In this appendix, we compare the two fundamental approaches that we used to study the Disability Evaluation System—the purpose-driven, top-down approach, as described in Chapters 3, 5, and 6, and the issues-driven, bottom-up approach, as described in Chapter 4. We regard any system as a set of interrelated actions connected in a specific order, which presents a logical plan for linking various actions in order to accomplish certain desired outcomes.

Both of the approaches we used in this study impart order to the numerous actions that collectively make up the DES. Each approach relies on different but related constructs to present the proposed actions, which are bundled within categories of interventions, and an overall plan for achieving the desired outcomes. However, issues form the empirical basis for action in the bottom-up approach, whereas actual outcomes measured against desired outcomes and the stated system purpose form the basis for action in the top-down approach. This appendix describes the relationships among the various constructs within the context of these two approaches.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN APPROACH

Ideally, we would have preferred to employ a single top-down approach, such as illustrated in Figure F.1. Such an approach, however, would require a commonly agreed upon purpose for the DES, a set of desired system outcomes, and an information system to measure actual outcomes against desired outcomes. In that context, the observed differences between desired and actual outcomes would lead to the identification and recommendation of interventions to eliminate those differences. As a key intervention, effective training, in particular, must be based on both specific and measurable training objectives tied to the desired system outcomes and on an assessment of how well the objectives are currently being achieved.

In the top-down approach, when the desired outcomes are achieved, the system accomplishes its purpose. The desired outcomes suggest the kind of data the management information system must gather and also the competencies the primary participants need to perform their jobs effectively. By comparing actual outcomes with desired outcomes, the management information system establishes the basis for training and other interventions.
Chapter 3 of this report describes a suggested purpose and five supporting outcomes. We use the outcomes in two ways:

- Four of the five outcomes lead directly (and the fifth leads indirectly) to the identification of competencies needed by the primary participants in order for them to accomplish the purpose of the DES. We base the design of training intervention (discussed in Chapter 5) on the bodies of knowledge underlying these competencies.
- All five outcomes lead to the functional specifications for an information system, as discussed in Chapter 6. This system, once deployed, will provide the means to identify problems in the consistent application of disability policy over time and provide a more concrete foundation upon which to shape training in the future.

**ISSUES-DRIVEN APPROACH**

Based on our conversations with primary participants and information gathered at workshops and training sessions, we identified dozens of specific problem areas, or issues, related to the consistent application of disability policy that exist within the current DES. To develop recommendations for immediate execution, we employed a goal fabric framework—an issues-driven, bottom-up approach as illustrated in Figure F.2—that capitalized on the data we gathered.
This approach helped identify the desired results—what we would observe (related to the issue) if the difference were eliminated or the problem solved—and specific actions that would bring about the desired results. To ensure that the actions are comprehensive, this approach aligns desired results in terms of the objectives they satisfy and aligns objectives in terms of the goals they satisfy. The final product of this analysis, ten categories of interventions (composed of similar actions), represents a comprehensive plan for moving toward consistent application of disability policy.

**INTEGRATING THE APPROACHES**

The issues-driven and purpose-driven approaches are actually not as different as they might first appear to be. Figure F.3 suggests their relative similarities.

The goals and objectives of the bottom-up approach function in much the same manner as the DES purpose does in the top-down approach, and the desired results in one are similar to the desired outcomes in the other. As stated earlier in this appendix, issues form the empirical basis for action in the bottom-up approach,
whereas actual outcomes as measured by the management information system serve that function in the top-down approach. Actions grouped into categories of interventions correspond to the training, management information system, and other interventions in the top-down approach.

We employed each approach to accomplish different tasks. The bottom-up approach was very fruitful in identifying shortfalls in the consistent application of disability policy, which the OSD can rectify immediately by implementing specific interventions. This approach also affirmed the necessity of pursuing standardized training for the primary participants and developing a management information system to monitor the performance of the system.

Although the bottom-up approach is the basis for the recommended interventions presented in Chapter 4, it does not provide enough of a foundation for actually designing the training intervention or developing the functional specifications for the management information system intervention. For these latter tasks, we used the top-down approach.