effectively meeting their conservation needs.”⁴

During both rating exercises, State and Regional customers demonstrated support for this statement; customers were more willing to accept decreased service levels where functions do not directly impact WSFR’s ability to process grant applications in a timely manner. Across the board, all of the core functions that directly support grant processing were rated as requiring the “same service level or higher” (those listed as “No Consensus” are functions added after the customer interviews to bring an additional level of detail to the *Register of Core Functions* at the request of the Regional and Headquarters Chiefs). During the State customer meetings, State partners generally expressed satisfaction with the timeliness of grant turnaround, timeliness of diversion letter turnaround, and adequacy of Region-to-State communications. State partners identified these service levels as sufficient for meeting their needs and expressed support for preserving these functions.

2. Perceived duplication of effort impacts the importance customers place on functions. While each core function was assigned to a primary accountable group, there are processes where multiple parties contribute to a successful outcome. State and Regional customers generally appeared to be more willing to accept decreased service levels in areas where they complete a portion of the process. Anecdotal feedback indicates that, in some cases, there is a perceived duplication of effort. In other cases, customers expressed that if service levels had to decrease in some areas, it would be less disruptive to “pick up the slack” in processes they already know and support.

An example observed in the State customer session was the willingness to accept lower service levels associated with national / Headquarters communications. During the PMA, State and industry partners indicated that current national communications are not very effective in advertising the high-level impacts of the grant programs. Several industry stakeholders mentioned the need to “tell WSFR’s story” about where the funding comes from and how it is applied, so that the program can gain additional support from taxpayers. One stakeholder described WSFR as “a very successful program that no one knows about.” Currently, some State customers are working directly with Regional staff and on

⁴ States’ Priority Needs from WSFR Program as Identified by the States’ Representatives to the Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group; February 2017



their own to fill the gaps in national / Headquarters communications. Seen through this lens, feedback to decrease the service level associated with national / Headquarters communications is likely a reaction to considering “more of the same,” not a reflection of the importance of optimized strategic external communications to program success.

3. Lack of understanding can translate into a lack of perceived value. During the customer interviews and other PMA working sessions, stakeholders tended to place less importance on functions when they lacked insight into how or why they were performed. The stakeholders interviewed were generally candid about their lack of understanding of the activities, and several acknowledged that they might place more importance on the functions if they understood their place in the “big picture” of WSFR operations. This observation is more applicable to the feedback from Regional customers, likely due to the level of detail associated with the interviews.

Overall, the customer feedback and key takeaways indicate that customers are interested in engaging with WSFR to discuss how and why administrative support provided by the program may change in the future. The PMA customer interviews were a first step in gathering high-level insights into the value that customers associate with different WSFR functions. WSFR is committed to building on this information to close gaps in customers’ understanding of its functions and design a future state that enables the program to effectively deliver the mission in the face of evolving requirements and needs.

III. Desired Future State

Similar to the approach to gathering and validating the core functions, the Analysis Team worked with WSFR stakeholders to identify the key characteristics of the desired future state: the WSFR team’s goals for the program that make change worth the effort. After completing interviews with Regional and Headquarters staff and leadership, the Analysis Team synthesized input on the desired future state into a set of draft characteristics. Then, the Analysis Team facilitated working sessions with Regional and Headquarters Chiefs to validate how the perspectives gathered during interviews were distilled into the key characteristics. The end result of the effort is a set of five organizational characteristics that WSFR staff and leadership in the Regions and Headquarters feel should be the “north star” for WSFR change initiatives, depicted in *Figure 4*.



Figure 4. Key Characteristics of WSFR's Desired Future State

Before WSFR undertakes a new change initiative, the team will look to these characteristics and discuss whether the successful completion of the initiative is likely to help WSFR progress toward one or more of these ideals. If the proposed initiative does not align with at least one of the key characteristics, it will be a lower priority for the organization. In some cases, the program will need to take on unaligned initiatives, for example, to comply with regulations or new policy set by DOI. But if multiple suggested change initiatives are not aligned with these future state characteristics, WSFR will revisit the key characteristics to see if program employees’ perspectives or priorities have shifted.

For each of the key characteristics of the desired future state, the Regional and Headquarters Chiefs provided insight into how they would know WSFR was succeeding in the given area. All statements in sections A-E are paraphrased input from WSFR staff and leadership, not the opinions or suggestions of the Analysis Team.



A. Clearly defined national program identity

WSFR stakeholders indicated that they feel strongly about working toward a WSFR that has a clearly defined national program identity. While WSFR employees' focus on their mission and customers becomes clear when discussing job duties and priorities, they see value in formalizing these guiding principles in the spirit of open communication and consistent messaging.

Regional stakeholders indicated that they would like the program to have a vision statement and core values that clearly establish quality service to grantees and State customers as the highest priority for the organization. They indicated that when WSFR leadership announces a new initiative or management priority, it should be incumbent upon the leadership team to demonstrate the link to the vision statement and core values.

Regional and Headquarters team members also noted the importance of continuing to build a properly staffed strategic communications team that supports the WSFR national program identity through effective stakeholder messaging; this topic is addressed in more detail in section *IV. Areas of Focus*.

B. Strong relationships based on a high degree of trust

WSFR stakeholders acknowledged that the program cannot succeed unless internal and external stakeholders trust each other to make responsible decisions regarding the use of limited resources. Discussion of how to build relationships with a high degree of trust identified three areas where WSFR can focus its efforts:

- **Collaborative prioritization.** Stakeholders discussed the importance of setting organizational priorities as a group, with Regional leadership representing the priorities of State customers and their own teams in strategic planning meetings with Headquarters leadership.
- **Consistency in messaging.** Trust is diminished when external parties hear conflicting messages about WSFR's priorities and plans from various individuals or groups within the program. Keeping everyone "on the same page" by providing the information required to communicate clearly and consistently with external parties is key to garnering support for WSFR's direction and building confidence in the program's ability to execute effectively.
- **Open information sharing.** During execution, being able to speak knowledgeably about "what's happening in WSFR" and demonstrate transparency into program operations reinforces trust with external stakeholders.

Regional stakeholders also indicated that maintaining State partners' trust requires that WSFR devote adequate resources to support a proactive approach to grants management. In particular, Regional Chiefs indicated that the organization must re-prioritize sufficient field time, which is frequently decreased when administrative funding runs low. The group discussed the importance of site visits, noting that, when done well, a site visit expands beyond a compliance "check in" to include informal training opportunities and invaluable in-person relationship building.

C. Seamless internal coordination

WSFR stakeholders place value on seamless internal coordination with WSFR leadership setting the "tone at the top" and taking a consistent approach to collaborative strategic planning. They hope that, once the plan is in place, WSFR leadership will remain committed to and focused on the agreed-upon priorities, regularly provide updates on progress, and confirm stakeholders' needs are being addressed.

Regional and Headquarters Chiefs expressed satisfaction with the new WSFR Assistant Director's more collaborative approach to Chiefs' meetings and designing approaches to new requirements and initiatives. Regional Chiefs indicated that success in this area will also require additional flexibility to include FWS Regional priorities in strategic planning, and



support for these Regional priorities carrying through execution, both in terms of ensuring adequate funding is available to complete the priority items and that they are represented in planning and execution documents.

Headquarters Chiefs also discussed the need to re-visit how Regional office staff influence new projects and work products, and expressed a desire to formalize a standard approach to gathering Regional input earlier in their initiatives. The Headquarters Chiefs also view the Chiefs meetings as a critical forum for effective internal coordination.

D. Effective, engaged, and supported WSFR staff

Regional and Headquarters Chiefs placed strong emphasis on developing an effective, engaged, and supported WSFR workforce. The Chiefs expressed that they want to assign manageable workloads to their team members and play an active role in helping staff prioritize assignments. For Regional Chiefs, the idea of “filtering” also plays into workload management: supervisors should have adequate time to proactively manage the portfolio of work, which includes interpreting requests and questions from various audiences, and parsing out specific items to each team member for action. When supervisors are overworked, staff members are less protected from the “noise” of requests and questions unrelated to their daily job duties, which can be confusing and distracting.

In the desired future state, WSFR staff have the ability to attend training and conferences to support their continual professional development. This requires freeing up funding to pay for courses, conference fees, and associated travel costs; but also reaching the point where staff have manageable workloads and feel comfortable dedicating time to continual learning opportunities. Staff who are connected to innovations in their fields through training and conferences are more likely to be engaged at work and bring new ideas back to enhance the WSFR environment.

Chiefs also indicated that their desired future state is characterized by high employee morale. For the Regional Chiefs, a key indicator of morale is the approach that their staff members take to working with the States. In the desired future state, Regional staff feel positive about the opportunities to engage with State partners; in-person and virtual communication is energizing, not a burden. This is not to say that staff are taking a negative approach to working with State partners currently, simply acknowledgement that high workloads can translate into a lack of enthusiasm or time for relationship building. For the Headquarters Chiefs, a key indicator of morale is the strength of staff’s connection to the mission and confidence that day-to-day work has a positive impact on the program. Headquarters Chiefs indicated that increased collaboration with Regional counterparts and opportunities to engage with State partners and on-the-ground projects are important to staff engagement.

E. High degree of transparency into how and how well resources are used

WSFR staff and leadership indicated that, in their desired future state, they will have a high degree of transparency into how and how effectively administrative funding is used. Regional and Headquarters Chiefs in particular expressed the desire to move toward a shared understanding of the value and level of effort associated with different program functions to support informed funding decisions.

Regional and Headquarters stakeholders indicated that, during execution, administrative expenditures should be clearly aligned to the highest priorities so that spending is transparent and defensible. WSFR stakeholders want to operate in an environment where they can easily verify that funding is being used in support of high-priority functions and initiatives, and are able to provide this information to external stakeholders in meaningful ways. Cohesion in how information is gathered and presented from prioritization through planning and execution is required to support this type of transparency. This topic is discussed in additional detail in section *IV. Areas of Focus*.



IV. Areas of Focus

This final section of the report highlights five areas where WSFR can focus in order to make progress toward its desired future state, listed in **Table 6** below.




Area of Focus	 Action	 Benefit	 Linked Characteristics of Desired Future State
Workforce	Identify and track key workload metrics	To support defensible budgets and informed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships based on trust • Seamless internal coordination • Transparency into priorities and spending
	Explore flexible staffing approaches	To enable program agility and effective use of available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective/engaged/supported staff • Transparency into priorities and spending
Process	Explore opportunities to improve knowledge sharing	To support increased efficiency and standardization where feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless internal coordination • Effective/engaged/supported staff
	Improve approach to gathering and using data	To support robust reporting and communications functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined national program identity • Strong relationships based on trust • Transparency into priorities and spending
	Focus on defining and delivering strategic external communications	To promote program value and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined national program identity • Strong relationships based on trust

Table 6. Selected PMA Areas of Focus

Each of the five areas includes a set of observations from the Analysis Team’s interviews, research, and working sessions with WSFR Regional and Headquarters staff and leadership. Where applicable, observations from the customer interviews are included as well. Following each set of observations are some potential next steps WSFR is considering. Some items are actionable in the short- or medium-term; others will require preceding changes to available information, processes, or behaviors to create lasting change.

It is worth noting that anecdotal evidence from within the program and external stakeholders indicates that, overall, WSFR is succeeding in meeting customer expectations, and is staffed by individuals who are dedicated to delivering the mission. All organizations have room to improve, and WSFR is committed to exploring ways to increase its operational efficiency prior to revisiting the adequacy of its administrative funding. These areas of focus can help WSFR develop a roadmap to drive further transparency in existing operations and progress toward its vision of an optimized future state.

Within this section, topics are grouped by whether the focus is primarily on workforce or process improvement. Each includes a section header that lists the topic area, action, benefit, and linked characteristics of the desired future state to orient the reader to the topic. A sample section header is included below in **Figure 5**.







Topic Area and Number		Action (<i>What WSFR is considering</i>)
		Benefit (<i>Why WSFR is considering it</i>)
		Linked key characteristics of the desired future state (<i>How it links to WSFR’s vision for change</i>)

Figure 5. Sample Section Header with Definitions



A. Workforce Focus Areas

Workforce Area 1		Identify and track key workload metrics
		To support defensible budgets and informed decision making
		And progress toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships based on a high degree of trust • Seamless internal coordination • A high degree of transparency into how and how well administrative resources are used

Observations

The idea of quantifying the resources required to support the Regions and Headquarters, and evaluating how well the current spend is aligned with the organization’s priorities and customers’ needs, is central to WSFR’s change journey. As part of the PMA, the Analysis Team spoke with internal stakeholders regarding the types of data currently available, and considered the types of analyses that the data could support.

The following data related to WSFR programmatic performance are currently available:

- Allocation methodologies used by Regions and Headquarters to develop budget requests;
- Administrative funding allocated to each Region and Headquarters unit, by FY;
- Hours charged to each grant program by WSFR staff, by pay period;
- Salary and fringe costs associated with administering each grant program, by pay period;
- WSFR-reported data on administrative effectiveness measures developed for the Joint Federal / State Task Force on Federal Assistance (JTF);
- Counts of grants and grant actions from FBMS; and
- Counts of projects from TRACS.

The available information presents two roadblocks to WSFR’s ability to use data to provide additional insight into program operations and identify potential efficiencies.

It is difficult to compare performance among units (e.g., Region to Region) or across the program (e.g., Regions to Headquarters). Due to process variations and the dichotomy of Regional vs. Headquarters functions, designing measures for use in comparing performance within and across WSFR is a complex undertaking. Regional and Headquarters Chiefs express broad support for the idea of national performance standards, but uncertainty regarding how WSFR can identify these measures and an understandable hesitance to burden staff with data calls or more detailed timekeeping protocols.

WSFR must improve data availability to align spending with functional areas/functions. The lowest level of detail currently available is the allocation of funding to grant programs and individuals, which does not provide traceability to the specific activities that the funding supports. Moving to a shared view of what administrative functions should be funded, and at what level, requires confidence among all parties that the functions are operating as effectively as possible. WSFR teams are not currently able to support anecdotes about workload and efficiency with data that enables comparisons across Regions or between Regions and Headquarters. This lack of visibility can impede WSFR’s ability to provide full transparency into its administrative spending internally and externally.

Potential Next Steps

Establishing meaningful workload metrics can assist WSFR in identifying remaining inefficiencies, completing “what if” analyses to identify the likely impacts of shifting funding among priorities, and estimating the impacts and making plans



to address new regulatory requirements and customer needs. WSFR is considering the following next steps as part of maturing its approach to programmatic performance measurement.

- Eliminate redundant and low-priority functions.** The *Register of WSFR Core Functions* provides a starting point for WSFR to complete a categorization and prioritization exercise, and to make preliminary determinations about which of its core functions or groups of functions drive stakeholders’ views of program performance and success (“high value”), and where the program might focus process improvement efforts (“low efficiency”). Developing a common understanding of how to define value and how to talk about process efficiency are foundational to a program-wide view of the core functions’ performance. For example, it is through this effort that WSFR will be able to identify the functions most closely linked to grant processing times, and hone in on actions required to further improve efficiency in this area. Similarly, WSFR could use the *Register of Core Functions* when revisiting customer feedback on perceived duplication of efforts to identify processes where both Regions and Headquarters contribute to a successful outcome and, for each, consider whether regrouping the related functions with one accountable party would result in improved efficiency.
- Define national standards.** The idea of meaningful national standards has wide support across the Regions and Headquarters. In some cases, internal stakeholders already have ideas about how to stratify service levels. WSFR is considering next steps in this area to identify workload drivers and use them to support informed decision-making on aligning staffing with priorities and desired service levels. This would enable WSFR to think through potential adjustments to roles or staffing to better align existing funding with priorities, or to account for additional grant volume, new federal regulations, or other changes that could occur in the operating environment.
- Integrate customer perspectives.** As part of internal and external communications efforts, WSFR intends to continue building an understanding of how customers define success in WR-SFR / SWG administration. Setting out to create a “perfect” performance management system is unrealistic. There will always be special circumstances that influence performance temporarily or long term. Using input from customers to develop a nuanced view of the relative value of core functions can help leadership make informed decisions about when performance deviations require action.

Workforce Area 2		Explore flexible staffing approaches
		To enable program agility and effective use of available resources
		And progress toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective, engaged, and supported WSFR staff • A high degree of transparency into how and how well administrative resources are used

Observations

As noted in the discussion of program complexities, WSFR grant program administration has always required knowledgeable biologists who can serve as partners to State agencies in evaluating and monitoring conservation projects. However, in recent years, the requirements associated with administering and overseeing Federal financial assistance programs have increased in areas related to fiscal management and internal controls. In some cases, WSFR Headquarters staff assumed responsibility for these fiscal roles program-wide; in others, Regions backfilled positions with staff who have fiscal management backgrounds or asked existing staff to diversify their skillsets to fill both roles.

At a high level, biology-focused tasks generally include determining grant feasibility, monitoring grant progress, conducting site visits, reviewing and approving performance reports, reporting in TRACS, and providing other technical



assistance to grantees. Fiscal-focused tasks generally include entering data into financial and grant monitoring systems, conducting risk assessments, reviewing and approving budgets and financial reports, and completing audits. Staffing a program that requires in-depth knowledge of both biological and fiscal subject areas, and the ability to manage and provide customer assistance on complex technical considerations, leads WSFR to a structure weighted toward the high end of the General Schedule (GS) pay scale.

There are arguments for WSFR maintaining higher-graded positions to attract well-qualified, high-quality candidates to the organization. In addition, higher-graded positions support WSFR in retaining experienced staff and subject matter experts able to operate confidently in the complex grant management environment. However, maintaining a staff roster weighted toward the high end of the GS scale places unavoidable pressure on the WSFR administrative budget.

Another constraint on WSFR's staffing approach is the language in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000 that stipulates: "The Service may charge salary and benefits for part-time employees only if those employees spend at least 20 hours a week administering the [PR-DJ] Act."⁵ Prior to 2000, there was no 20-hour work week minimum for part-time employees to charge time to WR-SFR programs for associated administrative activities. Where WSFR has explored flexible staffing approaches to date, anecdotal reviews are positive. For example, during the PMA, WSFR stakeholders indicated that they feel that it is effective to have the Fiscal Officer positions in Regions 1, 7, and 8 serve as back-up for each other; cross-service FBMS roles across Regions; and have Headquarters staff on detail to provide surge support to other branches as needed. However, WSFR Regional and Headquarters leadership are reluctant to push innovative staffing of WR-SFR functions much farther while required to remain compliant with the 20-hour per week minimum.

Remaining variation in how processes are performed in different WSFR units also complicates staffing considerations. This issue is most prevalent when comparing processes across Regions. Even if two team members have the same title, grade, and role within their respective Regions, there is no guarantee that they could "swap jobs. Some of the variations in Regional approaches to core functions are the result of differing customer needs or expectations, but there are likely areas where Regional processes differ simply because of the program's historically decentralized management, and not because unique activities or approaches are required to satisfy customer needs.

Potential Next Steps

Exploring flexible staffing approaches can help WSFR move from relatively static organizational charts that limit a unit's capacity based on its headcount, to a more agile organization that can shift resources based on the level of demand in different functions or functional areas. WSFR is considering the following next steps to expand upon its success in resource sharing to date, and make flexible staffing a more integral part of the program's approach to responsible use of limited resources.

- **Standardize processes across the program where feasible.** Using the OMB A-123 and other Regional and Headquarters process documentation as a starting point, WSFR could map out variations in how units deliver key functions. Identifying where processes differ is relatively easy; understanding why, and if there is room to standardize, can be more difficult. This topic is addressed in more detail in **Process Area 1**.
- **Validate alignment of skillsets with positions.** As WSFR gains more transparency into the effort associated with delivering its core functions, teams will have the opportunity to revisit the activities that comprise their "standard" roles, and whether there are sets of activities that could be reassigned to staff at lower GS levels. Thinking




⁵ *Implementation of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000 and Projected Spending Report*, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, August 2001.



“outside the box” about how to assign functions could lead WSFR to changes in its staffing structure that result in process efficiencies or enable some positions to be re-graded at lower GS levels to generate cost savings.

- **Commit to sharing resources where possible.** WSFR leadership has indicated that the team is working through the process to request Congressional approval to remove the 20-hour work week minimum from the requirements associated with funding WR-SFR program administration. Eliminating this requirement would enable additional flexibility in sharing staff within Regions, across Regions, with other programs (e.g., cross-staffing similar functions performed by WSFR, Migratory Birds, and / or Ecological Services), and at Headquarters. WSFR leadership intends to facilitate additional discussions about specific positions or scenarios that would lend themselves to resource sharing across the program or with other FWS programs.

B. Process Focus Areas

Process Area 1		Explore opportunities to improve knowledge sharing
		To support increased efficiency and standardization where feasible
		<p>And progress toward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless internal coordination • Effective, engaged, and supported WSFR staff

Observations

WSFR personnel express the desire to demonstrate operational effectiveness to State and industry partners. Achieving this objective requires discipline in the approach to gathering and adopting best practices, and a willingness to let go of unnecessary variation in processes and approaches to meeting customer needs. There appear to be two primary factors in the current state limiting effective knowledge sharing that could support increased efficiency and standardization: lack of time and a sub-optimal knowledge repository.

Regional and Headquarters stakeholders indicate that, in the current environment of limited resources and high workloads, team members lack the bandwidth to re-examine processes as part of daily work. It is daunting to consider the effort associated with deconstructing a daily routine into processes, gathering and building out process documentation, comparing differing approaches across organizational units, and identifying where variations can be eliminated and where they must remain. Regional stakeholders’ close relationships with State partners and intimate understanding of the projects, history, species, and conservation issues at play in their local areas also contribute to a sense of each Region having distinct needs and operating realities. As discussed in **Workforce Area 2**, some of the differences in Regional approaches to core functions are the result of variation in customer needs or expectations, but others are likely the legacy of decentralized operations and not linked to a unique operational or customer need.

Targets for increased standardization at Headquarters can be harder to identify than in the Regions, where the grants lifecycle is more easily diagrammed. However, a comparison can be made to variation in approaches taken by different Headquarters branches to work planning, information gathering, reporting, and communications. The impacted stakeholders and service offerings may be different, but the idea is the same: comparing functions and measuring efficiency becomes easier when units execute analogous activities the same way.

The second limiting factor is the ad hoc approach to sharing best practices and the lack of value that stakeholders derive from the WSFR Wiki. During PMA interviews and working sessions, Regional and Headquarters stakeholders consistently expressed frustration with the Wiki, highlighting that they find it difficult to use and feel that information is not organized in an intuitive or user-friendly manner. One Regional stakeholder indicated that it is pointless to reflect on the






completeness of Wiki resources because even if all of the relevant and current information on a topic is available on the site, users cannot locate what they need at any given time. Overall, stakeholders indicate that they do not consistently reference the Wiki for internal guidance, best practices, or innovative approaches, and are more likely to call a peer or subject matter expert for guidance.

Stakeholders cautioned the Analysis Team that even an optimized knowledge sharing platform cannot fully eliminate the need to discuss complex issues or obtain situational interpretations of policy or guidance. However, there appears to be room to provide a more robust and user-friendly repository of centralized resources to increase employees' confidence in locating answers to their questions and winnow down the cases in which consultation is required.

Potential Next Steps

To demonstrate that processes are operating efficiently and in a low risk manner, WSFR is considering the following next steps to eliminate unnecessary process variations, and create a culture of sharing and adopting best practices.

- **Standardize existing processes where feasible.** Using existing process documentation as a starting point, WSFR can begin to develop a common understanding of the processes that support key functions. This effort would include documenting where units complete processes in the same way, and where approaches differ. Where the approach is the same, these are opportunities to explore flexible staffing approaches, as discussed in **Workforce Area 2**. Where the approaches differ, WSFR could examine whether standardization is possible and either identify the best practice and guidance to transition other units to the preferred approach, or document the rationale for retaining the variation and its associated impact on performance metrics.
- **Proactively plan for consistency.** As WSFR stands up new processes as a result of change initiatives, the program would likely benefit from proactively developing process documentation to support consistent execution across units. For example, if WSFR develops a success story repository, an idea discussed during several PMA working sessions, the team could establish a protocol for updating and using the repository that works for all Regions and Headquarters branches to drive consistent use and value.
- **Create a culture that seeks out best practices.** WSFR stakeholders indicate that leadership should set the “tone at the top” and encourage teams to share and adopt best practices. WSFR leadership could include time to highlight best practices and process efficiencies as a standing agenda item during Chiefs meetings and calls. In addition, WSFR leadership could spearhead an evaluation of the Wiki. It is important for WSFR to determine whether improved information sharing protocols will result in the Wiki being a useful tool, or if there is a tool better suited to be the centralized repository for internal guidance and resources.

Process Area 2		Improve approach to gathering and using data
		To support robust reporting and communications functions
		And progress toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly defined national identity • Strong relationships based on a high degree of trust • A high degree of transparency into how and how well administrative resources are used

Observations

In addition to refining its approach to gathering and interpreting information on programmatic performance, WSFR is also faced with challenges in how it collects and uses grants reporting information. In 2012, WSFR decommissioned its



legacy grants management system, FAIMS, and transitioned to using TRACS as the repository for project information and FBMS for financial information. The transition from FAIMS to TRACS / FBMS presented challenges to WSFR staff and State partners over the past five years. Since the original TRACS user requirements were developed before stakeholders fully understood the ramifications of FAIMS being decommissioned, the system was retrofitted as a FAIMS replacement. When the initial rollout did not replicate the functionality and data points to which FAIMS users had grown accustomed, trust in the system and willingness to adopt it eroded. Since that time, WSFR has been working to more closely align TRACS with users' needs, while managing expectations associated with a "FAIMS replacement." The evolution of TRACS has required that State partners dedicate time to learning new functionality and protocols, and has required that WSFR staff assist with training and, in some cases, data entry and quality reviews.

WSFR stakeholders indicated that, recently, they have seen improvements in the PAR branch's approach to TRACS activities. With the latest user requirements phase complete, development of the new TRACS functionality is on schedule for a 2019 release. Regional stakeholders reported that the TRACS working group, under its new leadership, is functioning effectively and is now a valuable forum in which PAR is gathering and addressing input on users' needs and preferences. Regional stakeholders indicated that the PAR branch's highest priority should now be ensuring that the next TRACS rollout is successful.

WSFR internal stakeholders, particularly those in the Regions, also see the need to engage in expectations management prior to go-live, so that the next release does not generate confusion or frustration among stakeholders. In some Regions, reluctance by State partners to transition to TRACS has resulted in Regional staff taking on the responsibility of entering project data, adding to their workloads. In other Regions, the TRACS dataset is incomplete. Improving WSFR's ability to tie project outcomes and outputs to programmatic performance hinges on stabilizing TRACS and transitioning State partners to consistently using the system, both in terms of completing data entry and using reports generated from the system.

Potential Next Steps




WSFR's ability to monitor funded grants and gather meaningful data on program outputs and outcomes requires consistent use of TRACS. WSFR is considering the following next steps to increase the likelihood of a positive stakeholder reception of the next TRACS release.

- **Educate internal stakeholders on the long-term vision.** The PAR branch could consider holding a briefing to educate internal stakeholders on key messages associated with forthcoming TRACS improvements, including how functionality planned for the new release aligns with the originally agreed-upon goals for the effort. To the extent that the PAR branch can educate internal stakeholders on how WSFR is using TRACS data now, and the vision for its use longer-term, this would likely help Regional stakeholders prioritize data entry of legacy records and educate State partners on the long-term value of the system.
- **Manage external stakeholders' expectations.** The PAR branch and WSFR leadership could undertake an effort to manage external stakeholders' expectations regarding the forthcoming TRACS release. With input from the TRACS working group, the PAR branch and WSFR leadership could provide talking points or a memo on the alignment of TRACS data points with stakeholders' requests and information formerly available in FAIMS, and address any short-term or long-term gaps between the two.
- **Continue to explore integration.** Now that FBMS is stable and users are well trained on its functionality, there may be an opportunity to explore new ways to integrate data from TRACS and FBMS. During the PMA, the FASO Systems team indicated that they are already producing FBMS export files for use in grants reporting (i.e., to add financial information to the project information available in TRACS). The Headquarters Chiefs expressed interest in



improving FBMS / TRACS reporting capacity by training additional staff on how to run reports, adding a more user-friendly reporting tool (e.g., Crystal Reports, Tableau), or building more “canned” reports. There may also be an opportunity to use robotic process automation to reconcile and integrate data sources and generate reports on a much higher frequency with limited impact on staff time. WSFR could evaluate these options to determine how to best harness the data available in FBMS and TRACS and provide it to stakeholders with a frequency that aligns with their real-time reporting expectations.

- **Link project outcomes to program spending.** WSFR could explore opportunities to link grant outcomes and accomplishments to administrative spending. This may include making use of data visualizations (e.g., Tableau) to present existing information in new ways, or better integrating TRACS- and FBMS-based data for use in stakeholder messaging. This type of reporting could bolster stakeholders’ understanding of the link between administrative spending and the mission, and could help build a case to provide additional support and / or resources to the Regions.

Process Area 3		Focus on defining and delivering strategic external communications
		To promote program value and continuity
		And progress toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly defined national identity • Strong relationships based on a high degree of trust

Observations

Throughout the PMA interviews and work sessions, stakeholders indicated that there is room for WSFR to do a better job “telling its story” to external audiences. There appears to be broad consensus that WSFR should improve consistency in developing and delivering messages for external audiences, and exploit opportunities to drive increased awareness of WSFR grant programs and their successes. There is a strategic communications planning working group currently engaged in identifying key external audiences and their needs, and designing communications protocols and products to help WSFR better meet these needs. WSFR Regional and Headquarters stakeholders indicate that the working group is employing a sound approach, and making good progress toward an improved WSFR strategic communications function.

The stated goal of WSFR's strategic communications planning effort is to communicate the accomplishments of the WSFR program in a manner that influences the behaviors of key audiences so that WSFR has the funding, support, and relevance to effectively deliver its mission. To meet this goal, a national team comprised of staff from WSFR and FWS External Affairs, with contractor support, is developing a Strategic Communications Plan (SCP). The SCP will identify priority audiences; define principle behaviors needed from these audiences; and describe messages, strategies, and tactics that WSFR can use when communicating with these audiences. The SCP will also consider the research needs, evaluation methods, and adaptive management approaches required for effective future communications.

Potential Next Steps

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the strategic communications initiative has been progressing on schedule, hitting its key milestones, and garnering broad support across the program. Continued discipline in attaining key milestones (on an initiative that is a collateral duty for some of its participants) and providing ongoing transparency into progress are critical to successful completion of the initiative and long-term realization of associated benefits. WSFR should also remain mindful of the how the strategic communications initiative links to other focus areas.



- **Strategic planning.** As WSFR leadership expands participation on and transparency into strategic planning, it may be valuable to include checkpoints on the progress of the strategic communications initiative, including whether the initiative has sufficient resources and participation to succeed.
- **Internal communications.** WSFR should consider building out internal protocols and tools to help the organization realize the benefits of the external communications effort. Even with the best laid plans, external communications will still be uneven if internal coordination and communications are not consistent and effective.
- **Staffing flexibility.** As the strategic communications working group hones in on the skillsets and positions required to successfully deliver the re-designed strategic communications function, the working group may benefit from thinking broadly about how to staff the team. There appears to be consensus that specialized skillsets and relevant experience are required to develop effective strategic communications; the types of flexible staffing approaches discussed in *Workforce Area 2* may come into play when staffing a team with balanced perspectives and requisite technical knowledge.

Looking Ahead: Continuing Momentum from the PMA. The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000 assigned the FWS, through the Assistant Director for WSFR, the responsibility for: “the administration, management, and oversight of the Federal Assistance Program for State Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.”

The successful execution of these trustee responsibilities is greatly benefited by a strong FWS/State/Industry Partnership (Partnership) operating under a consistent set of expectations for program administration. These expectations should be established by a shared vision for the efficient and effective administration of the WSFR Program. Based on the foundational information provided in this report, FWS recommends a shared vision focused on the following principles:

- Promoting efficient grant review, approval, and monitoring processes that support the effective delivery of conservation;
- Standardizing processes in support of improved efficiency and cross-regional resource sharing;
- Prioritizing program integrity and accountability through effective training, data management, performance reporting, policy and adequate capacity;
- Providing stakeholder visibility and input on priorities and value propositions; and
- Enhancing strategic communications.

Over the coming months, the Partnership will work collaboratively to refine these principles and create a shared vision which will establish consistent expectations for program administration across the Partnership.



Appendix A. Acronyms

This section defines the acronyms used throughout the PMA Program Report.

Acronym	Term
ARD	Assistant Regional Director
BMO	Business Management and Operations
CIAP	Coastal Impact Assistance Program
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DJ Act	Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FA	Financial Assistance
FAIMS	Federal Aid Information Management System
FASO	Financial Assistance, Support, and Oversight Division
FBMS	Financial and Business Management System
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
GS	General Schedule
JTF	Joint Federal / State Task Force on Federal Assistance
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PAR	Program Accomplishments Reporting Branch
PMA	Program Management Analysis
PR Act	Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act
SCP	Strategic Communications Plan
SFR	Sport Fish Restoration
SWG	State Wildlife Grant
TRACS	Wildlife Tracking and Reporting Actions for Conservation of Species System
WR	Wildlife Restoration
WSFR	Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration



Appendix B. Register of WSFR Core Functions

This section includes the *Register of WSFR Core Functions* developed with Regional and Headquarters staff and leadership for the purpose of the PMA, and definitions to assist readers in interpreting the information. The version of the register included on the following pages is sorted by Functional Area and Accountable Group. Use the Microsoft Excel version included as an attachment to create new views by sorting and filtering the information.

Key Term	Definition
Core Function	A function regularly performed by WSFR Regional and / or Headquarters staff in support of the WR-SFR / SWG programs.
Functional Area	<p>The aspect of program delivery to which the core function is most closely aligned, among the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide guidance and training on laws, regulations, and policies. 2. Complete grant awards. 3. Monitor the financial health and performance of funded grants. 4. Develop and deliver strategic communications. 5a. Support program-wide coordination and information exchange. 5b. Monitor program-wide financial health and integrity.
Accountable Group	<p>The group primarily responsible for delivering the core function; either the Regions or a Headquarters branch; noted in the register with an “A.”</p> <p>Each core function is assigned to only one accountable group. Where other teams support the function, their participation is noted with a “P.”</p>
Category	<p>The best description of the core function type, among the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance (mandatory activities required by law or regulation); • Support (discretionary services provided to states and other partners); or • Value (discretionary activities to promote the long-term health and viability of the program).
Service Level Feedback	<p>Consensus from the applicable customer group as to whether the service level should remain the same or higher (+) or a lower service level would be acceptable (-).</p> <p>The list of core functions was iterated throughout the PMA. Some functions had not yet been identified during the customer feedback sessions; these are listed as “NC” for “No Consensus,” as are functions where customers did not agree on an acceptable service level.</p> <p><i>Please note that the customer feedback exercise required respondents to select lower service levels for at least one discretionary core function in each topic area. Some customers indicated that they would prefer to receive the same service level or higher in all core functions, if possible.</i></p>

ID	Core Function	Functional Area	Accountable Groups											Category (C/S/V)	Service Level (+/-/NC)
			Regions	Budget & Admin.	Division of Policy & Programs			FASO							
					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems	PAR		
1	Assist applicants by consulting on compliance with 2 CFR 200 requirements and environmental/historical compliance	1	A		P	P		P	P	P	P			S	+
2	Provide technical support to external customers for grant- and program-specific needs	1	A		P	P		P	P	P	P			S	+
3	Participate in revisions to WSFR regulations, policies, and Service Manual chapters by providing input and reviewing drafts	1	A		P	P		P	P	P	P			S	NC
4	Coordinate delivery of national/Headquarters policies to State Directors and FACS	1	A		P	P			P					S	+
5	Assist States with TRACS	1	A			P			P				P	S	+
6	Develop and provide training to grantees and their partners	1	A						P	P				V	-
7	Interpret regulations, policies, Service Manual chapters, and legal precedents and provide related technical assistance	1	P		A	P		P	P	P	P			S	-
8	Work with Training Branch to update courses with new policy information	1			A				P					S	+
9	Develop WSFR regulations, policies, and Service Manual chapters	1	P		A									C	+
10	Create and deliver training to Servicewide and WSFR staff and external stakeholders	1			P			P	A	P				C	+
11	Provide technical assistance to Regional customers to drive consistency in processes/procedures	1	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	S	-
12	Create WSFR user guides and training materials	1			P				P		P	A		S	+

ID	Core Function	Functional Area	Accountable Groups										Category (C/S/V)	Service Level (+/-/NC)	
			Regions	Budget & Admin.	Division of Policy & Programs			FASO							
					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems			PAR
13	Maintain the Federal Assistance Wiki	1			P	P				P			A	V	-
14	Maintain the WSFR Wiki page	1							A					S	NC
15	Interpret IT policy impacts on TRACS	1											A	S	+
16	Complete environmental/historical compliance activities	2	A			P								C	+
17	Determine funding availability and eligibility status	2	A			P								C	+
18	Develop and communicate award solicitation and awardee to public and GSA	2	A			P								C	+
19	Review award budget justification	2	A			P								C	+
20	Review for compliance, merit, and risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200, 50 CFR 80, and additional federal requirements	2	A			P								C	+
21	Collaborate with grant applicants in resolving incomplete grant applications	2	A			P								S	+
22	Provide consultations in meeting the requirements for the solicited grants	2	A			P								S	+
23	Evaluate and respond to potential diversion issues	2	A											C	+
24	Complete SWAPs and account for CMS considerations	2	A											C	NC
25	Assist grantees with funding matching/pooling and provide technical assistance as needed	2	A											S	NC
26	Assist with early review, development, and approval of competitive grant proposals	2	A											S	NC

ID	Core Function	Functional Area	Accountable Groups										Category (C/S/V)	Service Level (+/-/NC)	
			Regions	Budget & Admin.	Division of Policy & Programs			FASO							
					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems			PAR
27	Complete planning related to multiple-state grants, especially as they pertain to SWG	2	A											S	NC
28	Participate in the merit review process for WSFR competitive grant programs	2	A											S	NC
29	Administer the Multistate Conservation Grant Program	2				A								C	+
30	Manage, participate in, and oversee the merit review process for WSFR competitive grant programs	2	P			A								C	NC
31	Review and approve financial and performance reports	3	A			P								C	+
32	Enter TRACS data/oversee TRACS data entry	3	A										P	C	NC
33	Implement audit resolutions	3	A								P			C	-
34	Oversee grant audits	3	A								P			C	-
35	Provide real-time grant information from FBMS to grantees	3	A									P		S	NC
36	Monitor for compliance, merit, and risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200	3	A											C	+
37	Manage, review, and approve grant/project revisions	3	A											C	NC
38	Monitor long-term capital improvements and lands	3	A											C	NC
39	Review and approve expenses for high-risk grantees	3	A											C	NC
40	Conduct site visits as warranted	3	A											S	-

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			Regions	Budget & Admin.	Division of Policy & Programs			FASO							
					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems	PAR		
41	Develop, operate, and maintain TRACS	3											A	C	+
42	Manage State grant audits	3										A		C	+
43	Develop FA reports, including WSFR WEBi monthly report	3										A		C	+
44	Maintain and update TRACS export file	3										A		S	+
45	Communicate policy guidance for updated/new items to external customers	4	A		P	P		P	P	P	P			S	-
46	Assist and support with R3 initiatives	4	A		P	P								V	NC
47	Provide support with State/program initiatives and communication	4	A			P								S	NC
48	Conduct outreach to manufacturers and other stakeholder groups	4	A			P								V	-
49	Attend grant press events to announce grant awards and dedications	4	A			P								V	NC
50	Participate in the Five-Year Report Team	4	A			P								V	NC
51	Support the strategic communications initiative and liaise with External Affairs	4	A			P								V	NC
52	Complete Regional performance reporting	4	A											S	NC
53	Contribute to WSFR Regional social media accounts and web pages	4	A											V	NC
54	Prepare briefing materials for Service and DOI leadership and other external parties	4	P		P	A								S	+

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					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems	PAR			
55	Complete national and coordinate Regional performance reporting	4	P			A									C	+
56	Conduct outreach/communications for new awards and program accomplishments	4	P			A									V	-
57	Coordinate and implement the strategic communications initiative	4	P			A									V	+
58	Maintain WSFR social media accounts and web page	4			P	A				P					V	-
59	Chair the Five-Year Report Team	4				A									V	-
60	Lead the economic section of the Five-Year Report	4						A							V	NC
61	Participate in the TRACS Working Group and Lands team	5a	A		P	P			P				P		V	NC
62	Present WSFR updates at Regional meetings/conferences	5a	A		P	P			P						V	-
63	Participate on Regional teams for WSFR information sharing on conservation benefits and planning	5a	A			P									V	NC
64	Hold meetings with State Directors and Federal Aid Coordinators	5a	A												V	+
65	Participate in committees chartered by AFWA and Regional State associations	5a	A												V	+
66	Support planning and serve as SMEs during JTF meetings	5a	P		A	P									S	-
67	Serve as SMEs at Regional and national meetings to discuss new policies and training opportunities	5a			A			P	P	P					V	+

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					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems	PAR		
68	Serve as SMEs for OIG and fiscal meetings, DOI/FWS policy reviews	5a			A			P			P	P		V	+
69	Complete mandated rulemaking activities, including required communications and Federal Register publications	5a			A									C	+
70	Gather stakeholders' input on regulations, policies, and programmatic agreements; includes forming/chairing working groups	5a			A									V	+
71	Serve as SMEs at Regional and national fiscal meetings	5a							P		A	P		V	NC
72	Support the Trust Fund Collections Working Group (TFCWG) and its special projects	5a				A								S	-
73	Represent WSFR on the FWS GIS Steering Committee	5a											A	V	-
74	Chair the TRACS Working Group	5a											A	V	+
75	Coordinate and complete the Five-Year National Survey	5a						A						C	+
76	Provide technical assistance on use/interpretation of survey data	5a						A						S	-
77	Develop and deliver presentations on survey data/analysis	5a						A						V	-
78	Write addendums and reports based on survey data/analysis	5a						A						V	-
79	Provide economic analyses for the WSFR programs	5a						A						V	NC
80	Serve as liaison to DOI BIO on WSFR-related issues and requests	5a										A		V	+

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					WSFR Policy	Programs	Survey	Policy	Training - WSFR	Training - FA	Compliance	Systems			PAR
81	Respond to OMB and Congressional inquiries on Regional issues	5b	A	P		P						P	P	C	+
82	Respond to Departmental data and policy requests	5b	A	P								P		C	NC
83	Provide consultations on safety margins	5b	A	P								P		S	NC
84	Support budget-to-actuals tracking and true ups	5b	A	P										S	NC
85	Support budgeting process and annual allocations	5b	A	P										S	NC
86	Provide information for WSFR OIG investigations and respond directly to OIG on Regional matters	5b	A								P			C	NC
87	Support Federal and State land reconciliation	5b	A											C	+
88	Provide allocation methodologies, grant program balances, and budget projections to Headquarters	5b	A											C	NC
89	Develop Regional budget projections	5b	A											S	NC
90	Support FOIA requests, A-123 and A-133 reviews, and OIG investigations	5b	P			A					P			S	+
91	Provide information for WSFR OIG investigations on program-wide issues	5b	P								A	P		C	+
92	Respond to FOIA requests	5b	P		A									C	NC
93	Complete apportionment calculations	5b		A										C	+
94	Coordinate WSFR's annual budgeting process and calculate budget allocations	5b		A										C	+

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95	Support reversion and safety margin determinations	5b		A										S	-
96	Develop budget justifications	5b		A										V	+
97	Develop budget justifications for WSFR programs	5b				A								C	+
98	Update the annual CFDA profiles	5b				A		P						C	+
99	Support WSFR grant coordination and funding distribution	5b				A								S	-
100	Report on TRACS spending, security, continuous monitoring, and risk assessment	5b											A	C	-
101	Integrate and monitor new security protocols	5b											A	C	+
102	Run the apportionment calculations	5b											A	C	+
103	Calculate the freshwater and saltwater angling allocations	5b						A						C	+
104	Collect license certifications	5b									A			C	+
105	Oversee administrative audits	5b									A			C	+
106	Facilitate cash transfers for SFR funds	5b									A			C	NC
107	Oversee WSFR audit resolutions and corrective action plans	5b									A			C	NC
108	Administer budget transfers	5b										A		C	+
109	Oversee safety margin process and WSFR year-end process	5b										A		C	+