

Common Output Level Standards (COLS) and Program Standards

Understanding COLS

Common Output Level Standards (COLS) are a cornerstone of CNIC's ability to program, budget, and execute, in essence to manage the Navy's shore enterprise, in a consistent and logical manner. They are used for describing the Navy's delivery of Shore and Support services. The Navy funds APF Programs to achieve a specific COLS level. There are four COLS levels:

Level 1 – Program is provided with sufficient resources to deliver full outputs. No risk to customer operational requirements.

Level 2 – Program is provided with sufficient funds to deliver most outputs. Low risk to customer operational requirements.

Level 3 – Program is provided with sufficient resources to deliver many outputs. Medium risk meeting basic customer operational requirements. Legally compliant.

Level 4 – Program requires additional resources to meet basic customer operational requirements. Significant risk to customer operational requirements. Potential legal implications.

Definition of COLS

Mission Essential Core Programs (Afloat/Deployed): Fitness, Fleet Recreation, MOPIX/LMRC
Mission Essential Core Programs (Ashore): Fitness, Liberty, Library/Resource Center, ITT
Community Support Non-Core Programs (Ashore): Outdoor Recreation, Auto Hobby, Bowling, Recreational Swimming

COLS 1:

All Core and Non-Core programs are provided in full compliance with Navy standards (personnel, equipment, and programming) at all installations with no cost to authorized patrons. Category A and B programs meet 100% of OSD funding standard per DODI 1015.10. Non-appropriated fund (NAF) capitalization plan (approved by NEX/MWR Board of Directors and reported to Congress) is 100% executed and no capital projects are deferred.

COLS 2:

All Core MWR programs are provided in compliance with Navy standards at all installations. Non-Core programs are partly sustained by NAF, including user fees. Category A and B programs meet the minimum OSD funding standard per DODI 1015.10. Approved NAF capitalization plan is partially met and some capital projects are deferred to offset reduced APF in Non-Core programs.

COLS 3:

All Core MWR programs are provided in partial compliance with Navy standards at all installations. Afloat/forward deployed programs have funding priority. Reduced program capacity in all non-core programs and all programs are sustained by NAF, including user fees. Category A programs meet the minimum OSD funding standard per DODI 1015.10. Category B programs do not meet minimum OSD funding standard. Approved NAF capitalization plan is not met and capital projects are deferred to offset reduced APF in non-core programs.

COLS 4:

All afloat/forward deployed programs are provided in compliance with Navy standards. Ashore Core programs are substantially sustained by non-appropriated funds, including increased user fees. Non-core programs are closed or significantly reduced. Neither Category A nor B programs meet the minimum OSD funding standard per DODI 1015.10. Approved NAF capitalization plan is deferred to offset reduced APF in core programs.

Distinct COLS Levels

COLS are Program centric and “standard” across all Regions. Specific COLS descriptors for individual Programs are developed by subject matter experts working within Integrated Process Teams, and they are finalized and approved by the CNIC Headquarters Program Directors for each Program. The resulting four distinct COLS levels are:

- Priceable
- Measurable
- Output-oriented
- Viable

Purpose of COLS

Specific COLS are developed for individual business areas and Programs. COLS are a valuable tool for tracking and communicating existing support levels and identifying resource requirements.

A well-defined family of COLS:

- Offers options for decision making during the funding process
- Provides customers with realistic expectations of service delivery
- Provides objective performance metrics to manage a Program during execution

History of COLS

Prior to Fiscal Year 2004, COLS were referred to as Service Levels (SLs). The original SLs and today's COLS provide capability and cost options to Navy and DOD leadership for decision making in programming and budgeting. The term "Capability Level" (CL) was later used by the Navy, but transitioned to COLS as a preparatory step to better align with the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) efforts to develop DOD-wide output standards for Installation support. The terminology COLS is used for the tiered output standards modeled after the Navy's CLs.

COLS were developed by the Department of Defense (DOD) to provide a common language for identifying common output or performance levels of support across all United States (US) military Installations

Importance of COLS

Without COLS, funding decisions would be made arbitrarily based on subjective interpretations of data. COLS create standard levels of performance so RPDs can quickly see where funding is needed and how best to direct monies for each Program at each Installation. COLS will also show an RPD and IPM when, due to lack of funding, delivery of programs and services may be approaching a potentially severe and legally non-compliant level

COLS and Program Standards

Besides being the foundation of COLS, Installation Program Managers (IPM) use Program Standards for periodic assessments of their Programs to give a measurable range of performance and also to compare a Program's performance against other like Programs in the Navy.

Often, COLS are further defined by specific performance metrics that are consistent with, but more detailed than, the COLS themselves. Each APF Program has COLS and some number of performance metrics that correspond to them. In some Programs, the COLS and performance metrics are combined. In other Programs, they are separate. Many people in the CNIC organization use the terms COLS and Program Standards interchangeably. Check with your supervisor or your HQ Program Director to locate and discuss your COLS, Program Standards, and any Program-specific performance metrics for the Program you operate.