



Australian Government

Defence and Veterans' Service Commission

Corporate Plan

2026-2027





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Commissioner's foreword

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission (DVSC) exists to drive systemic improvements in the systems supporting the wellbeing of our current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide interrogated these systems for three years. The Royal Commissioners found a need for change and accountability. Their key recommendation was to instill independent oversight and accountability – to build the DVSC – and the Government agreed. The DVSC opened its doors on 29 September 2025.

My vision as the inaugural Commissioner remains steadfast. We will shine an enduring light on Defence member and veteran wellbeing to foster accountability, strengthen transparency and drive system-wide improvements, so those who serve our nation are treated with respect and live healthy and fulfilling lives – during and beyond their service. This vision – our north star – will guide all we do.

We will monitor and report on the implementation of the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. These reforms are too significant to be forgotten. The *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026* also gives the Commissioner the power to inquire broadly. Matters related to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of wellbeing for our Defence members, veterans and their families, will be on our radar.

The DVSC will be an ongoing presence in the Defence and veteran ecosystem. We will provide an ongoing spotlight on the state of the Defence and veteran ecosystem. Our focus over the next four years is to inquire into issues and deliver high-quality advice and recommendations for improvement to the Australian Government. The 2026-27 year will be busy for us.

The Royal Commission found military sexual violence is a substantial risk factor for suicide and suicidality, particularly amongst current and ex-serving female ADF members. The Royal Commission was unable to investigate the issue the extent it considered necessary and recommended a more thorough independent inquiry.

When we opened our doors, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs requested the DVSC undertake an independent Inquiry into Military Sexual Violence. In May 2026, I received the endorsed Terms of Reference. The Inquiry will formally commence in late 2026 and be completed by the end of 2027.

The Inquiry's scope is comprehensive. It covers prevention, early intervention, reporting, supports, responses and justice processes. As Commissioner, I am committed to working with the appointed Deputy Commissioner to provide people with the opportunity to engage meaningfully with the Inquiry and to identify achievable systemic improvements and reforms. The Inquiry will build on lived experience to inform a better future.

We will also deliver:

- the first progress report assessing the implementation of the Government response to both the Interim and Final Reports of the Royal Commission, and
- an Inquiry into Access to Information assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the Royal Commission Interim Report recommendations 9-13.

In 2026 we established and met with the inaugural Commissioner's Advisory Group. The Group provides me with an opportunity to draw upon valuable insights from people with relevant lived experience and expertise. The Group brings expertise and insights into issues impacting wellbeing in the Defence and veteran community.

Community, connection and lived experience are all central to our work. We will continue to connect across the Defence and veteran community to hear first-hand about how reforms are working (or not working) and issues impacting wellbeing of our service community.

The DVSC Corporate Plan 2026-27 outlines our operating environment, strategic goals and values to guide us towards achieving our purpose to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for Defence members, veterans and their families.

As the Accountable Authority of The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, I am pleased to present the 2026-27 Corporate Plan as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). This plan has been prepared for the 2026-27 reporting period and covers the 4-year period from 1 July 2026 through to 30 June 2030.



Penny McKay
Commissioner
August 2026



Role of the Corporate Plan



This Corporate Plan serves as our primary planning document, identifying our purpose, key activities, operating context, and the performance measures we will use to assess how well we are achieving our purpose over the next four years.



About DVSC

Our Vision

We will shine an enduring light on Defence member and veteran wellbeing to foster accountability, strengthen transparency and drive system-wide improvements, so those who serve our nation are treated with respect and live healthy and fulfilling lives—during and beyond their service.

Our Purpose

To enable systemic reform through evidence-based advice to the Australian Government and Parliament to improve outcomes relating to suicide prevention and wellbeing among Defence members and veterans.

Our Culture

Our culture underpins our ability to influence and achieve outcomes for Defence members and veterans. We actively built strong foundations for the Commission in 2025-26. From the top to bottom of the organisation, there is a united commitment to delivering sustained improvement in suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for Defence members and veterans.

Values



Courage

We are courageous in our pursuit to improve outcomes for veterans’ and their families.



Compassion

We are compassionate, embedding trauma-informed and people-centred practices in all that we do.



Curiosity

We are curious in our approach, apply critical thinking and listen without judgement or assumption.



Influence

We are influential in delivering our work and driving meaningful and lasting change.



Integrity

We act with integrity to uphold the independence and credibility of the DVSC.

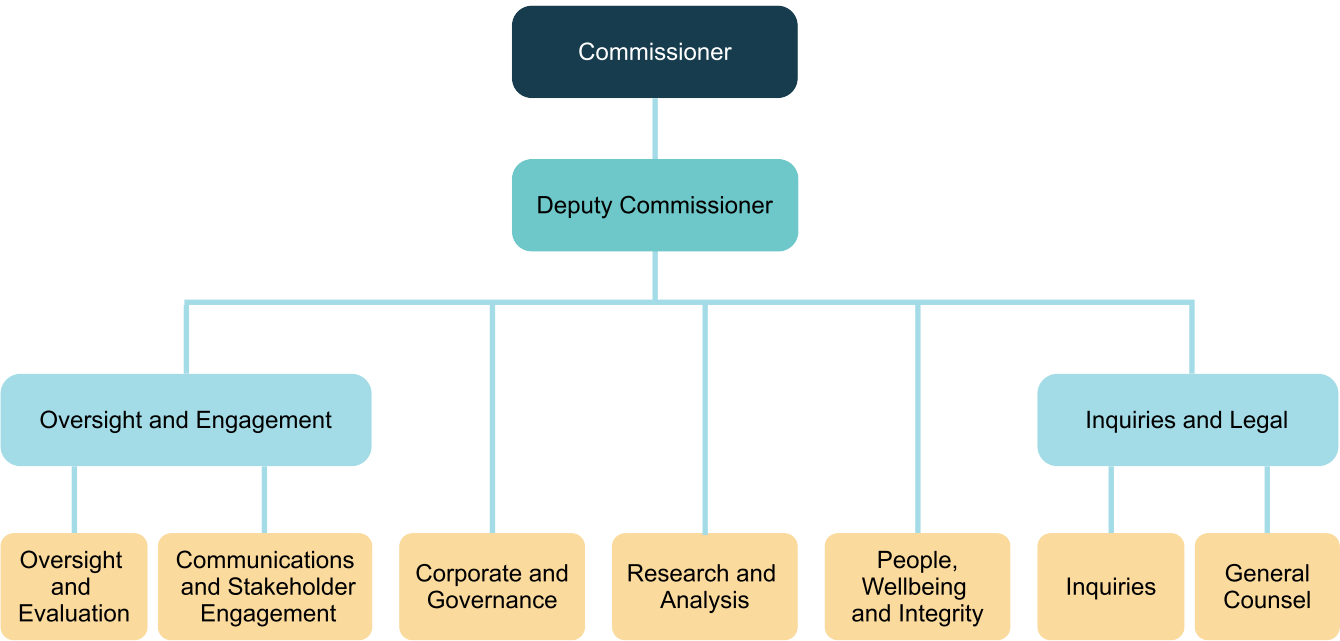
Our Structure

Organisational Structure

The Commissioner is the Accountable Authority of DVSC appointed by the Governor-General under section 72 of the *Defence and Veterans’ Service Commissioner Act 2026*. The Commissioner is directly supported by a Deputy Commissioner and two Assistant Commissioners with APS staff across seven teams.

The DVSC’s organisational structure is illustrated below.

Figure 1: DVSC Organisation Chart



The DVSC’s key governance body is the Executive Committee (EC), consisting of the Commissioner, senior executives and staff representatives. The EC is the overarching leadership and management committee, that considers and provides advice on the strategic and operational priorities of the Commission to the Commissioner.

Our Operating Context

Operating Environment

DVSC commenced operations on 29 September 2025 as a new, independent statutory entity established to implement Recommendation 122 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Recommendation 122: Establish a new statutory entity to oversee system reform across the whole Defence ecosystem

The Australian Government should establish a new statutory entity with the purpose of providing independent oversight and evidence-based advice in order to drive system reform to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members.

We operate across a broad Defence and veteran ecosystem that is undergoing significant reform in response to the Royal Commission. It is a large, geographically diverse and dynamic environment, sensitive to the demands of military service and community expectations.

Our role involves delivering our statutory functions. These include monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission recommendations, independently inquiring into issues impacting suicide prevention and wellbeing of Defence members and veterans, and promoting understanding of suicide risks.

This shapes how we exercise our oversight role. We must balance our functions to deliver timely, evidence-based advice to Government to improve suicide and wellbeing standards while ensuring we allow adequate time to conduct a thorough and robust inquiry process. In exercising our discretionary powers, it is important for us to consider where we can make the greatest impact. As a new extra-small agency, we are continuing to build our people, systems and capabilities while establishing the independent and authoritative voice that Defence members, veterans and their families expect from us.

Inquiry into Military Sexual Violence

The Royal Commission revealed devastating impacts of military sexual violence, particularly on women and their families, directly linking to suicide and suicidal distress. In order to inform reforms in the areas of prevention, survivor support, data collection and justice, the Royal Commission made Recommendation 25: Conduct a formal inquiry into military sexual violence in the Australian Defence Force.

In September 2025, the Minister requested the DVSC to undertake an independent inquiry into military sexual violence. The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry were extensively consulted by the Australian Human Rights Commission before being provided to the Commissioner by the Minister in May 2026.

Terms of Reference for Military Sexual Violence Inquiry

The terms of reference for the Inquiry encompass recommendation 25 and also the progress made to implement recommendations 14-24 from the Royal Commission.

The Inquiry will consider reform efforts underway in the Australian Defence Force and identify gaps and opportunities to strengthen workplace protections and accountability.

The Inquiry will examine prevention and early intervention, reporting barriers, and supports for people impacted. It will also place a spotlight on leadership responses and justice processes. It will be victim-survivor-centred, trauma-informed and guided by the principles of natural justice.

The Minister will choose a Deputy Commissioner with relevant experience and expertise to lead the Inquiry from a list of candidates recommended by the Commissioner. The DVSC will also establish an advisory group of current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members with lived experience to advise on the Inquiry's processes and operation.

The DVSC was appropriated \$16.6 million through the 2026-27 Budget to conduct an independent Inquiry into Military Sexual Violence in the ADF over FY27 and FY28. The Inquiry will formally commence in late 2026 and will be conducted over a 12-month period. The final report will be submitted to the Minister by the end of 2027 and will be publicly available.

Legislative Environment

The DVSC is an independent non-corporate Commonwealth entity. The DVSC's functions and independence are enshrined in the *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026* (DVSC Act).

Our independence is assured by:

- Section 12 of the DVSC Act which provides the Commissioner with complete discretion in the performance of functions and use of powers.
- Section 72 of the DVSC Act which requires the Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor-General following a publicly advertised merit-based selection process, and
- Section 72 of the DVSC Act also requires that the Commissioner has not been a member of the Australian Defence Force at any time in the last five years.

We also assure our independence through maintaining a workforce of APS staff who are not members of the Defence force, nor APS staff members of the Department of Defence or the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Our systems are independent of these agencies.

As a Commonwealth statutory authority, the DVSC also has responsibilities under other legislation, including the *Public Service Act 1999* and the PGPA Act.

Oversight and Cooperation

As an independent oversight entity, the DVSC uses its powers judiciously to inquire into the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations and issues impacting Defence member and veteran wellbeing. We will provide practical, evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving suicide prevention and the wellbeing of Defence members and veterans. It will be important for the DVSC to build and maintain relationships of trust and influence with relevant government agencies as well as the broader Defence and veteran ecosystem, so our recommendations are accepted and implemented to the greatest effect.

Key Government Agencies

Our ability to influence system-wide reform to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes relies on close engagement with Commonwealth agencies, most importantly the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. These agencies have a frontline relationship with Defence members and veterans. We will work openly and transparently with these agencies to foster accountability and assess the effectiveness of their policies and services in addressing suicidality and suicide risks – in particular, the implementation of the Government's response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Key Non-Government Bodies

We recognise that the quality and impact of our advice is strengthened through broad and meaningful collaboration with people on the ground in the Defence and veteran community and subject matter experts. We are committed to ensuring our work is informed by diverse perspectives and supported by the most current evidence, research and data available.

To achieve this, we will actively engage with leading non-government organisations, ex-service organisations, academics, and research bodies. As our program of inquiries evolves and our forward planning of publications and reports becomes more defined, we will draw upon these relationships and clarify the scope and nature of our work.

Key Advisors

The DVSC is committed to listening to a diverse range of voices including those with lived experience of service, suicidality and life following service to inform our work. One way the DVSC does this is through the Commissioner's Advisory Group.

Our work is supported by the Commissioner's Advisory Group (the Advisory Group), established in July 2026. The Advisory Group brings together people with lived experience and experts in relevant fields, to provide insights and perspectives to inform our work. The Advisory Group is a valuable sounding board for the Commissioner to improve the quality of our advice and help ensure our work is reflective of both lived experience and contemporary research and practices, bolstering the credibility and relevance of our advice.

The independent Inquiry into Military Sexual Violence in the Australian Defence Force will be supported by a separate lived experience advisory group.

Capabilities

People are our greatest asset. In the coming year, we will continue to have a strong focus on recruitment, capability building and wellbeing support to ensure our people have the right skills and expertise to deliver, and that our organisational culture aligns with our values.

We are committed to providing a safe work environment for our people and supporting their health, safety, and wellbeing. Recognising our role and the potential for our people to be exposed to confronting or traumatic content, we have systems and supports in place for the wellbeing of our people. These include:

- an employee assistance program
- mandatory training on vicarious trauma and mental health first aid, and
- proactive psychological wellbeing checks.

We will continue to monitor the wellbeing of our people and provide additional supports where needed.

Our Performance Framework



Our Approach to Performance Measurement

Our performance framework defines our performance measures and targets and provide a transparent view of our performance. Our performance measures and targets relate to delivery of our key activities and achievement of our purpose.



Key Activities

Significant areas of work that we will undertake to achieve our purpose



Performance Measures

How we will measure and assess the achievement of our purpose



Performance Targets

Planned performance levels that outline the specific actions we will take to achieve our purpose

Our Performance Framework

Our key activities and performance measures have been developed in line with better practice performance reporting approaches, guided by the following principles:

- **Clear read:** creates a clear, consistent, and trackable connection between the allocation of public resources to deliver planned performance across key activities, and the results being achieved in delivering DVSC's purpose.
- **Materiality:** the key activities are essential to the DVSC achieving its purpose, as assessed against our criteria.
- **Completeness:** purposes and key activities accurately represent the main policy and program goals.
- **Meaningfulness:** the performance information provides a clear, accurate and balanced picture of achievement, enabling the reader to assess the DVSC's performance in achieving its purpose.

Our performance measures are also guided by the requirements of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (PGPA Rule) to ensure they:

- relate directly to one or more of our key activities
- use sources of information and methodologies that are reliable and verifiable
- provide an unbiased basis for the measurement and assessment of our performance
- where reasonably practicable, comprise a mix of qualitative and quantitative performance measures
- include measures of our outputs, efficiency and effectiveness if those things are appropriate measures of our performance
- provide a basis for an assessment of our performance over time, and
- have specified targets where it is reasonably practicable to set a target.

Our Key Activities and Performance Measures

Our key activities, performance measures and targets are grounded in DVSC's key functions as stated in the DVSC Act.

Key Activity 1

Provide evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on systemic reforms relating to suicide prevention and wellbeing among Defence members and veterans through monitoring, inquiring and reporting.

Performance measure 1.1

- A. Number of inquiries and publications delivered within committed timeframes
- B. Percentage of formal DVSC recommendations agreed by Government

Planned performance levels

2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
A. 3	A. 3	A. 3	A. 3	A. 3
B. 80%	B. 80%	B. 80%	B. 80%	B. 80%

Assessment scale for planned performance

Performance measure (A):

Met: Delivery of 100% of the target number of inquiries and publications committed to

Not met: Delivery of less than 100% of the target number of inquiries and publications committed to

Performance measure (B):

Met: 80% or higher

Substantially met: 50% to ≤80%

Not met: ≤50%

Planned performance rationale

- A number of factors can influence why Government may disagree with a recommendation. The percentage performance result should be interpreted in conjunction with any explanatory narrative, as Government response to a DVSC recommendation may not be solely representative of the quality of the recommendation nor the Commission's influence.
- Publications include all formally published materials, including but not limited to inquiry reports. This key activity encompasses the work the DVSC undertakes more broadly to provide evidence-based advice.
- The resource intensity of each inquiry will vary, contributing to the number of inquiries expected to be delivered in a given year. In 2026-27, there are two major reports (Access to Information and Royal Commission Recommendations Progress Report) to be published which will be a key focus for the financial year.

Key Activity 2

Inquire into the Australian Government's implementation of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Performance measure 2.1

Number of Royal Commission recommendations assessed for implementation and/or effectiveness

Planned performance levels

2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
135 recommendations assessed for implementation	To be established through the forward work plan	To be established through the forward work plan	To be established through the forward work plan	To be established through the forward work plan

Assessment scale for planned performance

For 2026-27:

Met: 100%

Not met: less than 100%

For all remaining years:

Met: 100%

Substantially met: 80% to ≤100%

Not met: less than 80%

Planned performance rationale

- The DVSC Act requires two inquiries to be conducted into the implementation of the Defence and Veteran Suicide Royal Commission recommendations. The first Progress Report to be delivered by 5 February 2027 and the second Progress Report to be delivered by 2 December 2030.
- As such, for 2026-27, the target and assessment scale has been set by the DVSC Act.
- The number of recommendations expected to be assessed each financial year following 2026-27 is tied to a forward plan approved by the Commissioner at the commencement of each statutory reporting cycle. If emerging issues result in the deprioritisation of any recommendation assessment, future year targets will be adjusted accordingly.

Key Activity 3

Promote understanding of suicide risks for Defence members and veterans, and factors that can improve support and wellbeing of Defence members and veterans, through collaboration and engagement.

Performance measure 3.1

- A. Number of engagements by engagement type
- B. Qualitative demonstration of DVSC's ability to achieve the key activity

Planned performance levels

2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
A. Baseline to be established	A. As per the established baseline	A. As per the established baseline	A. As per the established baseline	A. As per the established baseline
B. To be established	B. To be established	B. To be established	B. To be established	B. To be established

Assessment scale for planned performance

Performance measure (A):

Met: ≥90% of engagements delivered across all types

Substantially met: 75% ≤ engagements delivered ≤ 90%

Not met: less than 75% engagements delivered

Performance measure (B):

Met: case study effectively demonstrates alignment to the key activity

Substantially met: case study partially demonstrates alignment to the key activity

Not met: case study does not demonstrate alignment to the key activity

Planned performance rationale

- Planned performance targets for performance measure (A) are to be established once DVSC determines the types (and quantity) of engagement needed to achieve this key activity, and that engagement can be meaningfully defined and reported against to measure performance. Once this baseline is established, the planned performance target for future years can be then set.
- Preliminary engagement types being considered for performance measure (A) include: senior leadership event attendance, speeches, roundtables, and official meetings (e.g. with community and ex-service organisations). Engagement types that meaningfully contribute to the key activity will be considered.
- The qualitative case study topic for performance measure (B) will be determined at the beginning of each reporting cycle to enable data requirements and collection processes to be set prior to commencement of operations for the reporting cycle.

Our Risk and Oversight Management

The DVSC has identified five key enterprise risks, which are managed in order to ensure achievement of our strategic objectives.

Risk management is integrated into DVSC's governance arrangements so that risk is a fundamental consideration in our everyday decision-making.

The Commissioner, as Accountable Authority, established the *DVSC Risk Management Policy and Framework* (RMPF). The RMPF sets out our approach and expectations for managing risk in line with the PGPA Act and *Commonwealth Risk Management Policy*.

The Audit and Risk Committee provides independent advice and assurance to the Commissioner on the appropriateness of our risk oversight and management systems, and systems of internal control.

Our Senior Executives act as role models for DVSC's risk culture, promoting and supporting active and intelligent risk management.

All managers, staff and contractors have a responsibility to manage risk with an open and proactive approach, where risks are appropriately identified, assessed, communicated and managed.

The DVSC works with three levels of risk – enterprise, strategic and operational.

Our five key enterprise risks support the achievement of our strategic objectives and are managed at a whole of DVSC level. Our defined strategic risks are managed on an ongoing basis by DVSC's senior leadership and regularly reported to the Audit and Risk Committee, and our operational risks represent the day-to-day management of risk throughout the DVSC's work.

Key Enterprise Risks

- 1 DVSC does not influence system-wide reform to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for Defence members and veterans

Risk Management Strategies

- Effective work planning and timely delivery including an ability to pivot as needed supported by clear and achievable performance measures
- Ensuring the advice provided to Government is practical, evidence-based and achievable and can drive change within the Defence and veteran ecosystem
- Building trusted relationships with relevant Government agencies and the Defence and veteran community

- 2 DVSC does not maintain its independence and integrity

Risk Management Strategies

- Strong integrity and fraud frameworks, policies, tools and culture including active management of conflicts of interest and establishing a culture of integrity
- Data and information storage and handling systems supported by robust processes
- Promoting transparency and accountability in all the Commission does (as far as possible)

- 3 DVSC does not meet its legislative obligations

Risk Management Strategies

- Active management of an achievable workplan
- Compliance register with clear accountabilities
- Clear and transparent financial and performance reporting
- Clearly defined processes for maintaining WHS compliance

4

DVSC does not engage and maintain the confidence of stakeholders, including the Defence and veteran community

Risk Management Strategies

- Recruitment or training of staff to effectively engage with key stakeholders including current and former ADF members and their families
- Effective management of actual and potential conflicts of interest together with processes to demonstrate they are being effectively managed to maintain DVSC's independence
- Actively engaging with insights and advice from key advisors including through the Commissioner's Advisory Group

5

DVSC does not support its people and/or fails to maintain its capacity and capability to deliver on its purpose

Risk Management Strategies

- Established ongoing training for key areas including data and psychosocial risk
- Effective shared services arrangement or Memorandum of Understanding
- Effective workforce planning to deliver on objectives, including effective recruitment and related budget support
- Active and ongoing support for health and wellbeing of staff



Appendix 1

PGPA Rule s16 checklist

Topic	Requirements	Sections
Introduction	(a) a statement that the plan is prepared for paragraph 35(1)(b) of the Act; (b) the reporting period for which the plan is prepared; (c) the reporting periods covered by the plan.	Commissioner's Foreword
Purposes	The purposes of the entity.	Our Purpose and Outcomes
Key Activities	For the entire period covered by the plan, the key activities that the entity will undertake in order to achieve its purposes.	Key Activity 1 Key Activity 2 Key Activity 3
Operating Context	For the entire period covered by the plan, the following: (a) the environment in which the entity will operate; (b) the strategies and plans the entity will implement to have the capability it needs to undertake its key activities and achieve its purposes; (c) a summary of the risk oversight and management systems of the entity, and the key risks that the entity will manage and how those risks will be managed; (d) details of any organisation or body that will make a significant contribution towards achieving the entity's purposes through cooperation with the entity, including how that cooperation will help achieve those purposes; (e) how any subsidiary of the entity will contribute to achieving the entity's purposes.	Commissioner's Foreword Operating Context Capabilities Our Performance Framework Key Activity 1 Key Activity 2 Key Activity 3 Our Risk and Oversight Management Cooperation The entity has no subsidiaries
Performance	For each reporting period covered by the plan, details of how the entity's performance in achieving the entity's purposes will be measured and assessed through: (a) specified performance measures for the entity that meet the requirements of section 16EA; and (b) specified targets for each of those performance measures for which it is reasonably practicable to set a target.	Our Performance Framework Performance Measures Key Activity 1 Key Activity 2 Key Activity 3



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