

CITIZEN-DRIVEN GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

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For several years the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Performance Assessment of Municipal Governments Program has been encouraging the creation and widespread adoption of measures of municipal government performance that objectively measure outcomes that matter to citizens. The program's approach emphasizes citizen involvement to ensure that what is measured is what matters to citizens and that the data are not corrupted by the natural desire of officeholders to report favorable outcomes. The program's strategy has two parts: (1) demonstration projects in selected municipalities and (2) projects that promote the adoption of citizen-based performance. Citizens are involved in these projects in many ways. In particular, some are encouraging the creation of interactive Web sites that will enable direct citizen participation in performance assessment.

Sloan-related projects are curricular resources for use in such programs as the master of public administration, master of business administration, master of public policy, master of social work, and certified public manager programs. The following teaching resources, modules, and cases are also available at the National Center for Public Productivity Web site: www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ncpp/curriculum/.

Curricular Resources Available

- Course syllabi
- On-line modules
- Cases in brief
- Case studies
- Detailed cases
- Bibliographies
- Performance improvement manuals
- Video clips

Course Modules

- Performance, Trust, and Citizen Engagement
- Performance, Evaluation, and Budgeting
- Managerial Behavior and Decision Making
- Management Skills and Techniques
- E-Governance and Accountability

Citizen-Driven Government Performance: Lessons from Montclair, New Jersey

Montclair, New Jersey, is an economically and racially diverse community of 38,000 people located approximately 12 miles west of New York City. In 1997, the Sloan Foundation funded a three-year citizen-driven government performance project in Montclair because of its long and well-documented history of citizen participation and close proximity to Rutgers-Newark and the National Center for Public Productivity (NCPP).¹

The overall project goal was to involve stakeholders in assessing and improving government performance and influencing how government services could be made more responsive to community needs. In support of that goal, the project sought to:

- have citizens intimately involved in identifying issues and measures of performance
- support the use of performance indicators in public decision processes
- develop a partnership built among citizens, local government, and Rutgers University
- encourage participating citizens, elected officials, and government administrators to learn from each other and from related projects across the country
- develop a long-term institutional capacity to support citizen participation.

For more information, go to www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ncpp/cdgp/cases/montclair.html.

Quality-of-Life Indicators: Lessons from Dayton, Ohio

Dayton, Ohio, has a long established system of citizen participation through seven Priority Boards. The Dayton project had two overarching objectives. The first was to facilitate the selection of quality-of-life indicators by seven Priority Boards, ensure the initial production of the indicators, and institutionalize their annual publication within the City of Dayton Planning Department. The second was to engage in a Priority Board reform process and development of a set of citizen-participation indicators to assess the degree of citizen participation in the life of neighborhoods and Priority Boards.

The project was conceived with the support of the Priority Boards to promote citizen participation in an effort to influence government policy and neighborhood life. Dayton's seven Priority Boards chose a set of quality-of-life indicators to serve as goals and as a statistical backdrop for the strategic planning that each board undertook as part of the CitiPlan 2020 strategic plan. The Sloan-funded project focused on the development, production, and institutionalization of six sets of quality-of-life indicators:

- economic development
- community development
- youth, education, and human services
- open space and quality of life
- downtown
- city services.

For more information, go to www.cityofdayton.org/planning/citizen_participation.asp.

Community Benchmarks Program: Lessons from Syracuse, New York

In June 1996, the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University formally established the Community Benchmarks Program (CBP) as part of the Alan K. Campbell Public Affairs Institute. The CBP endeavors to collect and disseminate information that describes community conditions, encourages citizen participation, fosters civic discourse, and provides a basis whereby the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can improve the quality of life within Onondaga County.

Onondaga County, on which the project is based, consists of 19 towns, 15 villages, and the city of Syracuse. A mayor and a common council govern the city, while a town supervisor and a town board govern the towns. What follows are the results of a series of studies conducted by the CBP. Four studies were undertaken during an 18-month period. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded the Maxwell School a three-year grant totaling \$579,000. During this period, the benchmarking criteria were revised to assess local government performance in the following five areas:

- crime control
- fire protection
- parks: safety and maintenance
- solid waste collection
- street condition: maintenance and snow removal.

For more information, go to www.maxwell.syr.edu/benchmarks/newsite/about.html.

Lessons from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB): Case Studies

During 1999, researchers from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) visited 26 state and local governments to determine the depth and breadth of actual use of performance measures by these governments for budgeting, management, and reporting; the effect of their use; and the extent to which governments are ensuring the relevance and reliability of performance measures. Through a comprehensive series of in-depth interviews, information was gathered about the reasons those governments are using performance measures, how they are being used, the degree to which they are being reported to citizens and other users, their effects, and what changes in the use of performance measurement those interviewed believe would improve their effectiveness. The overviews of the case studies below are just a small sample of the 26 cases that were researched.

A case example is the state of Arizona: The primary focus of the performance measurement movement in the state of Arizona is on “what matters.” The direction has been primarily from within the executive branch with departments developing performance measures and the governor focusing on key “themes” of government. Legislative use of performance measures is just beginning and is expected to expand during the 2000–2001 budget cycle. A number of citizen groups are active in the state. Although there are no clear indication that these citizen groups helped choose the performance measures that are used, their interest in the government and its programs certainly helped identify areas of concern to the agencies. Although legislation was passed in 1993 and subsequent years, the first test of performance measures comes in the 1999–2001 biennium budget cycle. Agencies have been using performance measures for many years, many before the 1993 required use. Because of the length of time, approximately seven years from formally requiring the use of performance measures and the use of performance measures in the budget cycle, agencies in general realize the management purposes for using performance measures. Many agencies are using performance measures to improve “what matters.”

For more information, go to www.gasb.org.

Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment: Lessons from Iowa

In 2001, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funded a three-year project called Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) in Iowa, which engages citizens, city council members, and departmental staff to develop and use performance measures to evaluate public services. Thirty-two Iowa cities with populations above 10,000 were contacted initially. Eventually, the city councils, departmen-

tal staff, and citizen representatives of nine cities (Burlington, Carroll, Clive, Des Moines, Indianola, Johnston, Marion, Marshalltown, and Urbandale) made the commitment to the project.

The Iowa CIPA project differs from traditional performance measurement in three major respects. First, it emphasizes collaboration among citizens, elected officials and managers in developing performance measures to ensure political credibility and receptivity of the measures. Second, it emphasizes the citizen perspective in performance measurement, rather than the managerial perspective that often emphasizes input and cost efficiency. Third, it emphasizes public dissemination of performance measurement results to hold government accountable.

For more information, go to www.iowacipa.org.

The Straphangers' Campaign: Lessons from Transit in New York City

The Straphangers' Campaign represents a bold attempt to influence the accountability, accessibility, and performance of local government on behalf of its citizens. Through the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), the Straphangers Campaign received a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to "launch a new in-depth effort to measure the quality of the transit service." The goal was to accurately report on the condition of the city's transit system and to draw media, public, and governmental attention to the need to continue to invest in transit.

By the mid-1990s, ridership had plummeted to its lowest level since 1917. Many businesses cited poor transportation as the main reason for relocating from New York City. An editorial in the *New York Times* on October 5, 1995, seemed to summarize the sentiment at the time: "Then the near-ruin of local mass transit was taken as a metaphor for the decline and fall of the City itself. But New York did not fall, and thanks to a \$20 billion rebuilding plan, the subways got better. Now, it seems the battle must be fought all over again."

For more information, go to www.straphangers.org.

Street Smoothness Project: Lessons from the Fund for the City of New York

The Fund for the City of New York, a nonpartisan and independent operating foundation established in 1968, strives to improve the performance of local government and the quality of life for citizens in New York City. Through its Center on Municipal Government Performance (CMGP), established in 1995 as the first grantee of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's National Assessment of Government Performance Program, the organization uses new technologies and traditional market research techniques to create quantifiable performance measurements based on the public's concerns and experiences. This effort provides

reliable, nonpartisan, and objective information about the effectiveness of the city.

CMGP's initial objective was to focus on a few services of critical importance to citizens, not to try to create and verify new indicators for the entire city of New York. In particular, the Fund undertook the street smoothness project for six reasons. First, everyone experiences the streets. Second, this study would provide data for the public and government to use in monitoring service changes. Third, the public's perspective is needed from the user's standpoint. Fourth, bumpy and uneven streets can precipitate accidents, as evidenced by the 411 settlements and judgments for roadway-related claims, totaling more than \$16 million, made by the city in the 1996 fiscal year alone. Fifth, smoother streets mean less fatigued drivers and consequently fewer accidents. Finally, smoother streets extend the life of vehicles, including those owned by the city.

For more information, go to www.fcny.org/html/home.htm.

City Scan Project: Lessons from Hartford, Connecticut

Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CPEC) is an independent, nonpartisan, and not-for-profit organization. It provides information and communication resources to help citizens, community leaders, civic organizations, and local governments set priorities and improve government performance. CPEC's initiatives increase the capacity of citizens to be involved in public decision making. Originally founded in 1942 as a center for public policy research and analysis, CPEC is now engaged in fostering local school and government excellence and accountability.

The City Scan project deploys the latest technology—hand-held computers, database applications, mapping software, digital imaging, and Web development—for community priority-setting and accountability. The Hartford-based project has been extended to other cities and now includes:

- citizen surveys
- community-specific parents guide to local schools
- information for involved parents and community leaders, which includes the CPEC Web site, best-practices reports, issue briefs, and data-at-a-glance pamphlets
- community goal setting, a facilitation process for school improvement.

For more information, go to www.city-scan.com.

Partnerships Key to Achieving Results: Lessons from Worcester, Massachusetts

In 1999, the Worcester, Massachusetts, Municipal Research Bureau received a three-year planning grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to:

- connect government goals to community results
- produce a comprehensive municipal data inventory
- utilize benchmarking data to help the city achieve its goals.

Maximizing community involvement was the first step in the planning efforts. Early in the grant period, three advisory groups were assembled to support community leaders and neighborhood representatives who had contributed to the development of preliminary performance measures, all of which were based upon the city's strategic plan. These representatives from Worcester's neighborhood associations and community development corporations played a key role in helping to refine the performance measures, developed accurate maps of Worcester's neighborhoods, and participated in public forums that focused on developing strategies for revitalizing Worcester's neighborhoods.

The Research Bureau then turned its attention to a systematic review of the performance measures literature, and visited and consulted with individuals who have been engaged in other Sloan Foundation citizen-driven performance projects. During these visits, the Research Bureau learned about each project and received feedback and suggestions regarding their performance measures.

For more information, go to www.wrrb.org/Reports/CCPMmnssum.html.

Inside Schools—Advocates for Children: Lessons from New York City

Insideschools.org, an online guide to New York City public schools sponsored by Advocates for Children of New York, was created with a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to help parents assess the performance of their schools. The site allows parents to find a school, learn about their legal rights, ask for advice, or send complaints directly to a school. In its "find a school" section, Inside Schools offers profiles of 1,200 New York City public schools with test scores, graduation rates, enrollment, attendance, and ethnic breakdown. Well beyond simple statistics, the site also has "reviews" or descriptions of schools based on school visits and interviews with hundreds of parents. Eight reporters have visited 500 schools and plan to visit all 1,200 in the coming years.

For more information, go to www.insideschools.org.

Note

This paper has not been peer reviewed.

1. This section contains excerpts from *Citizen-Driven Government Performance: Case Studies and Curricular Resources* (National Center for Public Productivity, 2003).

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