CNA



Polaris: An Organizational and Process Mapping Solution

Mapping Organizations. Guiding Enterprise Decisions.

Every organizational challenge is unique. The approach to understanding it should be, too.

Leaders face difficult questions about organizational performance: How well is the organization accomplishing its mission? Are responsibilities clear and efforts aligned with priorities? Where are gaps, overlaps, or inefficiencies undermining performance—and what needs to change?

Polaris is a scalable, and tailorable methodology developed by CNA's Organizations, Roles, and Missions Program to give leaders a clear point of reference for how their organization actually operates. Polaris reveals how missions, functions, activities, and relationships fit together—and where they do not—so leaders can identify opportunities for improvement and make informed organizational decisions. Grounded in disciplined functional and organizational analysis, Polaris adapts the scope and depth of its approach to the sponsor's specific problem, providing the right level of insight without unnecessary complexity.

What Polaris does

Effective organizational design begins with understanding how work is actually performed. Polaris provides a structured way to examine:

- Mission and objectives
- Functions and major lines of effort
- Activities, processes, and workflows
- Roles, responsibilities, and organizational relationships

By combining process mapping with organizational analysis, Polaris creates an integrated view of how work moves across the enterprise, who is accountable, and where constraints or inefficiencies limit performance.

Questions Polaris helps leaders answer

- Are we organized and resourced to accomplish our mission?
- Are roles and responsibilities clear, or do gaps and overlaps create friction?
- How does work move across the organization? Where are lines of fragmentation, delays, or points of failure?
- Are decision-making and accountability aligned with required outcomes?
- Which changes to functions, processes, or relationships would most improve performance?
- How will proposed changes affect the broader enterprise and mission?

How Polaris is applied

CNA has applied Polaris to a wide range of organizational questions across the defense enterprise and beyond, including:

- Clarifying how complex work is performed and how responsibilities intersect across mission areas, such as international programs and security cooperation.
- Examining organizational functions and relationships within major commands to clarify how missions are carried out, responsibilities are



distributed, and organizational arrangements affect effectiveness.

- Linking missions and strategic priorities to functions, processes, and structures to support organizational redesign efforts on the Navy staff.
- Translating enterprise functions and responsibilities into defined activities, organizational roles, and working relationships to support effective and consistent mission execution.

These efforts demonstrate how a common analytical foundation and process-mapping approach can be tailored to distinct organizational challenges and sponsor needs.

A team built for organizational complexity

CNA's Organizations, Roles, and Missions team brings experience in organizational and functional analysis, structured process mapping, and data-driven assessment. Our team has worked with complex military and civilian organizations, helping leaders make sense of interconnected missions, responsibilities, and workflows and turning those insights into actionable recommendations.

Part of a broader analytical constellation

Polaris is delivered through **StaffLab™**, CNA's suite of capabilities for examining and addressing organizational challenges. StaffLab brings together complementary tools—including organizational analysis and the OT3 (Organizational Troop-to-Task) wargame—to give leaders multiple ways to explore how their organization performs and how it could be designed differently.

Within this larger analytical constellation, Polaris provides the guiding view of how the organization actually works, while tools like OT3 examine how alternative organizational designs perform under different conditions. Together, these capabilities support more confident, evidence-based enterprise decisions.

About CNA

The CNA Corporation (CNA) is a not-for-profit analytical organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. With nearly 700 scientists, analysts, and professional staff across the world, CNA's mission is to provide data-driven, innovative solutions to our nation's toughest problems. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses—the Department of the Navy's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)—as well as the Institute for Public Research. The Center for Naval Analyses provides objective analytics to inform decision-making by military leaders and ultimately improve the lethality and effectiveness of the joint force. The Institute for Public Research leverages data analytics and innovative methods to support federal, state, and local government officials as they work to advance national and homeland security.

For more information on Polaris and StaffLab, contact Simone Robers, Research Program Director, Organizations, Roles, and Missions at roberss@cna.org.

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