

City and County of San Francisco
Department of Building Inspection



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**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION
FISCAL YEAR 2010-11
EFFICIENCY PLAN
AND
PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

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Introduction

The San Francisco Performance and Review Ordinance (Section 88 of the Administrative Code) and Charter Section 16.120 require that the head of each City department submit to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors by February 1st a departmental efficiency plan. The plan elements are:

1. Strategic Planning which includes a
 - a. Comprehensive Mission Statement as required by Section 3.5 of the San Francisco Administrative Code;
 - b. Description of the Department's major program areas or operational functions;
 - c. Outcome-related goals and objectives for each; and
 - d. Discussion of how current resource levels and resource levels requested for the coming fiscal year impact the department's ability to achieve stated objectives.
2. Customer Service which includes
 - a. Benchmarks of quality customer service provision;
 - b. Identification of internal and external customers; and
 - c. Discussion of the Department's success in meeting stated benchmarks.
3. Performance Evaluation which includes
 - a. Clearly defined performance measurements for each departmental objective;
 - b. Prior fiscal year targets and actual performance for each measure;
 - d. Current fiscal year targets and year to date actual performance;
 - e. Proposed budget year performance targets; and
 - f. Discussion of any variance between targets and actual performance.

Background

The Department of Building Inspection (DBI) was created by voter referendum under Proposition G in 1994. The Charter amendment establishing the Building Inspection Commission (BIC), which oversees the Department, also designated that its seven appointed members would represent the diverse communities that interact with the Department.

Mission Statement

Under the direction and management of the seven-member citizen Building Inspection Commission, to oversee the effective, efficient, fair and safe enforcement of the City and County of San Francisco's Building, Housing, Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical Codes, along with the Disability Access Regulations and other Federal, State and local codes and regulations.

Purpose

To serve the City and County of San Francisco and the general public by ensuring that life and property within the City and County are safeguarded, and to provide a public forum for community involvement in that process. This is done through code compliance and enforcement, as well as provision of an open and transparent public forum for community involvement in the permit, plan review, inspection and compliance processes.

Organization, Goals and Objectives

Building Inspection Commission

The Building Inspection Commission provides policy direction to the Department of Building Inspection. As a policy-making and supervisory body mandated by the City Charter, the seven member citizen Building Inspection Commission manages the Department of Building Inspection and the bodies subordinate to the Commission, by overseeing the effective, efficient, fair and safe enforcement of the City and County's Building, Housing, Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical codes, along with Disability Access Regulations.

The seven commission slots are filled by a structural engineer, a licensed architect, a residential tenant, a residential builder, a residential landlord, a community based non-profit housing developer, and a member of the general public at-large. The BIC appoints the Director of DBI, sets policy, hears various appeals on issues leading up to the issuance of building related permits, sits as the Abatement Appeals Board to hear appeals of Director's Orders of Abatement, and provides a public forum through their monthly meetings.

The BIC's goals and objectives are to:

- Continue to implement new technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of DBI's operations.

- Continue working with the City Attorney's Office, Housing Inspection Services staff and Code Enforcement staff in the Litigation Committee to abate outstanding cases.
- Continue to monitor DBI's staffing issues to ensure excellent customer service to the citizens of the City and County of San Francisco.
- Continue the process of implementing the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) for the Department in order to streamline services.
- Continue to meet with all City departments to coordinate permit processes and legislation by encouraging cooperation for service provision.

Department of Building Inspection

DBI is managed by the Director who reports to the BIC and is responsible for overseeing the overall Department operations. The Department consists of three program areas: Permit Services, Inspection Services and Administrative Services.

Permit Services is responsible for permit approval coordination, final approval and permit issuance to ensure that the proposed construction work meets all safety requirements of the codes; and ensure that the process is performed in a timely manner.

The divisions and associated responsibilities are:

- Plan Review is responsible for review and approval of all building permit applications to ensure that proposed construction work meets life safety, accessibility, and structural safety requirements of the code. Over-the-counter projects are reviewed at the counter as the customer waits. Pre-application review meetings are provided for code interpretations to resolve major code issues prior to the submittal of plans and permit applications. In addition, Plan Review provides emergency engineering response services.
- Permit Processing and Issuance is responsible for screening, checking and reviewing permit applications and plans for accuracy and completeness before accepting and routing them for further review and approval by plan review disciplines. This division accepts and issues construction permits for public and private buildings located within the City and County of San Francisco. Additionally, they issue electrical, plumbing and street space permits, and assess and collect fees for all structures, building enlargements and change of use permits.

Technical Services Division (TSD) is responsible for the first point of contact for the public. They answer general questions, provide direction to appropriate services and give permit status. They provide technical support related to codes and other technical matters to the other divisions within the Department of Building Inspection, to other City Agencies, and the public. The general areas of focus include code and policy review and development and code interpretation. They also represent DBI at the Board of Appeals, the

The goals and objectives of Permit Services are to:

- Continue to streamline permit processing to make it more efficient and transparent to the public and meet customer's needs.
- Continue to work with MIS on improving the current records management system.
- Ensure compliance with State Regulation AB717 which requires staff to be certified as building inspector or plans examiner and requires staff to complete 45 hours of continuing education within a three-year period.
- Develop additional plan review checklists, code interpretations, and structural bulletins.
- Update Administrative Bulletins to conform to new code.
- Continue to work with other City departments, staff and customers to implement the "Green Building" and Water and Energy Conservation code requirements.
- Continue focus on preservation of historic buildings through applications of the State Historical Building Code.
- Create guidelines for soft story retrofit designs and implementation.

Inspection Services is responsible for safeguarding life or limb, health, property, and public welfare by inspecting buildings, structures, and sites for compliance with local, state, and federal laws regulating and controlling the construction, use of occupancy, location and maintenance within the City and County of San Francisco. The divisions and associated responsibilities are:

- Building Inspection Division (BID) is responsible for inspecting the construction of all new and existing buildings and structures for conformity with approved plans and permits. BID inspectors verify that all building improvements are in compliance with state and local building code requirements. Inspectors respond to emergency situations, complaints of unsafe structures and work without permit. Notices of Violation are prepared and issued as necessary. Unresolved cases are referred to the Code Enforcement Section for further administrative action that may include the Director's Hearing process. This division also conducts inspections for Police and Fire permits issued by those agencies. BID issues Noise Permits for construction work at night as prescribed by Section 2908 of the San Francisco Police Code. Implementation of the Vacant/Abandoned Building Ordinance.

- Electrical Inspection Division (EID) provides for the life safety by enforcing municipal and state regulations and codes relative to construction, alteration and installation of electrical, life safety, and telecommunication systems.
- Housing Inspection Services (HIS) and Code Enforcement Section (CES) implement and enforce the San Francisco Housing Code and other pertinent related City Codes. They establish and maintain minimum maintenance standards for existing residential buildings to safeguard life, health, property, and public welfare by conducting periodic health and safety inspections and responding to tenant complaints. The Code Enforcement section investigates complaints of violations of the Building, Plumbing and Electrical Codes and employs abatement procedures to correct code deficiencies. This section initiates follow-up enforcement when cases have been referred by other divisions within DBI by holding Director's Hearings and referring cases to the City Attorney for litigation. Assessment fees are collected from building owners that have code violations in order to recover costs incurred by investigations. The section also assists in the preparation and issuance of Emergency Orders for imminent hazards arising from natural disasters and emergencies.
- Plumbing Inspection Division (PID) is responsible for ensuring, through inspections, the proper functioning for installations of drainage, water, gas, and other mechanical systems covered in the Plumbing and Mechanical Codes. These inspections are carried out in buildings which are newly constructed, remodeled, or repaired. They also inspect fire sprinkler installations to ensure compliance with the plans approved by the Fire Department plan review staff, and conduct inspections as required by various ordinances.

The goals and objectives of Inspection Services are to:

- Expand the use of technology to create inspection efficiencies including inspection scheduling using interactive-voice recognition and web-based systems.
- Provide a two-business day turnaround for inspection requests.
- Manage all complaints within one or two business day response time.

Administrative Services consists of Support Services, Financial Services, Management and Information Services and Legislative and Communication Services. The divisions and associated responsibilities are:

- Support Services is responsible for disseminating the Department's policies and procedures and managing, processing, and maintaining permit records. They are also responsible for the Department's website, preparing Monthly, Quarterly, Annual Reports, and performance measures. They are responsible for coordination of the implementation of over 180 recommendations for the Business Process Reengineering Report. The Personnel and Payroll Services are under Support Services.

- Financial Services is responsible for providing support to the Department in the areas of budget development, analysis and monitoring, fiscal management, purchasing, contract development, business analysis, and providing reports as required by the Director, BIC, Mayor and other City departments.
- Management and Information Services (MIS) is responsible for providing automated data capture, data management, hardware management and procurement, and report dissemination throughout DBI and other City departments. MIS also develops and implements special projects that benefit all City departments including the Permit Tracking System, Electronic Document Management and e-Plan Review System and the Interactive Voice Response System for inspection scheduling.
- Legislative and Communication Services is responsible for monitoring legislation to ensuring DBI interests are served, implementing the Department's Community Outreach Program, preparing information publications. The section also works with the Mayor's Office, Board of Supervisor's and the Budget Analysts Office on legislation.

The goals and objectives of Administrative Services are to:

- Continue to upgrade DBI's automation systems to improve data availability and interaction including working closely with all City departments.
- Implement a customer tracking system within the Department.
- Continue to upgrade DBI's office space in ways that will enable the department to implement a City-wide Permit Processing Center with consolidated City-wide permitting activities on designated floors, streamlined processes and procedures, etc. and to maximize staff and customer convenience.
- Establish written policies and procedures accessible to all customers and employees, including posting these on DBI's website.
- Continue to implement BPR recommendations, and keep customers, other City agencies, and the public fully informed of all new process changes, new policies and procedures and implement an E-Alert/DBI Update electronic distribution.
- Implement an online and Integrated Voice Recognition (IVR) Scheduling System, to facilitate inspection scheduling, an Electronic Data Management System for records storage and retrieval, and an e-Plan Check System for plan submittal and review.
- Increase online access to standardized forms and checklists, policies, procedures, records requests submittals, payment acceptance, etc.
- Continue to revise and update the DBI's Emergency Operations Plan.

- Develop and deliver a comprehensive training program for all DBI staff.

Departmental Goals

The Department will continue to focus on three primary goals: effective enforcement of and compliance to codes, efficient provision of services and continuous improvement of customer services. Achieving these goals will position the Department to fulfill its mission, meet evolving public demands for our services, and deliver high quality, professional, courteous, efficient and effective services that are consistent and transparent.

Effective Enforcement

In order to achieve the effective, accurate and consistent enforcement of codes, DBI will address the following areas over the next five years.

- Conduct random quality control field inspections to ensure effective and consistent enforcement.
- Identify training needs and provide training on a continuous basis, as well as increase customer access to supervisors and managers through the 'guaranteed second opinion' program to strengthen customer confidence and eliminate potential conflicts of interest and/or ethical challenges.
- Improve the staff expertise through recruitment and technical training, especially in code enforcement regulations, plan review, permit services, inspections, operations and customer services.
- Improve consistency in the application of all code requirements through weekly reviews and public postings of code interpretations on DBI's website.
- Increase legislative awareness/initiatives to remain informed and responsive to available "Best Practices" adopted successfully in other, comparable urban building departments.
- Continue to enforce mandatory certifications and licensing.
- Continue to build public trust and awareness with more pro-active public outreach and communications.
- Perform quality control plan review on approved permits to ensure effective enforcement, accuracy, and identify training needs.

Efficient Provision of Services

In order to improve the efficiency of our services and its delivery, the Department will address the following areas over the next five years.

- Continue to implement the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) Implementation Plan.

- Continue to establish written policies and procedures that are accessible to all customers and employees and set and monitor performance measures that meet promised project turnaround times and thus fulfill customer expectations.
- Implement a new customer tracking system that makes effective use of available technology that will reduce confusion and congestion, as well as enhance significantly the customer's experience.
- Continue to upgrade DBI's office space to implement a City- wide Permit Processing Center with consolidated City-wide permit processing activities on designated floors, increase online access to reduce unnecessary visits, enhance working conditions for all DBI staff and improve the entire customer experience.
- Continue to improve DBI's website, www.sfdbi.org to provide access to DBI's services, track the status of existing permits, review posted checklists, application completion standards and all polices and guidelines.
- Automate more services including expanding on-line permitting for both internal staff and customers in order to enhance efficiencies and to increase public transparency and accountability.
- Continue to work with other agencies involved in the permit process to facilitate better communications and standardize permit processing procedures where possible.
- Monitor and improve internal services, resources and staff training to maximize results from the appropriate application of new tools, technologies, and proven methods.

Continuous Improvement of Customer Services

In order to improve the safe and fair enforcement of building codes, the Department will focus on following areas.

- Continue to implement a City-wide integrated permit tracking system to improve public transparency, reduce potential conflict of interest situations, and to enhance multi-agency abilities to facilitate permit, inspection and code-compliance processes.
- Implement an Electronic Document Management System and e-Plan Check system to improve access to DBI records and to expedite plan review.
- Continue digitizing plans and begin digitizing records currently on other media to improve retrieval.
- Improve public access to services with additional space and design opportunities, while increasing pro-active outreach programs that educate

and inform potential DBI customers of procedures, code requirements, services available, etc.

- Continue to improve employee support, training opportunities, morale and teamwork to generate increased productivity and to build skill-sets for succession planning.
- Increase online services to simplify interactions as well as reduce energy, improve the environment and manage demands on limited resources.
- Increase DBI's communication efforts, including community outreach programs and education.
- Support continuous training for operations staff and management, including improved awareness of ethics and conflict-of-interest rules, and to promote better job performance and efficiency.

Customer Services

DBI's customers can be categorized into external and internal.

External Customers

DBI's external customers consist of:

- Contractors, architects, engineers and other building professionals doing business in San Francisco,
- Homeowners, and
- Community and industry representatives.

In 2008 Corey, Canapary & Galanis Research of San Francisco completed both a qualitative and quantitative survey and analysis of customer perceptions of DBI's professional services. DBI continues to use survey data to guide decisions and changes, and provide accurate, timely and measurable performance information. A complete copy of both analyses is found at www.sfdbi.org.

Significant progress has been made on implementation of the survey recommendations.

- Increase coordination with other departments, such as having parallel plan checks – DBI has worked with other City Departments to ensure they have a presence at 1660 Mission.
- Revamp the DBI offices including improving signage, designing a better layout, and creating a positive and welcoming environment for visitors and employees alike – The fifth floor remodel was completed in 2009 and it opened for customers on November 18, 2009. The fourth floor remodel is expected to be completed in June 2010.

- Continue to train staff so that codes are interpreted in a uniform manner and clarify boundaries between departments so customers can tell when issues need to be decided by DBI or other City departments – Additional training will be provided in FY 2010-11 to ensure the new state, federal and local codes are implemented.
- Improve information, both online and offline, including adding items to the DBI web site, constructing informational kiosks (self-serve and staffed) and providing special resources for first time visitors – The website was redesigned in FY 2009-10 to improve customer access. The Q-matic system will be implemented and is being implemented to improve customer flow within 1660 Mission.

Other survey findings were that DBI is doing a number of things right and those surveyed wanted City departments to examine the practices. The customers also complimented DBI's staff for its thoroughness and the depth of knowledge. Finally customers appreciated that they could walk in and talk to someone face to face, without necessarily having an appointment.

Internal Customers

Although the survey did not interview other City departments, efforts are underway to improve relationships.

- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was executed in October 2008 with the Planning Department for the coordination of the Permit Tracking System replacement project. The MOU governs the development and implementation of the project beginning with the issuance of the Request for Proposals up to full deployment of the system. The contract development process is suspended pending completion of a process review.
- DBI is coordinating closely with City departments to provide services and implement ordinances that require effort by several departments such as San Francisco's Green Building program and the Construction and Demolition Debris Recovery Ordinance.
- DBI continues to work to increase/improve coordination with other permitting agencies. Examples include regularly scheduled meetings with other City departments, joint issuance of administrative bulletins, and increased multi-jurisdictional efforts.

Ongoing Efforts to Increase Customer Services

DBI continues to focus on the customer including:

- Increasing customer and staff training including holding monthly brown bag seminars and training for staff and customers. Some of the topics offered included how to obtain a permit, ways to seismically retrofit residential buildings and expedited green buildings review for qualified projects, among many others.

- Increasing website information by adding links to other City agencies, reference links, required forms, establishing a dedicated customer email address that can be found at dbicustomerservice@sfdbi.org and adding staff email addresses to the staff directory.
- Continuing to staff informational booths at community fairs and public celebrations.
- Cross-training inspection and plan check staff to ensure consistent code interpretations.

Major Accomplishments During FY 2008-09

Issued a total of 58,102 permits, including:

- 23,102 Building Permits,
- 13,098 Electrical Permits,
- 15,434 Plumbing Permits, and
- 6,468 Miscellaneous Permits.

Performed a total of 133,905 inspections, including:

- 59,568 Building inspections,
- 33,072 Electrical inspections,
- 15,483 Housing inspections,
- 25,336 Plumbing inspections, and
- 446 Code Enforcement inspections.

Continued implementation of the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) report including more than 180 recommendations.

Completed and forwarded in February 2009 to the Mayor the Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety (CAPSS) study and recommendations for retrofitting soft story residential buildings identified as highly vulnerable to collapse during a major earthquake. The ordinance creating a voluntary soft story program is going through the legislative process.

MIS projects

- Released, in January 2009, a joint DBI-Planning Department Request for Proposals (RFP) to implement a state-of-the-art technical solution for a new City-wide Permit and Project Tracking System that will improve and integrate

City-wide development processing, and make public access easier, more accountable and more transparent. By early June 2009 all qualified bids were in and evaluated. The negotiations are suspended until process review is completed.

- Continued to implement the on-line Inspection Management System.
- Increased and promoted online access to standardized forms and checklists, and encouraged customers to use them.

Continued to build out the 4th floor of 1660 Mission to provide an environment that is both efficient and customer friendly. Operations began on the 5th floor on November 18, 2009 and the remodeling of the 4th floor is expected to be completed in June 2010.

Continued to focus on improving accountability and transparency in the DBI decision-making processes.

Worked with the BIC, other department agencies and the Board of Supervisors to pass legislation including:

- Vacant/Abandoned Building legislation will generate additional code enforcement and inspection fees implemented jointly by DBI and the Department of Public Works.
- New tax assessment to cover building and housing code enforcement fees on one and two-family rental units.
- Increased apartment and hotel licensing fees to achieve partial cost recovery.
- Added new technology surcharge that will generate funds to cover ongoing and long-term Permit Tracking System maintenance costs.
- Code and fee adjustment legislation providing improved cost recovery for DBI professional staff services, and giving the Building Official authority to extend building, electrical and plumbing expiration dates, thereby providing essential flexibility in the current economic recession.
- Obtain approval from the Board of Supervisors of new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to provide Inspection and Plan Review services on several high-profile City projects – including
 - TransBay Joint Powers Authority,
 - PUC's new headquarters' building,
 - Port of San Francisco for the Exploratorium,
 - Treasure Island Development Authority.

Continued to maximize the use of departmental resources.

FY 2009 – 10 Goals

Implement a customer tracking system within the Department.

Award a contract and begin implementing the new joint DBI-Planning Project and Permit Tracking System, upgrade DBI's automation systems and improve data availability, reliability and public transparency.

Continue to work closely with the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on legislation to

- Encourage voluntary seismic retrofits of vulnerable soft story residential buildings,
- Centralize within DBI the collection of all legally-mandated development impact fees to provide improved City-wide development review efficiencies, and
- Continue to pursue cost recovery for DBI's code enforcement and housing inspection divisions, and recover the costs accumulated during the abatement process prior to a Director's hearing.

Continue implementing Business Process Reengineering (BPR) recommendations to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of the City-wide permit review and approval process – and keep all customers, other City agencies and the public fully informed of new processes, policies, and procedural changes.

Continue posting on DBI's website established written policies, procedures and checklists to improve the quality of submissions, as well as the review and approval turnaround times.

Complete remodeling the 4th floor of 1660 Mission as part of the ongoing effort to improve customer convenience.

Complete the Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety (CAPSS) remaining studies and recommendations to policymakers on steps required to improve the City's overall seismic safety – including continuing staff training exercises to increase preparation for the next major earthquake.

FY 2010-11 Resources Levels

Beginning in November 2008, permit revenues began to decline precipitously. In order to adjust for this reduction, the FY 2008-09 budget was balanced by decreasing 25% of staff in May 2009, reducing non-professional services, closing projects and using other one-time revenues. It was expected that the entire discretionary operating fund balance would be required to balance the budget;

however the Department ended the fiscal year with a balance of \$553,000. The total FY 2008-09 actual revenue was 6% less than FY 2007-08 actuals.

Going forward, the FY 2009-10 original budget reflects a 4% reduction in revenues from the FY 2008-09 actuals. To prevent deeper cuts in positions than those implemented in May 2009, the Department adjusted apartment and hotel license fees for partial cost recovery, closed projects, and budgeted additional one-time revenues. No use of the discretionary operating fund balance was assumed in the budget.

Early in FY 2009-10 DBI negotiated several intergovernmental agreements (MOUs). Based on six months of actual revenues and expenditures along with the supplemental appropriation for the intergovernmental agreements negotiated after the budget was approved, the Department proposes to add \$2.71 million to the discretionary operating fund balance. The current balance will fund only four days of payroll in the event of an emergency or drop in revenues. The increase to \$3.3 million will fund 32 days of payroll.

Departmental Goals and Strategic Issues Used in Developing the FY 2010-11 Proposed Budget

The following overarching mission and goals governed development of the FY 2010-11 Proposed Budget.

- Effective enforcement,
- Efficient provision of services, and
- Safe and fair enforcement of building codes and provision of services.

The following strategic issues identified by the Commission, staff and customers were also taken into consideration:

- Improve public access to DBI services,
- Ensure staff are adequately trained,
- Improve coordination with City departments and the community,
- Improve timeliness and effectiveness of DBI services, and
- Improve transparency and consistency in Department operations.

To address these key strategic issues, the Department proposes the following FY 2010-11 Budget Priorities:

- Maintain current fees,
- Restore some position reductions that occurred during FY 2008-09,

- Meet demand for permit and inspection services associated with the MOUs while avoiding impact on services for other permits,
- Provide mandatory training on California code changes, including new codes that will be effective on January 1, 2011 and on the Certified Access Specialist Program which will be effective July 1st 2010.
- Continue funding technology improvements that benefit our customer services and provide transparency,
- Improve service delivery by completing the build out of the 4th floor, and
- Improve the fiscal health of the Department to the greatest extent possible.

Challenges

Over the next five years, the Department will continue to focus on improving delivery of services. This will be accomplished through increased training, technology improvements, including more web-based services, expanded community outreach, and continuing emphasis on structural safety and emergency preparedness.

The Department faces the following major challenges in meeting its goals:

- Maintaining adequate funding

As a special fund and “enterprise” Department, DBI is dependent on the collection of fees to cover the costs of all services. Departmental revenues reflect, and are dependent upon, building activities tied closely to economic cycles. The Department’s ability to provide existing and higher levels of services is thus dependent upon fee collection. Although the Department’s fees were increased in September 2008, the downturn in the economy that began in November 2008 and the resulting decrease in construction activity are expected to continue through FY 2010-11 and quite possibly for several years. Achieving all of the Department’s priorities and goals will be a challenge.

In addition, DBI must rebuild the discretionary fund balance to a level that will ensure that economic declines are manageable without large staff reductions.

- Ensure staffing levels and skills sets are available even during times of economic declines.

A 25% reduction in staff was necessary to balance the FY 2008-09 and FY 2009-10 budgets. The reductions impacted the Department’s ability to deliver services in a timely manner and maintain the knowledge base. As the economy improves, trained staff will be required to meet the service needs however staffing up is a cumbersome and time consuming process.

Performance Measures

A report on DBI's Performance Measures with actuals through the end of FY 2008-09 and FY 2009-10 targets. On March 1st a report will be available on the status of the FY 2009-10 measures and the FY 2010-11 targets.

Conclusion

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor's Office, Board of Supervisors, Building Inspection Commission, our customers, and all DBI employees for their continued and invaluable support of the Department.